



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

August 17, 2011

CONTACT: Tom Christensen (619) 384-4154

PREVENTING A CHILD'S 'SILENT DEATH' ONLY AN ARMS-LENGTH AWAY *Summer's Almost Over but Home Drowning Risks Persist*

Labor Day weekend is fast approaching and families will be gathering for family barbecues or hitting the beach for one last blast of summer fun. Many of these festivities involve young children and bodies of water, and San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) and Rady Children's Hospital officials remind parents to be extra cautious to prevent accidental drowning.

"It only takes a few minutes for an unfortunate drowning to occur," said Supervisor Bill Horn, Chairman, San Diego County Board of Supervisors. "Tragically, we've lost six children under age 2 to accidental drowning in San Diego County this year. It's important for adults to maintain constant eye contact with children around water and be no farther than an arm's length away."

Two of those children died in a backyard pool, one in a jacuzzi, two in other backyard bodies of water and one in a bathtub. There were four accidental drownings, often called 'silent deaths' in 2010 and nine in 2009, all involving children under the age of 7.

"These tragedies often occur quickly and silently with most child victims missing from sight for less than five minutes," said Nick Macchione, Director, HHSA. "The County of San Diego and HHSA are committed to helping families ensure the safety of their children, a cornerstone of our Live Well, San Diego! 10-year health initiative."

Among children ages 1 to 4-years-old, most drownings occur in residential swimming pools, but it's also important to remember these tragedies have happened in as little as two inches of water. Adults must remain vigilant at all times around children and water.

Nationally, two children aged 14 and younger die from unintentional drowning every day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Drowning is the second leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 14 years. For every child who dies from drowning, another four receive emergency department care from near-drowning incidents.

"Non-fatal drowning victims can suffer brain damage that may result in long-term disabilities including long term disabilities," said Sue Cox, Director, Rady Children's Hospital Trauma Services. "It's important to remember seconds count. The quicker the response time, the better chance a child has of an improved outcome of a near-drowning."

###

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
1700 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 207 • SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-2472