

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Clark County Health District kicks off annual drowning awareness campaign

(May 16, 2002) – The Clark County Health District has kicked off its annual drowning prevention and awareness campaign, once again stressing adult supervision. To date there have been 2 drownings and 14 near drownings this year in Clark County. Last year eight children drowned in Clark County and 59 near-drownings were reported.

“For the first time since 1994, our rate of drownings for children 0-4 years of age was below the national average. While this is a significant improvement, these accidents can almost always be prevented with proper adult supervision and we want to get this information out to all the residents of Clark County,” said Dr. Donald Kwalick, chief health officer for the health district.

In order to instill this message in the minds of Clark County residents, the health district, along with the SAFE KIDS Coalition, Clark County Department of Community Resources and other community partners, sponsors an annual drowning prevention campaign. The message of the campaign is simple, “Constant Adult Supervision is the Answer. . . Prevent Drownings.”

The reality is that an incident can happen in the time it takes to answer the telephone and a tragic death is not the only consequence of a drowning. Of children surviving near-drownings, 20 percent of those hospitalized suffer severe and permanent disability. The majority of these tragedies happen between 4 and 7 p.m., 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.

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The facts also show the majority of drowning deaths occur in a pool or spa, but any amount of water can pose a hazard. The most common drowning victims (approximately 80 percent) are four years of age or younger. The abilities of preschoolers change on a daily basis and it is especially important to ensure 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 power-operated pool safety covers, rescue equipment and CPR training. While these safeguards are important, the health district stresses that these precautions are recommended to help prevent drownings, and should not be used as a substitute for constant supervision.

For more information, contact the Clark County Health District at (702) 383-1217.

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