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**ST. JOHNS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES RESIDENTS AND VISITORS
TO DESIGNATE A WATER WATCHER FOR SUMMER SAFETY**
- Mix safety with fun this Fourth of July and all summer long -

ST. AUGUSTINE - With warm weather and pool time already here, and Fourth of July festivities right around the corner, the St. Johns County Health Department/Florida Department of Health (DOH) asks residents and visitors to save a life and designate a "Water Watcher" when children are participating in water activities. All across Florida, children will spend the hot days of summer playing in pool areas and swimming and jumping into the cool water, but despite the fun, pool safety is a serious subject and must be made a top priority.

Water Watchers can wear a Water Watcher designation tag as a visual reminder to parents and other responsible individuals that they are present to monitor children in or around water. According to DOH's Office of Injury Prevention, drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death in the United States for children between the ages of one and four, with Florida leading the nation. Florida residents under the age of 10 are most likely to drown in a swimming pool.

"In Florida, we lose four classrooms of Pre-K children every year to drowning," says Dawn C. Allicock, M.D., M.P.H., Director of the St. Johns County Health Department. "By designating a Water Watcher, you can ensure you have the proper supervision for children in or around water."

Three basic layers of pool safety will help keep children who are swimming safe on the Fourth of July and year-round: <http://www.waterprooffl.com>

- **Layer 1-Supervision:** Children should never be allowed in the pool area without an adult responsible for supervision. Supervision is the most critical layer of protection. Designate a "Water Watcher", so you know who is in charge of watching children in the pool. Download a "Water Watcher" tag at: <http://newsroom.doh.state.fl.us/wp-content/uploads/newsroom/2011/05/waterwatcher.pdf> or pick one up at the St. Johns County Health Department (1955 US 1 South, Suite 100, St. Augustine, FL 32086), while supplies last.
- **Layer 2-Barriers:** A barrier is an object or device that physically blocks children from entering the pool area. DOH recommends using a number of different barriers to ensure

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safety: for your home, child-proof locks and door alarms on all doors that open to the outside; and for the pool area, a fence with a self-closing and self-latching gate, and gate and pool alarms. The Residential Swimming Pool Safety Act (Chapter 515, Florida Statutes) requires at least one physical barrier for pools built after 2000. More than 90 percent of Florida's home swimming pools were built before the law.

- **Layer 3-Emergency Preparedness:** Always be prepared for a water emergency. Learn life-saving skills, know proper emergency procedures and keep a phone in the pool area in case you need to call 911. Many organizations offer Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and rescue-technique classes at little or no cost. Finally, ask your health care provider about age-appropriate swimming lessons in your area.

Other Prevention Tips:

- Install four-sided isolation fencing with a self-closing and self-latching gate around pools and spas.
- Install alarms on all doors and windows leading to the pool.
- Learn to swim and never swim alone or while under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Always wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD) while participating in open water sports and recreation.
- Operate watercraft safely and legally.
- Never dive into water less than nine feet deep. If you don't know the depth of the water, do not dive.
- Learn CPR.

Other Resources:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Water-Related Injuries <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/index.html>
- National Drowning Prevention Alliance <http://www.ndpa.org>
- Consumer Product Safety Commission, Pool Safely <http://www.poolsafely.gov/>

To take the Water Watcher pledge, visit <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/injury/DrownPrevent.html#pledge>

For more information, including local and statewide [unintentional drowning death data](#) from Florida CHARTS, please visit the Drowning Prevention Awareness Campaign at <http://www.doh.state.fl.us/injury/DrownPrevent.html#awareness>.

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