

Be Water Safe

By Rick Bunzel



Mountain View Property Inspections

As spring's temperatures increase; lakes, reservoirs and pools become popular recreation locations. And a reminder surfaces in the minds of police, fire and EMS personnel: it is drowning season. Each year in the U.S. about 200 children drown and several thousand others are treated in hospitals for submersion accidents, accidents that leave children with permanent brain damage and respiratory health problems. Children have a natural curiosity and attraction to water and it only takes a few seconds for a child to get into trouble. In Boulder County, we have reservoirs, ponds, and water running through ditches. These, in addition to pools, backyard "water features" and hot tubs can make it challenging for parents to protect their children. Here are some tips from Mountain View Property Inspections to help keep your children safe.

- If you own a pool you must put up a fence or barrier to separate your house from the pool. Most young children quickly master how to open doors and get to the pool area before their parents are aware. Install a fence or nylon barrier at least 4 feet high around all 4 sides of the pool. Use gates that self-close and self-latch, with latches higher than your children's reach. Survey the kid's toys to see if they can be used to scale the fence. I once watched my children use a "Little Tykes" picnic table to get to the top of the fence between my home and pool.
- Never leave your children alone in, or near the pool, hot tub or lake, even for a moment. Even when you are in the vicinity, you must be vigilant. During social gatherings at a pool or lake, appoint a "designated watcher" to protect young children from drowning accidents. Adults may take turns being the "watcher." When adults become preoccupied, children are at risk. If a child is missing, check the pool or lake first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability. I was once at a pool party and a 3 year old fell into the pool. The adults closest to the child didn't hear him fall in; it was an adult across the pool that noticed the child was no longer standing on the edge. Fortunately, no more than a few seconds had lapsed and the child was quickly rescued.
- If you have a spa or hot tub make sure it has a cover with childproof latches. Even with childproof latches watch your children when they are playing near the spa to see if they are playing with the latches. As any parent knows it's only a matter of time before a child defeats a "childproof latch."
- Consider a safety cover for your pool that meets the standards of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM). These covers add

additional protection but should not be used in place of the fence between your house and the pool.

- Do not use air-filled "swimming aids or floaties" as a substitute for approved life vests.
- Remove all toys from the pool, hot tub or lake after use so children aren't tempted to reach for them.
- Take a portable phone with you out to the pool or hot tub. Many drownings occur when parents are distracted by a phone call. If you do get a call, always keep your children in sight. Better yet, make the children get out of the pool while you are on the phone.
- Teaching your child how to swim DOES NOT mean your child is safe in the water.
- Learn CPR and be able to rescue a child if needed.

Supervision and vigilance are the key words when it comes to pool, hot tub or lake safety. Have fun, enjoy the water and stay alert!

Rick Bunzel is the Principle Inspector at Mountain View Property Inspections. If you would like to know more about safety in your home go to **WWW.MVPinspection.com** If you have questions or comments, Rick Bunzel can be contacted at Mountain View Property Inspections @ 303-443-9063 or Mvpinspection@comcast.net