



Strategic Goals and Objectives: Unintentional Drowning

OBJECTIVE 1: REDUCE WATER-RELATED INCIDENTS

The efforts of reducing water-related incidents focus on utilizing the three E's of Change: Engineering, Education and Enforcement, in addition to the focus on Block, Watch, Learn: Barriers, Supervision, and CPR and Swim lessons. These activities require community partnerships to develop and support comprehensive education programs and state-wide informational campaigns, in addition to strengthening codes and ordinances for barriers and safety measures.

Strategic Intervention 1.1: Increase public awareness about water safety in Arizona

Drowning is a leading cause of death among Arizona children ages 1-4. It is also a serious issue among adults. More than half of the water-related incidents involving individuals teenage and older end in fatality. The need for constant, consistent messages and education for all ages is a must.

Strategic Intervention 1.2: Increase awareness and enforcement of the Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act requirements

The Virginia Graeme Baker Pool and Spa Safety Act was passed to reduce the number of injuries and deaths attributed to unsafe drain covers. Children and adults nationwide have experienced life threatening injuries or have been killed simply because drain covers were not designed properly. Many parents and pool and spa owners are still not aware of the risk, and only 15 percent have installed the anti-vortex drain covers.

Strategic Intervention 1.3: Address the role of swimming lessons as a layer of protection

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) suggests "new evidence shows that children ages 1 to 4 may be less likely to drown if they have had formal swimming instruction." While the studies are small and do not define what type of lessons work best, it has been suggested that

parents decide whether to enroll an individual child in swim lessons based on a number of factors. The classes in no way should suggest a child becomes “drown proof” upon completion.

Strategic Intervention 1.4: Increase public awareness that standard CPR is still required for children age 8 and younger and victims of water-related incidents

When a person has a cardiac arrest, the heart stops beating, which then affects respiration and oxygen getting to the brain. When a person is in a drowning scenario, the initial issue is a respiration problem that then affects the heart and the brain. These differences are the critical reason why traditional CPR is performed in water-related incidents, rather than the “new” hands-only CPR, which is used in cases of cardiac arrest.

Strategic Intervention 1.5: Emphasize the importance of pool barriers as a layer of protection

“Layers of protection” means that multiple strategies or devices are used constantly and simultaneously. For residential pools and spas, the first line of physical defense is to restrict unauthorized access to the pool or spa area in its entirety. The barrier must be maintained and used properly 100 percent of the time.

OBJECTIVE 2: EXPAND THE DROWNING SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

Collecting data in water-related incidents help agencies identify trends. The research provides the evidence needed to establish educational campaigns and program development throughout the state, and could highlight needs for better enforcement or engineering.

Strategic Intervention 2.1: Expand statistical reporting throughout state

The Arizona Department of Health Services has been collecting water-related incident stats for Maricopa County since 1990. In 2009, Pima County also began collecting vital information that has allowed a more cohesive and comprehensive water safety campaigns. Accurate statewide reporting will allow Arizona to provide a more detailed picture of the drowning issue rather than only a simple snapshot of hotspots.

Strategic Intervention 2.2: Standardize the collection of water-related incident stats

The dependency on fire personnel to submit the drowning report form has allowed discrepancies in how and when to report. Additionally, software issues allows for miscoding of certain details, which forces additional research on the backend to ensure accuracy of the data.

Strategic Intervention 2.3: Address the surveillance system for reporting incidents at rivers and lakes in Arizona

Open water poses special dangers. Poor outcomes are more common when drowning occurs in open water settings because of the many factors involved. Tracking these incidents is critical. Identifying the appropriate jurisdiction and communicating across boundaries will aid in more accurate reporting.

Strategic Intervention 2.4: Define parameters in reporting adult water-related incidents

In the past 20 years, more attention has been given to the drowning issue involving children. However, it has been recognized that as numbers of water-related incidents for youth have gone down, the number of fatal water events involving adults has remained steady.