



June 27, 2015

Riverside County  
**NEWS RELEASE**

Contacts: Raymond Smith  
Public Information Officer  
(951) 955-1110

Jody Hagemann  
CA FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department  
Public Affairs Bureau  
(951) 940-6985

## **Event on Tuesday unveils county water safety campaign to combat child drownings**

In response to the disturbing number of recent drownings and near drownings among children in Riverside County, the Board of Supervisors, the county Fire Department and other officials will hold a press conference Tuesday at noon to unveil a countywide water safety campaign to help protect children.

Emergency responders in Riverside County reported 19 near drownings and two deaths between Jan. 1 and June 15 of 2014. So far this year, 21 non-fatal and five fatal incidents were reported – including the deaths of two children under age five.

“Drowning is the leading cause of death among children under the age of five, in our county and across California,” Supervisor John J. Benoit said. “We must do a better job protecting our children and we can only do that by engaging the entire community. Drowning IS preventable.”

The safety campaign is an effort among two dozen or more county departments, including Department of Public Health, Emergency Services Department, CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Department, the Children and Families Commission, the Park and Open Space District, the Department of Public Social Services and the Environmental Health Department. Agencies and companies outside county government also are being recruited to participate because of their interaction in the community.

“These statistics are frightening and tragic,” said CAL FIRE/Riverside County Fire Chief, John R. Hawkins. “Parents and all other adults must supervise children closely near the water. A second of distraction may end in tragedy.”

Drowning is a concern for any adult who cares for young children, even those who do not have a pool at their home. Young children can drown in just a couple of inches of water and, according to statistics from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 60 percent of all accidental death among infants under the age of one occur in a bathtub.

Even if a child survives, the future can be torturous for the victim and the family, said Dr. Cameron Kaiser, Riverside County’s public health officer. Near drowning can cause devastating neurological damage and long-term health impacts.

“We all need to work together to avoid these tragedies,” Kaiser said. “Someone surviving a drowning is a miracle – but it’s also a warning. We can all prevent drownings with just a few simple precautions.”

The media is invited to cover the event, scheduled for noon Tuesday (June 30) at the Riverside County Administrative Center, 4080 Lemon St. in Riverside. Officials from participating agencies and victims’ families will be available for interviews immediately following the press conference. Press kits will be available at the event.