

LOSS CONTROL BULLETIN SWIMMING POOL SAFETY

On a national level, drowning is the fourth leading cause of death to children under age five. In the states of California, Florida, Arizona and Texas, it is the leading cause of accidental death to children under five. More than 300 children under five drown each year and more than 2000 in the same age group are treated for submersion injuries such as brain damage.

With a swimming pool in your manufactured home community, safety is of paramount importance. Management needs to be keenly aware of children left unattended in or near the pool area. In order to reduce the possibility of a drowning in your community, it is imperative that proper fences, gates and safety procedures are in place and management should designate someone to be responsible for keeping an eye on the pool and conducting periodic inspections of the pool and enclosure. The following are minimum guidelines to be followed. These may vary according to local codes so you should check with your local government for their requirements.

- Fences or barriers should be at least 48" (preferably 60" to 72") high with no foot or handholds that could help a child climb it. Some local codes may require a height of 60" to 72".
- Vertical members should be less than 4 inches apart and no more than 2 inches from the ground.
- Chain-link fence should be equipped with wire mesh, slats or other means to prevent openings from being used as a climbing device.
- Gates should be the same height as the fence or barrier, self-closing and self-latching, and open outward from the pool.
- Gates should be: locked when the pool is not in use; unable to be blocked open or disabled to prevent closing; and located at the shallow end of the pool.
- A visual check of the perimeter enclosure and safety equipment should be conducted at a minimum of twice a day and when opening and closing the pool.
- If a safety cover is used, it should have a continuous connection between the pool and deck to keep children from entering.
- Pool rules should be posted clearly and enforced.
- Any defect or damage to the perimeter enclosure (fence or gate) must be repaired immediately.

In addition to the above, proper life saving equipment should be available and include a life ring, throw ring and shepherd hook. A telephone near the pool is also essential.

Again, the above guidelines are not meant to be all-inclusive and you need to check your local codes to make sure you are in compliance.

Remember, a small child can drown in the same time it takes to answer the telephone and most young victims are out of sight for less than five minutes. By enforcing effective guidelines in your community for fences and barriers, and having property safety procedures in place, you can possibly save a child's life.