



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS STATE FIRE MARSHAL

JB Pritzker, Governor
Michele L. Pankow, State Fire Marshal

For Immediate Release

Date: July 23, 2025

Contact: JC Fultz

217-685-2041

jc.fultz@illinois.gov

Stay Cool and Follow the Rules at the Pool this Summer!

Over 4,500 people died due to drowning each year from 2020–2022 in the United States.

Springfield, Ill- The popularity of residential pools has increased over recent years raising the risk for accidental drownings meaning homeowners and parents need be extra vigilant to protect kids who have access to the water. Public pools are a popular summer destination for people to beat the heat, but they can pose some hidden dangers.

“Pools have been a popular way to cool off this summer, but we can’t afford to get complacent — drownings can happen in an instant and often without a sound. It’s not like the movies,” **said Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow**. “If children are in or around the pool, stay off your phone, put down your book, and keep your eyes on them at all times. Staying cool at the pool is fun — but it comes with serious responsibility.”

Statistics from the American Red Cross show a four-sided isolation fence (separating the pool area from the house and yard) reduces a child’s risk of drowning 83% compared to three-sided property-line fencing.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reports an average of 379 child fatalities (under 15 years old) annually due to pool or spa drownings, with 75% of these deaths involving children under 5. Additionally, an estimated 6,700 children per year are treated in hospital emergency rooms for nonfatal drowning injuries related to pools or spas. Where the location was known, 81% of fatal child drownings happened in residential settings. Also, 76% of these nonfatal drowning injuries involved children younger than 5 years of age.

Over 4,500 people died due to drowning each year from 2020–2022 in the United States, 500 more per year compared to 2019 according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). That is an average of 12 fatal drownings per day.

Pool chemicals, like chlorine, are needed to protect swimmers’ health. However, mishandling pool chemicals can cause serious injuries. Pool chemical injuries lead to about 4,500 U.S. emergency department visits each year, and over one-third of these preventable injuries are in children or teens.

Below are some simple steps to keep children safer in and around the water:

- Install a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate around all pools and spas. Check to make sure the gate is locked or closed when leaving the pool or spas.
- Keep the pool and deck clear of floats, balls, and toys after leaving the pool.
- Always ensure children swim with an adult or buddy.
- Designate an adult Water Watcher to supervise children at all times around the water. Stay off your phone, put your book down, and pay attention to whoever is in or around the water!
- Never leave a child unattended in or near water.
- Learn how to swim and teach your child how to swim.
- Learn how to perform CPR on children and adults.
- Teach children to stay away from pool drains, pipes, and other openings to avoid entrapments.
- Ensure any pool or spa has drain covers that comply with federal safety standards. If you are unsure, ask your pool service provider about safer drain covers.
- If you are installing a new pool, hot tub, or spa, be sure the wiring is performed by an electrician experienced in the special safety requirement for these types of installations.
- Install door alarms and locks that are out of the reach of a child on all doors and windows with direct access to the pool or spa area.
- For above-ground pools, secure, lock or remove steps, ladders and anything that can be used for access (such as outdoor furniture and toys) whenever the pool is not being actively supervised by an adult.
- Empty or flip over inflatable pools when you are finished using them for the day.

Take the Pool Safety Pledge by visiting: www.poolsafety.gov/pledge.

###