

Consumer Product Safety Alert

FROM THE U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20207

Infants & Toddlers Can Drown in 5-Gallon Buckets

A Hidden Hazard In The Home

Large buckets and young children can be a deadly combination. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has received reports of over 275 young children who have drowned in buckets since 1984. Over 30 other children have been hospitalized. Almost all of the containers were 5-gallon buckets containing liquids. Most were used for mopping floors or other household chores. Many were less than half full.

Of all buckets, the 5-gallon size presents the greatest hazard to young children because of its tall, straight sides and weight, even with just a small amount of liquid. At 14-inches high, a 5-gallon bucket is about half the height of a young child. That, combined with the stability, makes it nearly impossible for top-heavy infants and toddlers to free themselves when they fall into the bucket head first. A child can drown in a small amount of water.

Children are naturally curious and easily attracted to water. At the crawling and pulling up stages while learning to walk, they can quickly get into trouble. CPSC believes that bucket drownings happen when children are left momentarily unattended, crawl to a bucket, pull themselves up, and lean forward to reach for an object or play in the water.

Parents and caregivers who are using 5-gallon buckets for household chores are warned not to leave a bucket containing even a small amount of liquid unattended where a young child may gain access to it. A child can drown in the time it takes to answer a telephone.

