VACATION RENTAL
WATER SAFETY CHECKLIST

Planning a stay at a vacation rental requires careful consideration, especially when water features like pools or spas are involved. Given that child drownings are the leading cause of death among children ages 1 to 4 in the United States, it's crucial to prioritize water safety during your vacation. Here's a checklist to help you ensure a memorable vacation for all the right reasons!

BEFORE YOU BOOK YOUR STAY

- **Learn NDPA's 5 Layers of Protection:** Learn the basics of pool and water safety by visiting NDPA.org/layers. Be sure to enroll children in swim lessons early!
- **Research and Verification:** Look for properties with clear information about water features including pools, spas, ponds, lake access, and other water features on or near the property.
- **Check for Barriers, Alarms, & Other Safety Features:** Ensure that all water features have barriers that restrict access to the water. Doors and windows leading to water can also be alarmed. Ensure that you familiarize yourself with the safety features available at the property.
- **Read Reviews:** Check previous guests' reviews focusing on the safety and cleanliness of the pool/spa area.

THINGS TO ASK THE HOST OR MANAGEMENT COMPANY

- **Safety Features:** Ask about pool barriers, covers, and alarms. Confirm they meet safety standards, are in working condition, and have been properly maintained. Find a rental that has a 4-sided pool fence and/or alarm if you can!
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Ask if there is an emergency plan, including contact information for the nearest hospital and where the information is located. Ensure the address of the rental is clearly posted.
- **Swimming Rules:** Check if there are specific pool/spa usage rules you need to follow during your stay.
- **Water Depth:** Ask the host if the pool has visible depth markers. If it does not, be sure to find out the depths and share this information with your family and friends.
- **Water Features:** Ask the host if there are any water features near the home that are openly accessible, like lakes, man made and natural ponds, rivers, etc.
- **Pool Drains:** Ask the host if the pool drains are VGBA compliant and if the pump system includes a SVRS (Safety Vacuum Release System) model. These pumps are designed to shut themselves off immediately if entrapment occurs. If not, ask where the drain power switch is located.

WHAT TO BRING

- **Portable Alarm:** Consider bringing your own pool alarm if the property doesn't provide one. You can also find simple door alarms to add to entry/exit points that chime when opened. Remember that alarms are needed to protect young children when they aren't supposed to be in the water, especially in the absence of a fence to prevent access to the pool, pond or other water feature.
- **First Aid Kit:** Always have a first aid kit handy, with supplies tailored for water-related incidents.
- **Life Jackets:** If you plan on being near, in, or on natural water always pack life jackets that fit each member of your family.

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UPON ARRIVAL

- [ ] **Inspection:** Conduct a thorough check of pool/spa safety barriers and alarms.
- [ ] **Review Safety Features:** If any of these are not functioning as intended, don't use the pool and notify the host immediately:
  - **Fences/Gates:** Make sure the barrier is at least 4 ft high, has no holes in the mesh, is intact, and has a self-closing/self-locking gate. Also ensure that any item that a child can climb on is away from the pool fence.
  - **Pool Safety Covers:** Ensure pool safety covers are intact and put back on immediately after swim time. Remember, not all pool covers are safety covers.
  - **Alarms:** Test alarms to ensure they are sounding immediately upon water entry or door opening. Check for any corrosion.
  - **Pool Drains:** Check to make sure the drain cover is not missing, broken, cracked, or loose. Teach children to stay away from pool drains. If a toy or item falls near the drain, it should be retrieved by an adult when the drain power is shut off.
- [ ] **Establish Rules:** Set clear water safety rules for your family and discuss them upon arrival.
- [ ] **Use a Water Watcher:** Emphasize never leaving children unattended near water or entering the water without an adult present. An adult water watcher is someone who can provide close, constant, and capable supervision.
- [ ] **Locate Emergency Equipment:** Identify and show your family the location of life-saving equipment, like life rings or reaching poles.
- [ ] **Practice Touch Supervision:** When weak or non-swimmers are in the pool area, practice touch supervision by staying within arms reach at all times. Do not use flotation devices in-place of adult supervision.
- [ ] **Emergency Contact Information Posted:** Add the address and all emergency contact information to a place the entire family is aware of (the fridge is usually good).

CONTINUOUS SAFETY MEASURES

- [ ] **Supervision:** Never leave a child unattended when they have access to water. Be sure that they are always accounted for, as children can wander in an attempt to explore unfamiliar property. Most toddler drownings happen during non-swim times.
- [ ] **CPR Knowledge:** Ensure that at least one adult present knows how to perform CPR with rescue breaths on children and adults.
- [ ] **Swimming Skills:** Ensure that your child has learned essential water survival skills, like controlling their breathing, floating and swimming.
- [ ] **Drain Safety:** Educate children to stay away from pool drains, pipes, and other openings to prevent entrapment.
- [ ] **Pool Accessories:** Make sure to put away any pool toys and/or pool accessories once swim time is over. Toys left behind can be a source of danger.

Discuss and follow all 5 Layers of Protection. Visit NPDA.org/layers for additional information.

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