



Pool Safety

Whether you have a luxury in-ground pool, or plan to blow up an inflatable kiddie pool, it is important to consider the safety implications.

There are an estimated 7.4 million swimming pools and five million hot tubs in residential or public use in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Furthermore, there are over 3,400 fatal unintentional drownings in the United States each year, with more than one out of five drowning victims being a child 14 years old or younger, according to the CDC.

If you have a pool, the I.I.I. recommends taking the following safety precautions:

1. Install a four-sided barrier such as a fence with self closing gates to completely surround the pool. If the house forms the fourth side of the barrier, install alarms on doors leading to the pool area to prevent children from wandering into the pool or spa unsupervised. In addition to the fences or other barriers required by many towns, consider creating several "layers of protection" around the pool, in other words setting up as many barriers (door alarms, locks and safety covers) as possible to the pool area when not in use.
2. Never leave small children unsupervised—even for a few seconds. And never leave toys or floats in the pool when not in use as they may prove to be a deadly temptation for toddlers trying to reach them who might then fall into the pool.
3. Keep children away from pool filters and other mechanical devices as the suction force may injure them or prevent them from surfacing. In case of an emergency, know how to shut off these devices and clearly post this information so others can do so too.
4. Ask if pool users know how to swim. Learners should be accompanied by a good swimmer. If you have children, have them take swimming lessons as early as possible. And, do not allow anyone to swim alone.
5. Check the pool area regularly for glass bottles, toys or other potential accident hazards. Also, keep CD players, radios and other electrical devices away from pools or nearby wet surfaces.
6. Limit alcohol use around the pool, as drinking alcoholic beverages negatively impacts balance, coordination and judgment—and its effects are further heightened by sun exposure and heat. The CDC reports that alcohol use is involved in up to half of adolescent and adult deaths associated with water recreation.
7. Clearly post emergency numbers on the phone, in the event of an accident. Keep a first aid kit, ring buoys and reaching poles near the pool. You may also want to consider learning basic water rescue skills, including first aid and CPR training. For additional information, contact the American Red Cross.