



OFFICE OF THE ILLINOIS
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

JB Pritzker, Governor
Matt Perez, State Fire Marshal

Illinois Department of
DCFS
Children & Family Services
Marc D. Smith
Acting Director

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Contact OSFM: JC Fultz
217-785-1026
jc.fultz@illinois.gov

Contact DCFS: Deborah Lopez
312-937-0050
Deborah.Lopez@illinois.gov

The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal and Illinois Department of Children and Family Services remind parents to supervise children when they are in or near water

SPRINGFIELD - The summer heat continues to sizzle, and many Illinoisans are looking for ways to cool off. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many pools and beaches are closed, leading to home pools, either permanent or pop-up, becoming a popular substitution. If families plan to visit a beach that is open or invite a few friends over to swim, it's critical that parents stay vigilant and actively supervise their children when they are in or near water to prevent the tragedy of a child drowning.

In 2019, 22 Illinois children under the age of 18 lost their lives due to accidental drowning: 10 in pools; five in bathtubs; one in a bucket; three in ponds; and three in lakes. Six of the children who drowned in pools were age five and younger. Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death for children ages one to four and second leading cause of unintentional death for children ages five to 15 according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"Children are quick and curious – and naturally drawn to water," said Illinois DCFS Acting Director Marc D. Smith. "A child can drown in seconds, in silence and in as little as one inch of water. Never leave children alone – even for a minute to answer a text or the doorbell. Turning your back for a moment can change your life forever."

According to the American Red Cross, 69% of young children who are found drowned or submerged in swimming pools were not expected to be in or near the pool. On average, 379 fatal child drownings occurred per year between 2015 and 2017. Children younger than five years old accounted for 75% of these drownings, 56% of which were attributed to a lapse in adult supervision. Of the reported fatal drowning incidents, 71% occurred in residential locations, such as a child's home, a family or friend's house or a neighbor's residence according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC).

"Due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic many people have chosen to install pools or purchase a pop-up pool for their yards this summer. Installing a pool requires a need for parents to keep a closer eye on their children. It is also essential to take the proper steps to keep the pool secured and restrict access to prevent injuries and drownings from occurring," says Illinois State Fire Marshal Matt Perez.

The Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services urge everyone to follow these safety tips to help protect children from water-related tragedy:

Bathrooms

- Never leave a young child alone in a bathtub or rely on a bathtub seat for safety.
- Secure the toilet lid. Curious toddlers could tip headfirst into a toilet, risking drowning.
- Don't allow children to play alone in the bathroom.



Buckets

- Five-gallon buckets commonly used for household home-improvement projects pose a threat to babies and toddlers who may topple into them and be unable to get out.
- Empty and store all buckets out of children's reach when not in use.

Portable or Inflatable pools

- Don't be lulled into a false sense of security because of the shallowness of baby pools. A child can drown in as little as one inch of water.
- Empty the pool right after use and store it upside-down.

Swimming pools and hot tubs

- Keep ladders, patio furniture and toys away from above-ground pools. Toddlers are better climbers than you think!
- Install a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate around all pools and spas. Always check to make sure the gate is locked or closed when leaving the pool or spa!
- Keep the pool and deck clear of floats, balls and toys after you leave the pool
- Young children should wear personal flotation devices, but they do not replace adult supervision.
- Keep hot tubs securely covered when not in use. Children should not be left in a hot tub alone.
- Appoint an adult who can swim to watch children at all times when they are in the pool.
- Learn CPR and keep rescue equipment, phone and emergency numbers by the pool. The American Red Cross offers [online CPR training classes](#) anyone can take at their own pace from the convenience of home.

Ponds, fountains and retention ponds

- Be aware of access to water hazards in your yard and neighborhood. If a child goes missing, check these areas first!

For more information and water safety resources, including posters, brochures and a coloring book for children, visit the DCFS website at www2.illinois.gov/DCFS and click on Safe Kids > Health and Safety Tips for Children > Water Safety.

***About the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)** Founded in 1964, DCFS is responsible for protecting children from abuse or neglect by responding to calls received on the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873). With the goal of keeping children safe, DCFS strengthens and supports families with a wide range of services. When keeping a child safe means removing them from the home, DCFS makes every effort to reunite them with their family. When the best interest of the child makes this impossible, DCFS is committed to pursuing adoption by loving families to provide children with a safe and permanent home. DCFS is also responsible for licensing and monitoring of all Illinois child welfare agencies.*

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