

Fire Safety Article



**From The Office Of Fire Chief Chip Prather
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DROWNING PREVENTION

Child drownings and near drownings continue to be a major problem here in Orange County. These are accidents that can be prevented by residents following some simple guidelines. Children not only drown in backyard swimming pools, but often in community pools when people are not watching. The Orange County Fire Authority has provided the following information on how to prevent child drownings:

A fence or barrier completely surrounding the pool can prevent many drowning accidents. Most children who drown or nearly drown were last seen in the yard, porch or patio prior to the accident. Although a fence separating the pool and spa is the single most effective barrier for preventing childhood drownings, no one method alone is totally effective. Pool owners can take practical steps to make their pools and spas less dangerous by installing “layers of protection.”

- Pools should be fenced off from the rest of the house. Fences should be at least 5 feet high.
- The area adjacent to the outside of the fence must be free of objects that may aid children in climbing over the fence. These include items such as chairs, tables, tree branches, etc.
- Gates must be self-closing and self-latching, opening outward away from pool.
- A gate latch must be placed at the top of the gate or be made inaccessible from the outside to small children.
- All doors and windows leading to the pool should be secured and locked at all times.
- Additional “layers of protection” include safety covers, alarms on doors and motion-detection devices.
- Assign an adult “Water Watcher” to supervise the pool/spa area, especially during social gatherings.
- Assign a second adult to maintain constant visual contact with children in the pool/spa area. Don’t assume someone else is watching a child.
- Never leave a child alone near a pool or spa, bathtub, toilet, water-filled bucket, pond, or any standing water in which a child’s nose and mouth may be submersed.
- Don’t rely on swimming lessons, life preservers, or any other equipment to make a child “water safe.”
- Don’t allow children to play in the pool/spa area.
- Look in the pool area first if a child is missing.

The Orange County Fire Authority is a joint powers authority that serves as the all-risk emergency response agency for 1.3 million Orange County residents in 22 cities and the unincorporated areas of the county.