

Designate a Water Watcher

Supervision Could Save a Life

Water Safety USA, a consortium of 14 national governmental and non-governmental organizations, announces the 2017 water safety message: “Designate a water watcher—supervision could save a life.”



The alliance of water safety organizations agrees that designating a water watcher when in, on, or around water can help prevent tragedy, especially during the summer months. All parents and guardians can benefit by designating a water watcher who takes on the role of ensuring that all children and adolescents swimming or playing in, on, or around water are continually supervised, even if they know how to swim.

“If everyone is assigned to water watching, sadly it sometimes means that no one is watching, which can lead to tragedy,” began Tina Dessart, the USA Swimming Foundation’s Make a Splash Program Director. “Designating a single person, who is without distractions, is much more likely to ensure safety.” Outdoor excursions and activities have many great mental health benefits too. Greenery has a positive impact on the mind after only five minutes. And doesn’t that rolling scenery look so much better than the television screen in your gym?

Drowning is the second leading cause of unintentional injury deaths for children 1–14 years of age. Three children die every day as a result of drowning, a death that is preventable. To continue safe swimming for all ages, young children or inexperienced swimmers need to be within arm's reach of an adult at all times. Young children should also be supervised by an adult constantly while in the bath, as infants have lost their lives while a head was turned away from the tub.

An appropriate water watcher is someone who:

- is 16 years old or older (adults preferred)
- is alert and not under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- has the skills, knowledge, and ability to recognize and rescue someone in distress
OR can immediately alert a capable adult nearby

- knows CPR or can alert someone nearby who knows CPR
- has a working phone to dial 9-1-1
- has a floating and/or reaching object that can be used in a rescue

The public should be aware that a water watcher is NOT a substitute for a lifeguard. Adults should choose a lifeguard-protected area, but always designate a water watcher, as drowning can even happen in the presence of lifeguards. In many cases, drowning happens quickly and quietly. Most fatal drownings happen when there is poor or absent supervision.

To learn more about how to keep children safe in, on, or around water or for more information about water watchers, visit www.watersafetyusa.org today.

