



Sunrise Fire-Rescue Department
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For Release: IMMEDIATE

News Release

WATER SAFETY IS CRUCIAL IN SOUTH FLORIDA

(SUNRISE, FL)- It's the time of year when many people will be enjoying pools, beaches, and boating. Nowhere is this truer than in South Florida – where aquatic recreation is really available year-round. With all of the easy-access to water here, it's especially important for residents and visitors to practice water-safe habits.

In Broward County, drowning is the leading cause of death in children before the age of four. These tragedies almost invariably result from a lack of adult supervision – sometimes just for the briefest moment. Infants face the greatest risk around the home: bathtubs, toilets, buckets, decorative ponds, and kiddie pools. Babies can never be left alone in the tub – not even for a second. Toddlers are especially vulnerable wherever pools, lakes, and canals are nearby. Again, it only takes a moment for a small child to wander away from a distracted caretaker and into an unsupervised area with water. Parents and all other caretakers must be committed to keeping a constant line of sight with the children they are watching, to having children within arms-reach whenever they are in or around the water, and to maintaining focused attention on the task.

“There is no substitute for active adult supervision.” said Sunrise Fire Chief Thomas DiBernardo. “Too-often, parents mistakenly assume it's ok to step away for a minute. They think they will hear something if their child needs help, and that they will have enough time to react. But drowning is usually silent, and it happens quickly.”

While parents and caretakers must strive for impeccable vigilance, they should also take a wholistic approach to drowning prevention, using **multiple layers of protection**:

- **Supervision** - Always have a designated, responsible adult whose undivided attention is on the children – not only when swimming, but whenever access to water is a possibility. Children must be taught from an early age never to go near the water without an adult.
- **Barriers** – Use child-proof locks on all doors, door alarms, pool fences, and self-closing and self-latching gates. Use them consistently, with routine checks throughout the day.
- **Preparation** - Learn CPR and keep proper safety gear, including a phone, life-vests, hook, & ring buoy, near the pool. If a child is missing, always check the pool first.
- **Swimming and Water Safety Lessons** – Even the youngest children can learn skills to help them to be safer in and around the water. Caregivers should learn to swim as well.

Numerous, inexpensive options for swimming and water-safety lessons are now available locally. The City of Sunrise offers free and low-cost swim lessons to residents; visit www.sunrisefl.gov or call 954-747-4600 for more information. Free swim lessons are also available through the YMCA of Broward County SPLASH program; visit www.ymcabroward.org or call 954-334-9622. Additionally, Broward County's SWIM Central program offers \$40 vouchers towards swim lessons for children four years of age and under, and vouchers for adult lessons are available through the SWIMS Foundation. Go to www.watersmartbroward.org to request a voucher, where you will also find a wealth of information and resources for all things related to water-safety. For information about CPR training, please call 954-746-3465.

For more information and additional safety tips, please visit www.sunrisefl.gov/Fire,
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