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Media Release

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THE CITY OF JOLIET AND JOLIET FIRE DEPARTMENT REMINDE RESIDENTS ABOUT WATER SAFETY THIS SUMMER

POOL SAFETY

An adult should actively watch children at all times while they are in a pool. For infants and toddlers, an adult should be in the water and within arm's reach, providing "touch supervision." For older children, an adult should be paying constant attention and be free from distractions, such as talking/texting on the phone, socializing, tending to household chores, or drinking alcohol. The supervising adult **must** know how to swim. Adults should not drop children off at a pool or leave them at a beach without designating a responsible adult to supervise them.

If you have a pool, **insist** that the following rules are followed:

- Keep toys away from the pool when the pool is not in use.
- Empty blow-up pools after each use.
- No tricycles or other riding toys should be allowed at poolside.
- No electrical appliances should be allowed near the pool.
- No diving should be permitted in a pool that is not deep enough.
- No running should be allowed on the pool deck.

Pool Fences:

Children can climb out a window, through a doggy door, or sneak out a door to get to the back yard and a pool or hot tub. To prevent small children from entering a pool area on their own, there should be a fence that completely surrounds the pool or spa. Combined with the watchful eyes of an adult, a fence is the best way to protect your child and other children who may visit or live nearby. Also, consider additional barriers such as safety covers and pool alarms.

Pool fences should also:

- Be climb-resistant and should not have anything alongside it (such as lawn furniture) that can be used to climb it.
- Be at least four feet high and have no footholds or handholds that could help a child climb it.
- Have no more than four inches between vertical slats. Chain-link fences are very easy to climb and are not recommended as pool fences. If they must be used, the diamond shape should not be bigger than one and three-fourths inches.
- Have a gate that is well maintained and is self-closing and self-latching. It should only open away from the pool. The latches should be higher than a child can reach (54 inches from the bottom of the gate).
- For above-ground pools, always keep children away from steps or ladders. When the pool is not in use, lock or remove the ladders to prevent access by children and secure a safety cover.

Diving:

Serious spinal cord injuries, permanent brain damage, and death can occur to swimmers who dive into shallow water or spring upward on the diving board and hit it on the way down. Keep safe by following these simple common-sense diving rules:

- Check how deep the water is. Enter the water feet first, especially when going in for the first time.
- Never dive into above-ground pools; they are usually not deep enough.
- Never dive into the shallow end of a pool.
- Never dive through inner tubes or other pool toys.
- Learn how to dive properly by taking classes.

RIVER SAFETY

Even if a person is just enjoying the river from its bank, the water can be dangerous. River levels can change drastically, depending on rainfall, making passage and maneuverability in the water more difficult. If participating in water activities, a U.S. Coast Guard approved personal flotation device (PFD) should always be worn. Illinois law states that all children younger than the age of 13 must wear a PFD on vessels less than 26 feet in length. Below are tips when fitting yourself or your child in a life jacket:

- Life jackets are not like clothes. You don't grow into them.
- Life jackets should be Coast Guard approved and the correct size for your weight.
- Life jackets should fit snugly. The shoulders of the jacket should not come up above the nose or ears when pulled up or it will not stay on in the water.
- If your child's weight exceeds available children's sizes, you must purchase an adult-sized life jacket for them.

While most people believe that they are seasoned swimmers, boaters, or kayakers, when the weather brings the river to dangerous levels, the best advice is to stay out of the water. River safety tips include:

- Water that appears calm on the surface may have a current below the surface.
- Do not underestimate the power of an unseen current.
- If you are caught in a current and are being swept away, roll over on your back and go downstream feet first to avoid hitting your head.
- When you are out of the strongest part of the current, swim straight towards shore.
- Don't try to swim against a current if caught in one.
- Swim gradually out of the current by swimming across it.

GENERAL WATER SAFETY TIPS

It is important to make water safety a priority for you and your family. Below are general tips to keep you and your family safe while participating in any water-related activities:

- Swim in designated areas supervised by lifeguards.
- Always swim with a buddy; do not allow anyone to swim alone. Even at a public pool or a lifeguarded beach, use the buddy system.
- Ensure that everyone in the family learns to swim well.
- Never leave a young child unattended near water and do not trust a child's life to another child; teach children to always ask permission to go near water.
- Have young children or inexperienced swimmers wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets around water, but do not rely on life jackets alone.
- Establish rules for your family and enforce them without fail. For example, set limits based on each person's ability, do not let anyone play around drains and suction fittings and do not allow swimmers to hyperventilate before swimming under water or have breath-holding contests.
- Avoid alcohol use. Alcohol impairs judgment, balance and coordination; affects swimming and diving skills; and reduces the body's ability to stay warm.

In the event of an emergency, it is important to remain calm and know what to do.

- If a child is missing, check the water first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability.
- Know how and when to call 9-1-1 and ensure you have a phone nearby to do so.
- If you own a home pool or hot tub, have appropriate equipment, such as reaching or throwing equipment, a cell phone, life jackets, and a first aid kit.

Martin J. Shanahan, Jr. Interim City Manager

The City of Joliet is the fourth largest city in the state of Illinois, located just 45 miles southwest of Chicago's Loop. Home to 149,386 residents, in addition to thriving businesses and attractions, the City of Joliet is easily accessible by rail, auto and bus transit. A perfect place to live, work and play, Joliet is constantly striving to promote growth and diversity. For more information on Joliet visit www.cityofjoliet.info or call 815-724-4000.