

## Injury Prevention Coalition Fact Sheet on Drowning in Lee County, Florida

- Residential swimming pools are the location of 64% or nearly two-thirds of the drowning deaths in Florida for the 0-4 age group (FDOH).
- Seniors most often drown while swimming “alone” despite advanced swimming skills
- Adults between 25 and 45 most often drown in open water (FDOH)
- Pool drowning death data for Florida 2001-2005 is available at the following link [www.doh.state.fl.us/injury/drowningprevention.html](http://www.doh.state.fl.us/injury/drowningprevention.html).
- 4/5 of the pools and spas in Florida counties were built before the Residential Swimming Pool Safety Act went into effect in October 2000 (FDOH). The act did not require retroactive safety measures for the existing pools and spas. Data shows the number of drownings has not changed, but the percentage of drownings to pools and population is down.
- Children can drown in only an inch of water. Most children under age one drown in mop buckets, bathtubs, toilets, and other small containers of standing water (Safe Kids) [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)
- Children 1-4 most often drown in pools, spas, hot tubs and decorative ponds (CDC) [www.wonder.cdc.gov](http://www.wonder.cdc.gov)
- Children 5-14 most often drown in pools and open water, such as lakes, ponds, canals and the Gulf or Ocean (CDC)

The following data comes from the Lee County Medical Examiner death certificates and the Florida Department of Health.

- There were an average of 12 deaths by drowning per year in Lee County during the 25 years prior to 2000 (LCME)
- In the five years including 2000 through 2005 the average annual number of drowning deaths in Lee County increased to nearly 20 (LCME)
- Approximately one quarter of Lee County drowning deaths are children under the age of 5 (LCME)
- Drowning “season” is March through September in Florida, signified by doubling of the drowning rate, but new data shows children ages 1-4 drown year-round without any significant increase during any “season.” (FDOH)
  - ❖ Statewide *drowning* is the leading cause of death for children under 5 (*Florida Charts, 2007*). [www.floridacharts.com/charts/chart.aspx](http://www.floridacharts.com/charts/chart.aspx)
  - ❖ Nationally *drowning* is a leading cause of death for children under 5 (*NDPA, 2007*). [www.ndpa.org](http://www.ndpa.org)
  - ❖ Drowning is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for children 14 and under (*CDC, 2007*).

The majority of toddler drownings occur while a family member is “watching” the child at his or her home, the grandparent’s home, a friend’s home or a relative’s home. Before discovered missing, the child was last seen less than 11 minutes ago

(FDOH). That's why layers of protection are imperative, since each layer buys a parent precious minutes to locate a missing child before tragedy strikes.

- Toddler drownings also frequently occur in a spa or decorative water feature. Most children drown during the weekend while both parents are home.

Often young children experienced a first on the occasion of ending up in the water, according to parent interviews.

- It was the first time he/she opened the door
  - It was the first time he/she walked
  - It was the first time he/she crawled
  - It was the first time he/she pulled himself up
  - It was the first time he/she climbed out of the crib
  - It was the first time he/she didn't stay with "me"
- ❖ There are approximately 4,000 drowning incidents per year in the US, and at least 4 times that many near-drownings (*CDC and Hospital Discharge Records, AHCA*).
  - ❖ Drowning is "the **silent** killer." Most often there is no cry for help, and very little sound from splashing. (*ARC*)
  - ❖ A person can develop cold-related illness even when temperatures are not extreme. In Southwest Florida cold emergencies occur when air temperatures are as high as 74 and water temperatures as high as 80 degrees Fahrenheit (*ARC Life Guard Instruction*). Occurrence depends on the victim's physical activity, the wind, humidity, general working or living conditions, age and state of health.
  - ❖ Active, healthy adults swimming in water at or below 78 degrees with air temperatures at or below 68 degrees Fahrenheit can experience rapid onset of cold related illness. (*ARC*)
  - ❖ Wind increases the risk of hypothermia because it can carry away heat faster than the body can generate heat. When people get wet or fall in water, cold water can accelerate heat loss 25-fold. (*ARC*)

High wind may cause bigger waves and rough seas, as well as turbulence. Rough water is more difficult to safely swim in and can knock a wading adult or child off his/her feet. Turbulence under the water makes it difficult to see beneath the surface.