

Who is Watching? Toddlers Can Drown Quickly and Silently

Kidsafe Victoria has issued a warning about the increased risk of drowning in backyard swimming pools during the Christmas and summer holidays, with thousands of pool parties and barbeques taking place across the state.

Figures from Royal Life Saving Society of Australia's (RLSSA) National Drowning Report show that in 2016/17, toddler drowning incidents increased by 32%. During this period, 29 Australian children aged 0-4 years drowned. The majority of these drowning incidents (45%) occurred in backyard swimming pools.

Kidsafe Victoria General Manager, Jason Chambers, said "active adult supervision of children around water at all times is vital as toddlers can **drown quickly and silently**. Toddlers should always be kept within an arm's reach of an adult around water."

"Backyard pools are the most common location where toddlers drown. At parties and celebrations with lots of people around, adults can sometimes think someone else is watching the children around the pool, when in fact, nobody may be supervising them."

Mr. Chambers said that all pool and spa owners should make sure their pool barriers are secure and the pool gate and latch are working correctly, before the busy holiday period.

Many faults or non-compliance issues that arise through lack of maintenance of pool and spa barriers can provide children with unsupervised access to the water area. In the past decade, **69%** of toddler drowning deaths in home pools and spas involved lack of maintenance of the pool or spa barrier as a contributing factor, according to Life Saving Victoria's recently released Victorian Drowning Report.

The Swimming Pool and Spa Association (SPASA) Victoria's CEO Brendan Watkins reiterated the importance of pool and spa owners conducting regular checks to ensure that their barriers are in correct working order. "Pool and spa barriers tend to wear and tear over time. Rust and damage can prevent gates from self-closing or self-latching and ground movement can cause gaps underneath the barrier," said Mr Watkins.

In response to the Victorian Governments proposed changes to the states swimming pool and spa barrier laws as part of the Building Regulations Sunset Review, a number of organisations including Kidsafe Victoria, SPASA Victoria and Life Saving Victoria, have stressed the importance of introducing measures such as a mandatory pool and spa register and mandatory pool and spa barrier inspection system in Victoria, to effectively reduce the rate of childhood drowning in home pools and spas.

The reminder has been issued as part of Water Safety Week which is being celebrated from 4 – 10 December 2017 by Victorian aquatic agencies.

Is Your Pool or Spa Barrier Safe?



- Take 15 minutes to check the safety of your pool barrier at the beginning of summer to ensure it is safe and in correct working order - you could just save a life.

IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS HAVE YOU CHECKED TO ENSURE THAT:

- Children are closely supervised by an adult at all times around the pool/spa?
- All gates and doors that lead into the pool area are **self-closing**?
- All gates and doors that lead into the pool area are **self-latching**?
- The pool gate is **never propped open**?
- Your safety barrier is **free of gaps, holes, or spaces** that a child could try to get through?
- The area surrounding your pool barrier **free of climbable objects** - e.g. BBQs, tree stumps, chairs?

To complete a comprehensive home pool safety assessment and find out more information on pool fencing legislation and the responsibilities of pool owners, please visit www.kidsafevic.com.au

Kidsafe Victoria's Life Saving Summer Pool Party Safety Tips - Plan Your Pool Party and Keep Children Safe.

- **Children require active adult supervision around water at all times.** For toddlers, this means having an adult within arm's reach. **If you have to leave the water area for any reason, take the children with you.**
- For backyard BBQ's and pool parties, it can be a good idea to appoint a designated supervisor or supervisors to keep watch of children in and around water. This role can be shared throughout the day so that everyone can enjoy the festivities.
- Never prop the pool gate open – it might seem like a convenient idea to prop the gate open to allow people easy access to carry things like food and drinks into the area, however this can also allow children easy and often unsupervised access to the pool area.
- Toddlers can drown in as little as a few centimetres of water, so be mindful of other potential drowning hazards including esky's with melted ice, inflatable/portable pools, buckets and even pet's drinking bowls.
- Keep sun safe by following SunSmart's 5 steps – Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide!
- Learn CPR and update your skills regularly. **Resuscitation posters kept near pools are a good reminder.**

For more information on Kidsafe Victoria's 'Safe Barriers Save Lives' campaign and child water safety, please visit <http://www.kidsafevic.com.au/water-safety/pool-fence-safety>.



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Kidsafe Victoria's 'Safe Barriers Save Lives' campaign is proudly supported by SPASA Victoria, Safetech Hardware, Protector Aluminium and the Play it Safe by the Water Committee.