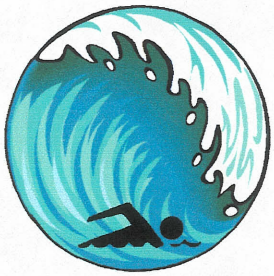

WATER AWARENESS TRAINING FOR CHILDREN IN THE HOME

Firefighters and paramedics have heard too often, "It happened so fast!" Unfortunately, a few seconds is all it takes for your child to drown. The purpose of **W**ater **A**wareness **T**raining for **C**hildren in the **H**ome (W.A.T.C.H.), a community awareness and education program, is to reduce the number of drownings and near-drownings to children five and under that occur in or around the home.

Unlike other programs, W.A.T.C.H. urges BOTH the ADULTS and CHILDREN to be responsible and actively participate in water safety. Each year throughout Los Angeles County almost 120 people lose their lives in drowning accidents, most of these victims are children. Most of these tragic accidents occurred in backyard pools, spas and bathtubs. Since most of these incidents involve children, the W.A.T.C.H program is vitally important.

POOL DROWNING FACTS

- In Los Angeles County, drowning is the leading cause of death for children between ages of 1 and 5.
- In 1992, there were approximately 80 drowning deaths involving small children.
- Backyard swimming pools account for approximately 70% of all drownings in the home with the other 30% occurring in bathtubs, sinks, buckets and other bodies of water.
- There are a greater number of near-drownings which result in permanent disabling injuries.
- **A child can drown in the time it takes to answer a phone; 77% of the victims had been missing for sight for 5 minutes or less.**
- 65% of accidents occurred in the pool owned by the child's family.
- 33% of the accidents occurred in homes of friends and relatives where the child was a guest.
- **Remember, children can drown in just inches of water.**

W.A.T.C.H. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

The Five Step W.AT.C.H. program is very simple and works like this:

Step 1 W.A.T.C.H. asks that adults discuss with thier children the potential of drowning and near-rowning accidents occurring at home. Note, that pools and bath tubs pose the greatest threat.

Step 2 Adults take the children on a HOME WATER HAZARD HUNT, pointing out hazards along the way. Starting with the INSIDE of the home, using the W.A.T.C.H. checklist as a guide.

Step 3 Adults take the children on a HOME WATER HAZARD HUNT, pointing out hazards along the way. On the OUTSIDE of the house, using the W.A.T.C.H. checklist as a guide.

Step 4 Adults instruct the children to **always have a designated "Watch Buddy" before entering a swimming pool, bathtub or other body of water.** Their designated Watch Buddy will be responsible for supervising all of their water activities. Their "Watch Buddy" would be in close proximity to the child and keep their eyes on them **AT ALL TIMES.** Instruct the child that if for any reason his or her "Watch Buddy" leaves the area, the child is simply instructed to **YELL AND SCREAM and IMMEDIATELY – GET OUT OF THE WATER OR HAVE THEIR WATCH BUDDY PULL THEM OUT!** This not only makes the adult accountable for the child's safety, but also asks the child to be responsible as well.

Step 5 Ensure that **EVERYONE** in the household **knows what to do** and **how to get help** if a drowning or near-drowning accident should occur. The county of Los Angeles Fire Department believes that working together we can make a difference in preventing these tragic drownings and near-drownings from continuing to take the lives of our children.

ADULT SUPRVISION

- Never take your eyes off a child when he or she is in or near any body of water, even for a second.
- Don't rely solely on barriers, such as fences or walls. There is no substitute for constant supervision.
- Don't rely on inflatable devices to keep your child afloat. These are not substitutes for adult supervision.
- Never, allow children to be alone near a pool; always make sure a 'WATCH BUDDY" is present.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FIND A CHILD IN TROUBLE IN WATER

- Yell for help and get the child out of the water
- Call 9-1-1 immediately for emergency medical assistance
- Begin CPR, if you are trained
- If you are not trained in CPR, follow instructions from the Fire Department until they arrive to help you (you may also refer to emergency instructions in your local telephone book).

REMEMBER

- Educate all family member on how to call 9-1-1 in an emergency.
- Encourage all adults and older children to receive CPR and first aid training.

W.A.T.C.H HOME HAZARD HUNT CHECKLIST – INSIDE THE HOME

Bathroom

- ☐ Keep toilet seats down
- ☐ Keep bathroom doors closed
- ☐ Empty; buckets and other containers of all liquids immediately after use
- ☐ Drain sinks and tubs immediately after use
- ☐ Tubs should have a non-slip surface

Kitchen

- ☐ Keep kitchen doors closed.
- ☐ Empty; buckets and other containers of all liquids immediately after use
- ☐ Drain sinks immediately after use

Garage

- ☐ Empty; buckets and other containers of all liquids immediately after use
- ☐ Drain sinks immediately after use
- ☐ Keep clothes washer and dryer lids and doors closed

W.A.T.C.H. HOME HAZARD HUNT CHECKLIST – OUTSIDE THE HOME

- ☐ A fence that is at least 5 ft. high should completely surround the pool or area
- ☐ Any gate that allows entry into the pool area should be self closing and have a self-latching mechanism that is out of reach of children
- ☐ The fence should allow for a clear view of the pool with no vertical opening of more than 4 inches wide.
- ☐ Fences should have no foot or hand holds that young children could climb
- ☐ All standing water should be removed from pool covers
- ☐ Pool covers should be completely removed when not in use
- ☐ Steps and ladders leading to above ground pools must be secured, locked or removed when not in use
- ☐ All pets, toys and other children's play things should be kept out of the pool area

For information on swimming pool fences and protection requirements, contact your local Building and Safety Office. For additional information regarding pool safety, contact the County of Los Angeles Fire Department, Community Relations Office at (323) 881-2411.

REMEMBER – *W.A.T.C.H.* The Children!