**Water Safety**

Most drownings and near-drownings occur in residential swimming pools. More than half of these drownings take place in the child’s home pool, and one-third occur at the homes of friends, neighbors or relatives. However, it’s important to know that children – especially younger ones – can also drown in as little as 1 inch of water. This puts them at risk of drowning in wading pools, bathtubs, buckets, diaper pails, toilets, spas and hot tubs. Childhood drownings and near-drownings can happen in a matter of seconds. They typically occur when a child is left unattended or during a brief lapse in supervision. If a child has a near downing, brain injuries can occur so be sure to know the signs and symptoms of such an injury.

Aside:

Drowning is a quick and silent killer. In the time it takes to …

…cross the room for a towel (10 seconds), a child in the bathtub can become submerged.

…answer the phone (2 minutes), that child can lose consciousness.

…sign for a package at your front door (4 to 6 minutes), a child submerged in the bathtub or pool can sustain permanent brain damage.

Aside: A flotation device, knowing how to swim, or use of a bathtub ring will prevent a child from drowning.

**Water Safety Tips**

- Never leave a child alone near water—at the pool, the beach or in the tub—a tragedy can occur in seconds. If you must leave, take your child with you.
- Beware of neighborhood pools—be it your own or your neighbors. Remove toys from in and around the pool when not in use. Toys can attract children to the pool.
- Enroll children over age four in swimming lessons taught by qualified instructors. But keep in mind that lessons don't make your child “drown-proof.”
- Remove all water from containers, such as pails and 5-gallon buckets, immediately after use.
- To prevent drowning in toilets, young children should not be left alone in the bathroom, and unsupervised access to the bathroom should be prevented.
- Older children risk drowning when they overestimate their swimming ability or underestimate the water depth.
- If a home has a residential swimming pool, it should be surrounded by a fence that prevents direct access to the pool from the house. Rigid, motorized pool covers, pool alarms, and other protective devices, which may offer some protection if used appropriately and consistently, are not a substitute for 4-sided fencing. The fence should be at least 4 feet high (or greater if required by local ordinance). The fence should also be climb-resistant. For example, chain-link fences are easily scaled by young children, whereas ornamental iron bar fences are more difficult to climb. The distance between the bottom of the fence and the ground should be less than 4 inches. The distance between vertical members of the fence also should be less than 4 inches. The gate is the single most important component of the fence. It should be self-latching and self-closing, and should open away from the pool.
- Teach your children to: Always swim with a buddy, Don’t dive into unknown bodies of water. Jump feet first to avoid hitting your head on a shallow bottom, and don’t push others in or near a pool.
• Use an approved personal flotation device on yourself and children when swimming in large pools, lakes, at water parks, and while boating.

In Mecklenburg County, there are protective devices required for all permanent in ground and above ground pools for these requirements, call 704-336-5101 or visit http://www.charmeck.org/Departments/Health+Department/Environmental+Health/Pest+Management/Private+Swimming+Pools.htm