

Press Release
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Water safety plea for parents and caregivers

Be within sight and reach of young children, be aware of all potential water hazards, put appropriate safety precautions in place and be prepared.

That's the plea from WaterSafe Auckland (WAI) and Safekids New Zealand (Safekids) in an effort to avoid adding to a rising child drowning toll with the Christmas New Year holiday period still to play out.

"Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury death for children in New Zealand," says Safekids New Zealand director Ann Weaver, "and already this year 13 children under the age of five have drowned."

The good news is that drowning is preventable and as holiday plans are made WAI and Safekids want parents and caregivers to think about the simple things they can do to help keep their children safe from drowning.

"Most importantly," says WAI Business Manager Teresa Stanley, "is that they should always ensure there is a designated adult to actively supervise children at all times and that means being within sight and reach, and without distraction."

You can also help minimise the risks by identifying potential water hazards and addressing them where possible she says.

"This includes the portable spa or swimming pool that might be lurking under your Christmas tree that will also need to be fenced, just like an in-ground pool," says Teresa.

With a little planning and care families can enjoy their time around water these holidays.

ENDS

For more information, contact

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Safety tips to keep children safer around water this summer

- Always ensure there is a designated adult actively supervising young children anywhere near water, especially at social gatherings.
- A supervisor must be a responsible, capable adult or caregiver over the age of 16 years.
- Never over-estimate a child's ability to cope in the open water environment (e.g. beach) even if they have had swimming lessons. They are very different environments.
- Your children are your responsibility at pools or beaches even if lifeguards are present.
- Learn about beach safety, choose to swim at a patrolled beach and swim between the flags.
- Water toys can provide hours of fun but learn how to use them safely.
- Be aware of your Council compliance responsibility to keep your pool safer and remember that this also includes inflatable swimming and spa pools.
- Know child and infant CPR.
- If you are travelling to a new destination familiarise yourself with the environment and identify any potential risks to your children, such as waterholes or ponds.
- Create safe play areas and establish safe water play rules with your children, such as always having an adult with them when they are in on or around water.
- Any container that can contain 40mm or more of water, such as rainwater containers, paddling pools or rubbish bins are all potential hazards. Empty after use and store them away.

WaterSafe Auckland is the acknowledged lead agency for water safety coordination and education in the Auckland region. As one of the four service delivery amenities under the Auckland Regional Amenities Funding Act 2008, WaterSafe Auckland is mandated by the ratepayers of Auckland to deliver water safety education to meet the needs of those living in and visiting the region. www.watersafe.org.nz

Safekids New Zealand is a service of Starship Children's Health, established in the early 1990s by Starship Children's Health Trauma Service to help reduce the high rates of preventable injury to children. www.safekids.org.nz