

Pat Quinn  
Governor



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## Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **GOVERNOR QUINN PROCLAIMS MAY “CHILDHOOD DROWNING PREVENTION MONTH”** *Reminds all Illinoisans to watch kids near water, and save a life*

SPRINGFIELD – As summer approaches, families will begin filling up their backyard pools, heading to lakes and ponds with their rods and reels, and relaxing in hot tubs and whirlpools. Governor Pat Quinn has proclaimed May *Childhood Drowning Prevention Month* in Illinois and reminds all citizens of the importance of actively supervising children when they are in or near water to prevent the tragedy of accidental drowning deaths.

The Governor’s proclamation was issued in conjunction with a year-round statewide effort to educate the public about the importance of constant adult supervision of children when they are in or near water. The “Get Water Wise...Supervise!” campaign is a collaborative effort of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA Illinois), the American Red Cross Illinois Capital Area Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, the Illinois Department of Public Health (DPH), and other community partners.

“We know from painful experience that this loss can happen to any family, any time a child is near water,” said DCFS Spokesman Kendall Marlowe. “These are good families who love their children and care for them well, only to make one tragic mistake when they step away to answer the phone or retrieve something from the family car. Drowning can be a swift and silent occurrence, striking anywhere kids are near water. We must watch kids near water, and save a life.”

Nationally, drowning is the leading cause of accidental death among children ages 1 to 4, and the second leading cause for children 1 to 14. In Illinois, 19 children lost their lives to accidental drowning in 2009, including eight in a pool, two in a pond, and two in a bathtub.

“Whether at home or the community pool, adults are responsible for the safety and well-being of children,” said Roy Harley, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois. “Drowning is preventable, and the best way to protect children and avoid tragedy is for adults to stay alert at all times when children are near water.”

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A child can drown in as little as one inch of water, in as little time as 20 seconds. Children are at risk anywhere water collects or is stored: in ditches, garden ponds, bathtubs, quarries, septic tanks, streams and farm ponds. Five-gallon buckets, such as those commonly used in home improvement projects, pose a special risk for toddlers with undeveloped upper body muscles, who may topple over headfirst into the bucket, unable to free themselves.

The American Red Cross identifies four crucial elements to childhood water safety:

1. Maintain constant supervision. Watch children around any water environment (pool, stream, lake, tub, toilet, bucket of water) no matter what skills your child has acquired and no matter how shallow the water. For younger children, practice "Reach Supervision" by staying within an arm's length reach.
2. Don't rely on substitutes. The use of flotation devices and inflatable toys cannot replace parental supervision. Such devices could suddenly shift position, lose air, or slip out from underneath, leaving the child in a dangerous situation.
3. Enroll children in a water safety course or Learn-to-Swim classes. Your decision to provide your child with an early aquatic experience is a gift that will have infinite rewards. These courses encourage safe practices. You can also purchase a Water Safety Handbook at a Red Cross Store.
4. Parents should take a CPR course. Knowing these skills can be important around water and expand the capability to provide care for your child. Contact your local Red Cross to enroll in a CPR course.

Text of the Governor's proclamation follows:

WHEREAS, drowning is the leading cause of accidental death for children ages 1-4, as well as the second leading cause of death for children under the age of 14; and,

WHEREAS, childhood drowning can occur in pools, bathtubs, hot tubs, decorative garden ponds and even buckets that contain as little as 2 inches of water, and,

WHEREAS, the state's annual "Get Water Wise...SUPERVISE!" campaign came about as a recommendation from the Illinois Child Death Review Team, after it determined that all childhood drowning deaths were preventable if proper adult supervision was provided; and

WHEREAS, the "Get Water Wise...SUPERVISE!" campaign is a collaborative effort of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Prevent Child Abuse Illinois (PCA Illinois), the American Red Cross Illinois Capital Area Chapter, the Illinois Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics, the Illinois Department of Public Health (DPH), and other community partners to remind the public to help prevent child drowning tragedies by providing adult supervision when children are in or near water; and,

WHEREAS, it is important to recognize that constant adult supervision is needed when children are in or near water;

Therefore I, Pat Quinn, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim May 2011 as Childhood Drowning Prevention Month in Illinois.

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