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**GOVERNOR SCHWARZENEGGER PROCLAIMS MAY
"DROWNING PREVENTION MONTH"**

Following simple safety tips could save a life this summer

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SACRAMENTO – Governor Schwarzenegger has proclaimed May "Drowning Prevention Month," the California Department of Developmental Services (DDS) announced today. The Governor's proclamation will launch a six-month effort by DDS and the Drowning Prevention Foundation to raise awareness of risks that can lead to childhood drowning accidents.

"Drowning is a leading cause of injury-related deaths among children under the age of five," said Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. "Half of all child drowning accidents occur in home swimming pools, so we must be extremely vigilant when our children are playing in or around the pool.

"Over 4,000 children under age five drown every year in swimming pools nationwide," said DDS Director Terri Delgadillo. "Another 2,725 children end up in hospital emergency rooms after almost drowning.

In California, DDS serves 710 survivors of near-drowning accidents, most of them severely disabled with irreversible brain damage caused by being underwater and without oxygen."

Statistics for 2006 show 249 children under 16 suffered near-drowning accidents in California, many with serious consequences.

"Drowning can be prevented if people follow the safety guidelines designed to protect our children from this avoidable peril," Director Delgadillo added.

Prevention tips published by the Drowning Prevention Foundation include the following:

- **Keep a constant eye** on young children playing in or near any body of water, public pool, or bathtub. A child can drown in the time it takes to answer the telephone.
- **Never leave a child alone near water** while you answer the telephone or doorbell, attend to another child or for household chores, even for a few seconds.
- **Designate an adult to watch children at play** at large gatherings.

"Building Partnerships, Supporting Choices"

- **Fence your pool** on all four sides with a barrier that is at least five feet high. Move lawn chairs, tables and other potential climbing aids away from the fence to help keep out children. Any gate or door leading to the pool area should be self-closing and self-latching, opening outward, with the latch placed on the poolside and out of reach.
- **Install panic alarms on all house doors** and windows leading to the pool area, automatic sliding door closers and an automatic safety cover over the pool.
- **Drain off water** that accumulates on top of a pool cover. A child can drown in as little as two inches of water. Completely remove the cover before allowing children in the pool.
- **Keep reaching and throwing aids**, such as poles and life preservers, on both sides of the pool.
- **All non-swimmers should wear approved personal flotation devices** (life vests) when they are near water and especially near rivers and streams.
- **Swimming lessons do not ensure safety.** A child who falls into water unexpectedly may panic and forget his or her swimming skills. Adults who serve as caretakers for children who swim should know how to swim themselves, and also be certified to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in an emergency. Immediate CPR could prevent death or brain damage.

For more information, including copies of the Governor's Proclamation and Drowning Prevention Tips, please go to www.dds.ca.gov/drowning.

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