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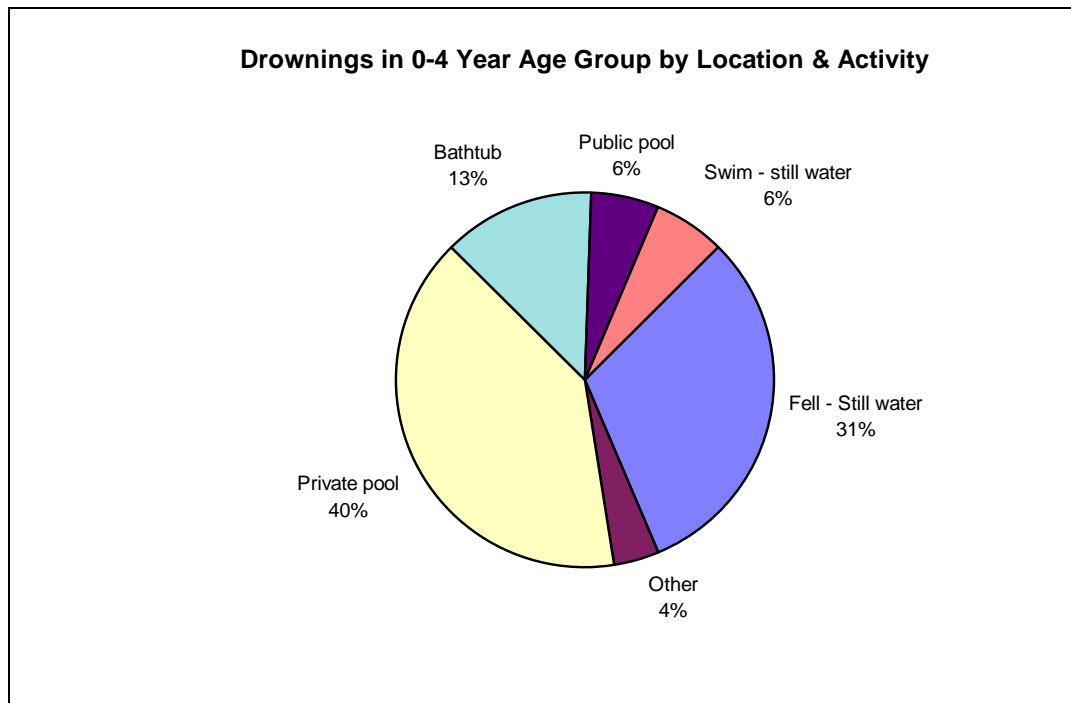
**POLICY NO:** E - 002  
**POLICY:** SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN UNDER 5 YEARS OF AGE  
**ORIGINAL POLICY:** OCTOBER 1995  
**LAST REVIEW DATE:** OCTOBER 2002  
**REVIEW DATE:** CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Drowning statistics in Australia reveal that the drowning rate in the 0 - 4 year age group is more than three times the drowning rate for all ages. In fact, drowning is the most common cause of accidental death (16%) among children aged 1 - 4 years (Carey, 1991).

The majority of deaths by drowning occur in private swimming pools and spas. These have included children living in or visiting a home with a swimming pool, or in a few instances, wandering in from the street. Children have also drowned in rivers, creeks, dams, bathtubs and buckets (Figure 1) (RLSSA, 1995).



**Figure 1. Drowning by location & activity**

These drownings may have been prevented if the children had been adequately supervised or if access to water had been restricted. Coroners' investigations into

toddler drownings have often found that parents or carers have contributed to the cause of death through their lack of supervision.

**The importance of supervision cannot be over-stressed. Young children are attracted to the water for which they show little fear. Most lack the ability to look after themselves if they accidentally fall into a swimming pool and they drown quickly and silently.**

## 2. POLICY

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia recommends that all children be constantly supervised whenever they are in, on or near water. This even includes public swimming pools where lifeguards are on duty.

Supervision is defined as constant visual contact from within a distance of 3-5 metres. For children aged less than 3 years, parents or carers should be in the water with the child.

Supervision does not include an occasional glance at the child while reading or snoozing. Neither should supervision lapse in response to a distraction. If a distraction demands attention, the child should be removed from the water and secured in a safe location where access to the water is restricted until supervision can recommence.

**Swimming pools fences, flotation aids or water familiarisation lessons are not a substitute for supervision.**

## 3. REFERENCES

Carey, V., Preventing drowning in toddlers. *Injury Issues*, NSW Department of Health 1991; 2 July.

Mackie, I. & Tebb, N., *National Drowning Study Second Report*, March 1994. Unpublished Report.

The Royal Life Saving Society Australia, *Drowning in Australia 1995*, RLSSA October, 1995.