

Clark County Health District
625 Shadow Lane
Las Vegas, NV 89106
(702) 385-1291

News Release

Contact: Jennifer Sizemore
(702) 383-1225

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Drowning Incidents Involving Children Increase by 133 Percent for Clark County

(Las Vegas, Nev. – April 19, 1999) – In 1998 fourteen children drowned in Clark County. This is a dramatic increase from the six reported fatal incidents of 1997. In an effort to reduce the number of accidental deaths by drowning in Southern Nevada this summer, and to promote awareness, the Clark County Health District has kicked off its Drowning Prevention Campaign.

Child drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental death in southern Nevada, according to child injury prevention experts. It is sometimes called the “Silent Death” because there is often no cry for help and very little sound from splashing. Mary Ellen Britt, a public health nurse with the emergency medical services division of the Health District states, “There was a total of 52 reported near-drownings or drownings last year. These incidents are preventable and we want to get this message out to all the residents of Clark County.”

“Constant Supervision is the Answer,” is the theme of this year’s campaign. The message is simple – an accident can happen in the time that it takes to answer the telephone.

(more)

The majority of these tragedies happen when one or both parents are at home to supervise their children, and the victim was last seen in the house or away from the pool area. A tragic death is not the only consequence of a drowning incident. Of children surviving near-drownings, 5-20 percent suffer severe and permanent disability.

The facts show that the majority of drowning deaths occur in the family pool, but any amount of standing water can pose a hazard. The most common drowning victim is three years of age or younger. The abilities of toddlers change on a daily basis and it is important to ensure that there is not a lapse in supervision.

In addition to supervision, experts recommend "layers of protection." A non-climbable five-foot fence that separates a pool or spa from the residence should be installed and openings should not be more than four inches wide so children cannot squeeze through the spaces. Gates should be self-latching and never left unlocked. Other recommended precautions include pool safety covers, CPR training, and rescue equipment.

The Clark County Health District and its co-sponsors, Rainbow Medical Centers, Bubble Swim School, and the Safe Kids Coalition stress that these precautions are recommended to help prevent accidents, and should not be used as a substitute for constant supervision. Brochures with more information and suggestions for protecting children from drowning accidents will be placed at hospitals, pediatric offices, the Health District and various other locations throughout the community.

For more information contact the Clark County Health District at (702) 383-1217 or Safe Kids Coalition at (702) 731-8666.

####