



NEWS RELEASE

Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein

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BURSTEIN ISSUES ALERT FOR WATER SAFETY, DROWNING DANGERS

Hot Weather Reinforces Need for Safety, Smart Decisions Around Water

ERIE COUNTY, NY— Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein today called attention to the need for increased vigilance and awareness when swimming or enjoying other water-related recreational activities following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) issuance of a report stating that drowning is a leading cause of unintentional death worldwide, and the highest rates are among children.¹ While drowning deaths have declined in the United States in the last decade, drowning remains the leading cause of injury death among children aged 1-4 years.² The highest unintentional drowning rates occurred among children younger than 4 years old and the death rate for males was nearly four times that for females. Nonfatal and fatal drowning incidents occurred most commonly on weekends and during June-August. Among children younger than 4 years, many fatal and nonfatal drowning incidents occurred in swimming pools and bathtubs.

“With hot weather once again here, many people will be heading to the water to cool off,” **said Dr. Burstein.** “Whether swimming, boating, or enjoying the water some other way, everyone needs to think safety and common sense first. Children should always be supervised around water, lifejackets should be used by boaters and jet-skiers, and swimming should not take place in dangerous or restricted areas.”

To prevent drowning, CDC recommends that all parents and children should learn survival swimming skills. Research shows that early formal swimming lessons reduce risk of drowning among children aged 1-4 years. Additionally, environmental protections (such as isolation pool fences and lifeguards) should be in place; alcohol should be avoided while swimming, boating, water skiing, or supervising children; lifejackets should be used by all boaters and weaker swimmers; and all caregivers and supervisors should have training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Information regarding drowning risk factors and prevention strategies is available at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/water-safety/index.html>
<http://www.cdc.gov/safechild>

¹ Peden M, Oyegbite K, Ozanne-Smith J, et al, eds. World report on child injury prevention. Geneva, Switzerland; World Health Organization; 2008. Available at

http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/child/injury/world_report/report/en/ir

² CDC. Web-Based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS). Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, CDC; 2012. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/index.html>

To access the CDC report, visit:

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6119a4.htm?s_cid=mm6119a4_e

For more information on the Erie County Department of Health, visit <http://www2.erie.gov/health>

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