

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Make Pool-time – a Safe-time!

Coldwater, MI – The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency offers advice for all residents on how to stay safe while enjoying swimming pools this summer. According to Rebecca Burns, Environmental Health Director for the tri-county health department, “Most drownings involving children and adults, as well as general pool-related injuries and infections, can be prevented by following a few precautions.” The health department offers the following:

- **Designate an adult to monitor the pool area.** An adult should always be present and aware of who is in the pool at all times. Never leave a child alone in the pool, even if the child can swim. If a child is missing – look in the pool first. Don’t waste precious time looking elsewhere.
- **Know CPR.** CPR saves lives. If you are a pool owner, be sure to learn CPR.
- **Use a barrier or fence** to prevent children from falling into the pool and to minimize opportunities for unsupervised activities to occur while you are away.
- **Keep the pool deck clear.** Toys and floats can be tempting to children; and don’t rely on water wings or toy flotation devices as life preservers for children. Remove any items from the pool deck that could become a trip hazard.
- **Diving don’ts.** Never slide headfirst or dive into an above-ground pool. Don’t dive from a pool deck unless the water is at least five feet deep. For maximum safety never dive from a diving board unless the water is at least 11 feet deep.

- **Teach children to respect lifeguards and follow the rules.** Review rules with children when arriving at the pool. Demonstrate by your actions that the lifeguard's instructions are to be followed.
- **Keep sick kids out of a pool,** even if it's filtered and chlorinated. Adults should also stay out of the water until well after they recover from diarrhea or other illness. Remove contact lenses before entering the water to reduce risk of eye infection.
- **Empty shallow wading pools after each use** as a way to prevent accidents and minimize infections associated with stagnant water.
- **Stay out of the pool and off wet ground when thunder or lightning approaches.**
- **Pools don't mix with alcohol or drugs.** Be extra cautious with anyone under the influence.

Likewise, Ms. Burns cautions pool owners to follow directions regarding pool chemical safety. She states, "While pool chemicals can serve a purpose to keep the pool water clean, they can become a significant hazard when not stored or handled properly. Mishandling pool chemicals can lead to fires, toxic fumes and injuries." Residents with pools are encouraged to follow these tips for safe handling of pool chemicals:

- **Educate yourself about pool chemicals** - read product labels and directions before each use and follow manufacturer's instructions. Never unseal more than one container at a time and never mix different types of pool chemicals together; do not mix old and fresh chemicals, even if they are the same product.
- **Use only pool chemicals in original, labeled containers** – never use a chemical from an unlabeled container.
- **Use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)** and keep that equipment clean and available for use.
- **Use dry tools to handle pool chemicals;** use a separate, designated tool for each pool chemical - never use a tool or piece of equipment for more than one chemical and wash hands after working with these chemicals.

- **If you spill the chemicals, know how to clean it up and do it immediately.**
Never pour chemicals down the drain or sewer. Contact the health department if you are unsure of how to dispose of chemicals safely.
- **Do not store or consume food or beverages near handling locations. Never smoke while handling pool chemicals.**

Swimming pools can be a lot of fun on a hot summer day, whether you're lounging and floating for a few hours, or playing any number of family water games. The majority of swimming pool accidents can be prevented with education and attentiveness when swimming or preparing your pool for use.

The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency has posted new signage and educational information at its website at www.bhsj.org - under the Environmental Health tab. Simply click on the 'Swimming Pools' hyperlink to access this information. Be sure to use these ready-made materials to help educate your guests and keep your pool-time a safe-time!

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