

# SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# ***Legislator Spencer Encourages Residents to Make Water Safety a Priority this Summer***

**Centerport, NY** - With summer underway, Suffolk County Legislator William R. Spencer would like to offer residents pertinent safety tips to keep in mind while enjoying the pool and beach this season.

"Sadly already this year we've heard yet another heartbreaking story of a young child drowning in a backyard swimming pool accident in Suffolk County," said Legislator William R. Spencer, M.D. "Accidents can happen in just a matter of seconds. We must all vigilantly take precautions when around water sources and teach children to do the same. By being proactive you can help prevent a tragedy."

Each year approximately 3,500 people die in accidental drowning incidents in the United States. For every person that dies from drowning, 5 more will receive emergency medical care for swimming related injuries. That is why it is so important to reinforce safety measures for all swimmers hitting the pool or beach.

Most safety precautions are easy to follow, yet sometimes they may be overlooked due to carelessness. The Suffolk County Department of Fire Rescue and Emergency Services, the Red Cross, and Legislator Spencer offer the following rules to help make the pool and beach a fun and safe place to be:

### **RULES FOR THE POOL AND BEACH**

- The best preventative step to avoid drowning accidents and other related injuries is to take swimming lessons and to learn CPR. By taking lessons, adults and children are not only protecting themselves, but they will be prepared to help if an emergency situation arises. To locate a swimming or safety class in your area, visit <http://www.redcross.org/take-a-class/program-highlights/swimming>.
- Instruct babysitters about potential pool hazards to young children and about the use of protective devices, such as door alarms and latches. Emphasize the need for constant supervision.
- Never leave a child unsupervised near a pool. During social gatherings at or near a pool, appoint a "designated watcher" to protect young children from pool accidents. Adults may take turns being the watcher. When adults become preoccupied, children are at risk.
- If a child is missing, check the pool first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability. Go to the edge of the pool and scan the entire pool, bottom and surface, as well as the surrounding areas.
- Do not allow a young child in the pool without an adult. Teach older children to always swim with a buddy, never swim alone, and never push or jump on others.
- Do not consider young children to be drown-proof because they have had swimming lessons.

- Do not use flotation devices as a substitute for supervision.
- Keep rescue equipment by the pool. Be sure a telephone is poolside with emergency numbers posted nearby. Teach children to dial 9-1-1 and how to get help in an emergency. Make sure they know their address!
- Remove toys from in and around the pool when it is not in use. Toys can attract young children to the pool.
- Avoid alcohol before or during swimming, boating, or other water activities. Do not drink alcohol while supervising children.
- Check local weather conditions and the forecast before swimming or boating.
- Consider purchasing a pool alarm. A wide range of different alarms are available, capable of alerting you when the gate has been opened, or even detecting when a person enters the surface of the pool. Prices range with many affordable options on the market.
- Don't dive headfirst—protect your neck. Check for depth and obstructions before diving, and go in feet first the first time.

**Swimming in open water can be quite different than the pool, and can require different skills to stay safe.**

- Always swim at a lifeguard-protected beach, within the designated swimming area. Obey all instructions and orders from lifeguards, and know where the nearest lifeguard stand is.
- When at the beach, check conditions before entering the water. Check to see if any warning flags are up or ask a lifeguard about water conditions, beach conditions, or any potential hazards.
- If you swim out from shore, remember you have to swim back. Even if you're confident in your swimming skills, make sure you have enough energy to swim back to shore.
- Have young children or inexperienced swimmers wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets in and the around water. No one should use any other type of flotation device unless they are able to swim.
- Pay especially close attention to children and elderly persons when at the beach. Even in shallow water, wave action can cause a loss of footing.
- Keep a lookout for aquatic life. Water plants and animals may be dangerous. Avoid patches of plants. Leave animals alone.
- If you are caught in a rip current, stay calm and don't fight the current. Swim parallel to the shore until you are out of the current. Once you are free, turn and swim toward shore. If you can't swim to the shore, float or tread water until you are free of the rip current and then head toward shore
- Stay at least 100 feet away from piers and jetties. Permanent rip currents often exist near these structures.
- If someone is in trouble in the water, get help from a lifeguard. If a lifeguard is not available, have someone call 9-1-1. Throw the victim something that floats – a lifejacket, cooler, inflatable ball and yell instructions on how to escape the current.

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