

**U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 21, 2008
Release #08-276**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - A new report (pdf) issued today by the staff of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) indicates that the average number of drowning deaths involving children younger than 5 in pools and spas has increased from a yearly average of 267

(for 2002-2004) to 283 (for 2003-2005).

The average number of emergency room treated pool and spa submersion

injuries decreased from an annual average of 2,800 (for 2004-2006) to 2,700 (for 2005-2007). The report also shows that the majority of deaths and injuries occur in residential settings and involve children ages 1-2. Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death to children ages 1-4.

At a press conference today, CPSC Acting Chairman Nancy Nord, Florida Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, Safe Kids USA parent advocate Nancy Baker, and American Red Cross Chief Public Affairs Officer Suzy DeFrancis came together in an effort to reduce the number of drownings and injuries this summer. Parents, caregivers, and pool owners were encouraged to make safety a top priority at the pool and spa.

A new federal pool and spa safety law was signed by the President on December 19, 2007. The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act requires that

by December 19, 2008, all public pools and spas have safety drain covers, and in certain circumstances, an anti-entrapment system. The goal of the law is to improve the safety of all pools and spas by increasing the use of layers of protection and promoting uninterrupted supervision to prevent child drownings and entrapments.

"CPSC is calling upon all public pool and spa owners to comply with the new federal law and we urge parents to never let their children out of sight when they are in or around a pool or spa," said CPSC Acting Chairman Nord.

"The tragedy of hundreds of children dying each year from accidental drowning and four times as many who are near-drowning victims with devastating injuries, is made even more painful by the knowledge that these types of accidents are preventable," said Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz. "Parents should know that simple safety measures for their pool or spa could very well prevent their own child from being lost through such nightmare scenarios as accidental drowning or entrapment."

"This legislation helps give meaning to the tragic circumstances that took Graeme's life and the lives of many other children," said Nancy Baker whose 7-year-old daughter died in 2002 when she was entrapped underwater by the suction of a spa's drain. "It is a tribute to these children and their grieving families that this law will prevent injuries and deaths as a result of drowning. Graeme would be honored that it is in her name."

New Report Shows Increase In Pool and Spa Drownings: New Federal Law Aims to Make Millions of Pools and Spas Safer

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New CPSC data (pdf) also shows that between 1999 and 2007 there were 74 reported incidents involving entrapment, resulting in 9 deaths and 63 injuries. Six of the deaths occurred in pools and three occurred in spas and all of the deaths except for one involved children 14 or younger. These entrapment incidents involve being trapped by the force of suction at the drain and can occur because of a broken or missing outlet cover.

Drowning occurs more commonly when children get access to the pool during a short lapse in adult supervision. To reduce the risk of drowning, pool owners should adopt several layers of protection, including physical barriers, such as a fence completely surrounding the pool with self-closing, self-latching gates to prevent unsupervised access by young children. If the house forms a side of the barrier, use alarms on doors leading to the pool area and/or a power safety cover over the pool.

"I encourage all parents to contact their local American Red Cross chapter and ask about the many services offered,"

said Suzy DeFrancis, Chief Public Affairs Officer for the American Red Cross. "From CPR and First Aid training to the Learn to Swim program, the Red Cross can be

your greatest resource to preventing any pool and spa accidents this summer."



In addition, parents should use these tips to help prevent drowning deaths:

- Since every second counts, always look for a missing child in the pool first. Precious time is often wasted looking for missing children anywhere but in the pool.
- Don't leave toys and floats in the pool that can attract young children and cause them to fall in the water when they reach for the items.
- Inspect pools and spas for missing or broken drain covers.
- Do not allow children in a pool or spa with missing/broken covers. Inserting an arm or leg into the opening can result in powerful suction and total body submersion/drowning.
- For above-ground and inflatable pools with ladders, remove or secure the ladder when the pool is not in use.

It is important to always be prepared for an emergency by having rescue equipment and a phone near the pool. Parents should learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).