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The Home
Safety Guru

Risks of Above Ground Inflatable Pools

By Louie Delaware

Drownings are the 2nd leading cause of death for children 4 years and younger (behind motor vehicle deaths) and this number is still rising. A recent US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) report reported that the average annual number of children 4 years old and under drowning in pools and spas increased from 267 for the years 2002-2004 to 283 for the years 2003-2005. The majority of those drownings involved 1 and 2 year old children and took place in residential settings, according to the report. And there are over 2,600 children requiring hospitalization as a result of a near drowning event.

One of the reasons for the increase is the use of above-ground inflatable pools. These can be as shallow as 8 inches to over 4 feet deep. These are easily purchased at a many retailers and are relatively inexpensive. But they are just as danger. For example, 17 children died in inflatable pools in 2005, an increase from 9 in 2004.

For example, when one installs an in-ground pool, a construction permit is typically required. In many municipalities, safety fencing is required that is located between the home and the pool that has a self-closing, self-latching child resistant gate. But with inflatable pools, a permit it is not typically required. The homeowner just places the pool, inflates it and then fills it with water, not thinking of the consequences. But all it takes is 1 inch of water for child to drown, and unfortunately most people think incorrectly that a child will come back up to the surface. And with taller inflatable pools, there is usually a ladder on the side of the pool or a child puts something next to the pool that allows the child to get easy access to the water.

To minimize the possibility of a drowning event with inflatable pools, you should do the following:

- ◆ Install a pool safety fence between the home and taller inflatable pools. Pool safety fences are made out of mesh material and are at least 48" tall (although it is recommended that the fence be 60" tall) and have a self-shutting, self-latching child-resistant gate. And never allow the gate to be propped open.
- ◆ After each use, the pool ladder should be remove and safely stored. And make certain that there is nothing in your yard that will make it easy for a child to move to the pool to use to climb over the top.
- ◆ For shallow inflatable pools, you should drain the water after each use.

In addition to the above tips, you should do the following:

- ◆ When using a pool, actively supervise and engage with your child.
- ◆ In a drowning, time is of the essence. Always look for a missing child in the pool first.
- ◆ Never leave toys and floats in the pool. These can attract the interest of a young child. They lean over to try to grab it and then fall into the water.
- ◆ With a pool or hot tub, there needs to be a second line of defense. Install child resistant locks high on the doors leading out of your home, alarms on doors to indicate that one has been opened, or a pool alarm to warn you that something has gotten into the water. And also keep in mind that windows leading to the pool area need to have a barrier or a stop to keep a child from getting out as well.
- ◆ Be prepared in case of an emergency by having rescue equipment and a cordless or cell phone near the pool, have the necessary equipment always nearby to assist in a rescue and learning cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).



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- ◆ Ensure that drain covers for your pool prevent the possibility of entrapment. In any cases, safer drain covers have dome or star-shaped designs to minimize the being sucked into the drain. In selecting a drain cover, make certain that it meets the requirements of and has passed testing against the American Society of Mechanical Engineers Standard (ASME) A112.19.8 – 2007.
- ◆ For people who have long hair, have them tie it up or put them in a braid to prevent it from being pulled into the drain covers.
- ◆ Never use a pool with a missing or broken drain cover.
- ◆ If you are not certain as to how to properly inspect drain covers, hire a reputable and knowledgeable pool professional to inspect them for you. And then inspect them yourself through the course of the year to ensure that they are still safe.
- ◆ Know where the shutoff switch for the water pump is located and clearly identify it so it can be turned off quickly in an emergency.
- ◆ There are legal risks with all swimming pools, regardless of the type, even if you put up signs on your property. Ensure that your homeowner's insurance policy covers you for a pool. If not, you may want to investigate having additional coverage for the pool.

As being around water is supposed to be fun, let's make certain that everyone is safe. One drowning or entrapment event is one too many.

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