

Preschool children drownings 'alarming'

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Water Safety New Zealand (WSNZ) is concerned about the "alarming" number of pre-school children drowning after three of the six people to die last month were toddlers.

Five preschool children have died so far this year. Last year 11 pre-school children drowned.

WSNZ general manager Matt Claridge said the August statistics "again highlighted the alarming number of tragedies involving pre-school children who continue to drown".

The vast majority of children who drowned were alone and unsupervised, or in the care of other children at the time.

"Children drown quickly and quietly, there is little noise as a small child slips below the surface.

"While physical barriers (such as compliant pool fences) are important they are only a starting point.

"Supervision without any distractions is the single most important precaution you can take."

The national drowning toll for the year to date is 69, one less than the 70 at the same time last year.

Of the 69 fatalities, 41 involved recreational activities.

As well as the three young children in August, two adult males drowned and one yacht crew member died after the vessel capsized off the Bay of Plenty coast.

- NZPA