Young Childhood Drowning

- Young children are curious and often fascinated with water, yet they do not understand the potential dangers of playing in or around it.
- Drowning is silent; a person who is drowning is not likely to splash, shout, or call for help.
- Drowning is the leading cause of injury death among children one to four years of age in the U.S. – two children under age 15 die every day from drowning.
- Annually in Oklahoma, approximately 10 children under age five die from drowning.
- Infant drownings most often occur in bathtubs, toilets, and buckets.
- Most toddler and preschooler drownings occur in residential swimming pools (often when swimming is not the intended activity and the child is assumed to be safe inside).

Prevention

- Supervision is critical!
  - Designate an adult with swimming skills to actively watch children in or near any water. Do not distract a “water watcher” or allow them to become distracted.
  - Never leave a child in or near water, even for a second. Drownings occur very quickly, in less time than it takes to answer the telephone or get something to eat.
  - Avoid using alcohol or drugs, or being under their influence, while supervising children; this causes poor judgement and delays in reaction time to emergencies.
  - Use “touch supervision” for young children; stay within an arm’s reach of the child.
- Use “layers of protection” to prevent drownings. When children are not supposed to be in the water, supervision alone is not enough to keep them safe.
- Install pool fencing that completely surrounds the pool and is at least four feet high, with self-closing, self-latching gates.
- Install alarms on all doors and windows that provide access to a swimming pool.
- Learn CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation).
- Provide children swimming lessons and water-survival skills training at an early age.
- Require wearing an approved personal floatation device (life jacket) at all times when boating or near water.
- Empty buckets and bathtubs immediately after use; consider installing toilet seat locks.

Internet Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/
- U.S. Coast Guard Boating Safety Resource Center: http://www.uscgboating.org

Live Injury-Free!