

The 5 Ls of Water Safety for Your Family
By Mick Nelson, MA & Sue Nelson, BS
Total Aquatic Programming, LLC / www.totalaquatic.llc



Summer is here but not at all what we anticipated. Over 500 public pools are not opening this summer and the little pop-up or inflatable backyard pools are selling out as fast as stores can get them ordered. This has the potential to be a real hazard for children, as well as their parents and other adults who are responsible to keep them safe around the water.

Drownings happen in lakes, rivers, oceans, ponds, pools (both residential and public), hot tubs and bathtubs, waterparks, ditches, buckets, toilets, coolers, wells, and other places you really would not imagine. The stats are available at our website. We have tracked drownings for the past 12 years and keep our numbers updated monthly at our website www.totalaquatic.llc under the DROWNINGS tab.

We have categorized our tracking into age brackets:

- Children 4 years and younger
- Children 5 years through 12 years
- Teenagers (13-19)
- Adults (20 and older)

We also track male and female and comparisons among Hispanic and African American ethnic groups. Other tracking includes situations: fishing, autos, emotional reaction, grandparents involved, rip currents, life jackets not worn, guards present, alcohol (drugs) involved, flooding, unsafe pool ladders, and more.

Our focus for backyard pools is how we can be safer by following simple, yet extremely important, reminders. We refer to these reminders as the 5 Ls:

1. **Lessons**
2. **Locks**
3. **Latches**
4. **Ladders**
5. **Life Vests**



Swim Lessons for toddlers and children are important. Consider that over 50% of adults do not know how to swim. Additionally, if either mom or dad does not know how to swim, the children have only an 18% chance of being enrolled in swimming lessons. We look at this as a 20-year fix; we need to start requiring every child to learn to swim before they leave third grade!

But even after lessons, we all must be vigilant in watching children every minute. This includes parents, grandparents, and babysitters. Your home pool, the neighbors pool, and the pond close by are all potential dangers to our children. When you have children around water there must be at least two sets of adult eyes on them 100% of the time. Remember, there are no do-overs when it comes to water accidents.

We must also address drowning prevention through education and awareness. Talk about water safety. We teach children that stoves are hot, bottles of cleaning fluids are poison, and electrical outlets are dangerous, but we do not talk enough about being safe around water. There is a difference between being paranoid and responsible. There is nothing wrong with frequently talking about water safety with children and those who are responsible for them.

PREVENTATION through EDUCATION & AWARENESS

Child proof locks and latches in child's home.
2 locks = \$250 total and or 2 latches = \$25 total

Safety latch and hardware on pool fence gate –
with alarm options

Children must be kept in the home safely and out of pool areas when they don't belong there.

Over 98% of pool drownings occur at home. Over half are in above ground pools with unsafe ladders. Almost all of the drowning could have been prevented with Locks, Latches, and Safety Ladders (and fences)!

Life jackets / life vests are necessary, especially since **70% of all drownings occur in open water!** If you or your loved ones are going to be around open water, a lifejacket should always be worn. Open water is naturally perilous with uneven bottoms and drop offs; currents; slippery rocks, banks and

docks; boats, motors and fishing lines; and literally hundreds of other potentially dangerous situations.

Drowning is silent, but we can no longer remain silent! Learn. Share. Make a difference.

AUTHORS

Sue and Mick Nelson formed their own swim club and built an indoor pool facility in Danville, Illinois in 1972. From that time forward, they have been involved in all areas of the aquatic industry as business owners, educators, consultants and program leaders. Total Aquatic Programming, LLC (www.totalaquatic.llc) has unparalleled experience in aquatic programming for the entire community. Mick's specialty is business development, programming, water treatment and aquatic facility design. Sue's specialty is aquatic programming.