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FIELD MANUAL NO. 404 — THE SILENT WATER

THE FACTS YOU CANNOT UN-KNOW

DROWNING IS THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF DEATH FOR CHILDREN AGES 1–4 IN AMERICA. NOT CARS. NOT ILLNESS. WATER. (C.D.C. — PUBLIC RECORD.)

AND IT'S GETTING WORSE — DROWNING DEATHS FOR AGES 1–4 ROSE 28% IN JUST A FEW YEARS. TWO CHILDREN A DAY. FOR EVERY CHILD LOST, 7–8 MORE GO TO THE E.R.

DROWNING IS SILENT. NO SPLASH. NO YELLING. NO ARMS WAVING. A CHILD SLIPS UNDER WITHOUT A SOUND — IN THE TIME IT TAKES TO READ ONE TEXT. THE SILENCE IS THE EMERGENCY.

THE HABIT THAT SAVES CHILDREN: IF IT GOES QUIET AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE THE CHILD IS — CHECK THE WATER FIRST. NOT LAST. FIRST.

NO SINGLE LAYER IS ENOUGH. WHEN ONE FAILS — AND ONE WILL — THE NEXT LAYER CATCHES YOUR CHILD. BUILD ALL FIVE.



LAYER ONE — THE BARRIER

MOST YOUNG CHILDREN WHO DROWN WERE NOT SWIMMING. NO BATHING SUIT. NO POOL PARTY. THEY WERE INSIDE ONE MINUTE — AND THEN THEY WEREN'T. THE BARRIER IS FOR GONE-FOR-A-MINUTE TIME.

- ☐ FENCE — FOUR SIDES, AROUND THE POOL ITSELF. NOT JUST AROUND THE YARD.
- ☐ AT LEAST 4 FEET TALL. NO FOOTHOLDS. NO GAPS TO SQUEEZE UNDER OR THROUGH.
- ☐ THE HOUSE WALL IS NOT ONE OF THE FOUR SIDES. LEAVING THE HOUSE AND REACHING THE POOL MUST BE TWO DIFFERENT EVENTS — WITH A LOCKED GATE IN BETWEEN.
- ☐ GATE SELF-CLOSES AND SELF-LATCHES ON ITS OWN. LATCH MOUNTED HIGH, OUT OF A CHILD'S REACH.
- ☐ THE GATE TEST — DO IT TODAY: OPEN THE GATE. LET GO. DOES IT SWING SHUT AND CLICK BY ITSELF? IF NOT, IT'S NOT A GATE. IT'S A DOORWAY WITH GOOD INTENTIONS.
- ☐ RENTING? REMOVABLE MESH POOL FENCES GO UP WITHOUT TEARING UP THE YARD. NO EXCUSE IS BIG ENOUGH.

DATE I WALKED MY GATE: _____



LAYER TWO — THE ALARM

BARRIERS FAIL. GATES GET PROPPED. DOORS GET LEFT CRACKED FOR THE DOG. THE ALARM SHOUTS THE MOMENT LAYER ONE FAILS. USE MORE THAN ONE KIND.

- ☐ **DOOR & GATE ALARMS ON EVERY DOOR AND GATE THAT LEADS TO WATER — BACK DOOR, GARAGE, SCREEN DOOR, POOL GATE. PASS BUTTON MOUNTED HIGH. WRITE THIS NAME DOWN: POOLGUARD.**
- ☐ **POOL ALARM IN THE WATER — LOOK FOR “SUBSURFACE” OR “IMMERSION” ON THE BOX. THE FEDERAL SAFETY AGENCY (C.P.S.C.) SAYS SUBSURFACE BEATS THE FLOATING RIPPLE-READERS.**
- ☐ **THE WEARABLE — FOR THE LITTLE ESCAPE ARTIST. WRISTBAND ON THE CHILD; BASE STATION SCREAMS THE SECOND IT TOUCHES WATER. THE NAME TO KNOW: SAFETY TURTLE. BAND + GATE ALARM = TWO CATCHES.**
- ☐ **A.I. POOL CAMERA — EXTRA EYES ON YOUR PHONE. ADD IT ON TOP OF THE FENCE. NEVER INSTEAD OF IT. A SCREEN NEVER STOPPED A CHILD FROM GETTING WET.**

THE RULE: AN ALARM IS THE LAST LINE, NOT THE FIRST. IT BUYS YOU SECONDS — AND SECONDS ARE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SCARE AND A FUNERAL. YOU STILL HAVE TO RUN.



LAYER THREE — THE EYES: THE WATER WATCHER

IN MOST DROWNINGS OF CHILDREN 1-4, AN ADULT WAS “SUPPOSED TO BE WATCHING.” THE SENTENCE THAT ENDS LITTLE LIVES: “I THOUGHT YOU HAD HIM.”

- ☐ AT ANY GATHERING NEAR WATER, ONE ADULT IS THE WATER WATCHER. ONE JOB. ONLY JOB.
- ☐ NO PHONE. NO DRINK. NOT ON THE GRILL. NOT DEEP IN CONVERSATION. EYES ON THE WATER.
- ☐ HAND IT OFF OUT LOUD, LIKE A BATON: “YOU ARE NOW THE WATER WATCHER.” NEVER ASSUMED. NEVER DRIFTS TO NOBODY.
- ☐ USE A TAG — A LANYARD OR CARD THAT SAYS WATER WATCHER. WHOEVER WEARS IT IS ON DUTY, AND EVERYBODY CAN SEE WHO.
- ☐ TODDLERS: WATCHING MEANS ARM'S REACH. TOUCH DISTANCE. CLOSE ENOUGH THAT YOUR HAND GETS THERE BEFORE THE WATER DOES.

OUR WATER WATCHER FOR THE NEXT SWIM DAY: _____

SECOND SHIFT (THE HANDOFF): _____



LAYER FOUR — THE SKILL: SWIM LESSONS

FORMAL SWIM LESSONS LOWER A CHILD'S RISK OF DROWNING. PROVEN. IN THE DATA. NOT A MAYBE.

- ☐ **SIGN THE KIDS UP — Y.M.C.A. (OFTEN SLIDING SCALE), CITY PARKS DEPARTMENT, RED CROSS. FREE AND LOW-COST PROGRAMS EXIST FOR FAMILIES WHO NEVER GOT THE CHANCE.**
- ☐ **PARENTS TOO. ABOUT 40 MILLION AMERICAN ADULTS CANNOT SWIM — AND FEAR PASSES DOWN THROUGH A FAMILY. IT IS NOT TOO LATE. NOT FOR THE CHILD. NOT FOR YOU.**
- ☐ **CHILDREN WITH AUTISM: WANDERING TO WATER IS ONE OF THE GREATEST DANGERS THEY FACE. ASK FOR SWIM PROGRAMS BUILT FOR THESE KIDS — THEY EXIST.**

THE WARNING INSIDE THE GOOD NEWS: THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS DROWN-PROOF. A CHILD WHO SWIMS CAN STILL PANIC, TIRE, HIT THEIR HEAD. LESSONS ARE A LAYER — NOT A FORCE FIELD. THE FENCE STILL STANDS. THE ALARM STILL ARMS. THE WATCHER STILL WATCHES.

LESSONS START DATE: _____



LAYER FIVE — THE LAST LAYER: C.P.R.

IF A CHILD GOES UNDER, THE MINUTES BEFORE THE AMBULANCE BELONG TO YOU. C.P.R. STARTED POOLSIDE IS THE SINGLE BIGGEST THING THAT DECIDES WHETHER A CHILD LIVES — AND LIVES WHOLE. IT PROTECTS THE BRAIN.

- ☐ TAKE A REAL CLASS — A COUPLE OF HOURS. RED CROSS OR AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION. SIGN UP ONLINE TONIGHT.
- ☐ LEARN THE CHILD AND INFANT VERSION — IT'S DIFFERENT FROM THE GROWN-UP VERSION.

BLUNT LINE: A POOL IN THE YARD AND NOBODY IN THE HOUSE KNOWS C.P.R. — THAT'S A HOLE IN YOUR HOUSE. FILL IT THIS WEEK.

C.P.R. TRAINED IN OUR HOUSE: _____

CLASS DATE: _____



THE WATER CHANGES AS THEY GROW

UNDER 1: THE BATHTUB AND THE BUCKET. A BABY CAN DROWN IN INCHES. NEVER LEAVE A BABY IN THE BATH — NOT FOR ONE SECOND. DOORBELL RINGS? BABY COMES WITH YOU. DRAIN THE TUB. EMPTY AND FLIP EVERY BUCKET.

AGES 5–14: THE DANGER MOVES OUTDOORS — LAKES, RIVERS, OCEAN. CURRENTS YOU CAN'T SEE, BOTTOMS THAT DROP OFF IN ONE STEP.

TEENS: NEARLY 80% OF ALL DROWNINGS ARE MALE. DARES, DISTANCE SWIMS, ALCOHOL. HE NEEDS TO HEAR IT FROM YOU: THE WATER DOESN'T CARE HOW STRONG HE IS.

BOATS AND OPEN WATER: COAST GUARD APPROVED LIFE JACKETS — IT SAYS SO ON THE LABEL. FLOATIES AND NOODLES ARE TOYS, NOT SAFETY DEVICES.

CHILDREN WITH AUTISM: HIGHEST RISK OF ALL. FENCES, DOOR ALARMS, THE WEARABLE BAND — NOT EXTRA. ESSENTIAL.



TONIGHT. THIS WEEK. EVERY DAY.

THE FIX YOU CAN DO TONIGHT

- ☐ WALK TO THE POOL GATE — OPEN IT, LET GO. DOES IT SELF-LATCH?
- ☐ ALARM ON THE BACK DOOR? IF NO — ORDER A DOOR ALARM AND GATE ALARM FROM YOUR PHONE TONIGHT FOR LESS THAN DINNER OUT.
- ☐ WALK THE HOUSE: EMPTY EVERY BUCKET, WADING POOL, COOLER OF MELTED ICE. DRAIN THE TUB.

THE ONE THING THIS WEEK

- ☐ SIGN UP FOR CHILD & INFANT C.P.R. — FIVE MINUTES ONLINE TO FIND A CLASS.
- ☐ NAME YOUR WATER WATCHER OUT LOUD, TO A REAL HUMAN BEING.

AFTER A REAL STRUGGLE IN THE WATER — PULLED OUT, HARD COUGHING — WATCH THE CHILD FOR A DAY. TROUBLE BREATHING, COUGHING THAT WON'T STOP, UNUSUAL SLEEPINESS OR CONFUSION, LIPS LOOK OFF: GET THEM SEEN.

EVERY BRAND, EVERY STANDARD, IN ONE FREE PLACE WITH NOTHING TO SELL YOU: [POOLSAFELY.GOV](https://poolsafely.gov)

TELL SOMEBODY. DON'T BE ALONE WITH THIS. MAKE THE PLAN OUT LOUD, WITH ANOTHER PERSON, TODAY.

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I AM JOHNNY ACTION. AND WE FIGHT BACK.