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## Over 90% of All Pools & Hot Tubs Are Not Properly Safeguarded to Prevent Drowning

In doing home and child safety evaluations, I commonly see that nearly all pools and hot tubs do not have appropriate safeguards in place to prevent drowning.

Even though there are possible safeguards, they are not as fail-safe as they should be. It only takes about one minute for a child to have brain damage, and not much more time and they will have drowned. Children have a natural attraction toward water. If a child can reach a pool or hot tub, they can walk out and quietly fall into the water. And in many cases, they won't come back up to the surface, so you won't hear them screaming. And one drowning is one too many.

My Home Safety Guru™ recommendations for pools and hot tubs include:

- ◆ **Pool Safety Fencing** – You need to have a safety fence that is between your home and your pool or hot tub, even above ground pools with ladders. The same goes for a pond or fountain. These fences need to be at least 48" tall (preferably 60"), with self-closing, self-latching, child-resistant locks. Fences should be made out of material that is difficult to climb, like plastic meshing, not something like chain link or wrought iron fencing. You should also look for pool fencing that has passed testing against the ASTM Standard F2286, Standard Design and Performance Specification for Removable Mesh Fencing for Swimming Pools, Hot Tubs, and Spas.
- ◆ **Door Locks & Pool Alarms** – Even if you have pool safety fencing, you should have a second line of defense. A lock that is located high on the door will make it difficult for a child to get out. A pool alarm will let you know if someone has gotten into your pool, even neighbor kids. You should purchase one that meets the ASTM Standard F2208-07, Standard Specification for Pool Alarms.
- ◆ **Don't Use Nets Over Pools** – These are devices that attach onto specially designed posts that are mounted into the pool deck. These nets are particularly dangerous for young children, as they can try to walk onto them and fall into the holes of the netting, thus potentially trapping them.
- ◆ **Don't Rely On Retractable Pool Covers** – These covers serve three purposes: acting as an insulator; keeping water from evaporating; and keeping debris from falling into the pool.

Even though many pool cover companies will state that you can stand on them, they are still not safe. Over time, the material that has been exposed to the elements for possibly years can become less strong, making them unsafe to stand on. Also, as these covers are waterproof, any water that falls onto the cover will tend to collect in the middle, making it attractive for a toddler to try to walk on the cover and possibly fall into the pooled water. Further, it is easy to forget to close the cover when someone leaves the pool area, again making it easy for a child to slip into the water.

- ◆ **Don't Rely on Buckles to Lock Hot Tub Covers** – In many cases, people who have hot tubs and use them in the winter may neglect to buckle the covers down. Further, some children can actually unbuckle them. The famous golfer Jack Nicklaus lost a grandson at his home because the tub cover was not locked and the child crawled under the cover and drowned.
- ◆ **Prevent Drain Entrapment** – It is easy for a child's body or hair to get pulled into a pool or hot tub suction drain. To prevent this happening, make certain that all pool and hot tub drains meet the safety requirements of ASME/ANSI A112.19.8 and that they are in good condition. Don't forget to check on other pools and hot tubs away from your home.
- ◆ **Wading Pools** – Don't forget these shallow pools, as it is easy for child to climb into to them and fall. All it takes is one inch of water for a child to drown. Always drain the water after each use.



The unfortunate thing about this is that people just don't think it will happen to them. By carelessness or not having the right protection in place, it is a recipe for disaster for young children. Putting up a pool fence will go a long way to keeping kids safe at a home with a pool or hot tub. But remember, there is no substitute for attentive adult supervision for keeping your child safe.

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