



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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June 29, 2006

American Red Cross Lifesaving Water Safety Advice: “Have Fun This Summer Without Taking a Vacation From Safety”

Summer is a wonderful time of year when children and parents look forward to outdoor activities at the pool, lake and beach. Yet accidents can happen if families take a vacation from safety. The good news is that most water tragedies can be prevented, if everyone remembers the basic rules of water safety.

“The American Red Cross Illinois Capital Area Chapter would like to remind everyone to have fun this summer without taking a vacation from safety,” says Chris Shanahan, Director of Community Health and Safety for the Illinois Capital Area Chapter. “We are encouraging families to take the time to go over water safety tips together because it could mean the difference between life and death.”

The following tips will help keep everyone safe and healthy in or around the water:

- **Learn to swim and swim well.** One of the best things anyone can do to stay safe in and around the water is learn to swim. No one, including adults, should ever swim alone. Adults should practice “reach supervision,” which means to be within arm’s length of a child in case an emergency occurs.
- **Outfit everyone with the proper gear.** Kids and even adults who are not strong swimmers or who appear to rely on inflatable toys for safety should use U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) whenever they are in or around the water. Everyone, including strong swimmers, should use an approved PFD when boating. Each person should have the appropriate personal flotation device for his or her weight and size, which is found clearly marked inside the label near the Coast Guard stamp.
- **Always keep basic lifesaving equipment by the residential pool and know how to use it.** A first aid kit, cordless phone, phone list with emergency contact information, a reaching pole and a ring buoy with a nylon line attached are recommended. First aid kits should contain plastic face shields, which can help prevent disease transmission. Cordless phones allow you to make that 911 call and to receive calls without leaving the area.

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In addition, the Red Cross recommends that pools be surrounded on all sides by a fence that is at least 4 feet high. It should not provide any footholds, which would allow a child to climb over or spacing to climb through. The fence should have a self-closing, self-locking gate that is locked when the pool is not in use.

- **Pack a “safety” bag for a day at the beach or lake.** Water-proof sunscreen with an SPF 15 or higher, water shoes to keep feet safe from the heat and sharp objects on land, and plenty of water are musts. All containers should be plastic to prevent injuries from breaking glass. Also, a hat and sunglasses keep eyes safe from dangerous UV rays.
- **Learn Red Cross first aid and CPR.** “While the above tips can help prevent emergencies, it is important to know what to do if a situation arises,” says Chris Shanahan, Illinois Capital Area Chapter Director of Community Health and Safety. And all caregivers, including grandparents, older siblings and babysitters should have these lifesaving skills.

For more information on staying safe in and around the water, please contact the Illinois Capital Area Chapter of the American Red Cross at (217) 787-7602.

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