



INTERNATIONAL LIFE SAVING FEDERATION

PRESS RELEASE (07/01/2008)

TITLE: Clear link between drowning prevention and education

SUBHEADING ILS POSITION STATEMENT SWIMMING AND WATER SAFETY EDUCATION

The ILS has worked for a number of years to collate the evidence necessary to clearly demonstrate the link between drowning prevention and swimming and water safety education.

Over the past three years the ILS Education Committee has researched available information collected from many organisations and member organisations across the world. While the direct link between drowning prevention and swimming and water safety education was known to exist it was not able to be clearly demonstrated through an evidence based approach until recently and through the great work of ILS partner in The Alliance for Safe Children (TASC).

The ILS now has great pleasure in presenting this new Position Statement to demonstrate the importance of swimming and water safety education in drowning prevention.

According to B Chris Brewster, ILS Lifesaving Commissioner, the position statement will make a difference in those countries where there has been some reluctance on the part of Governments to support swimming and water safety education.

The Position Statement identifies the WHO Global Burden of Disease study which demonstrated that drowning is one of the most common causes of death. It further notes that currently, the difference in drowning rates between higher and lower-income countries is as much as fifty fold; evidence of the effectiveness of preventative efforts in high-income countries. It is a powerful demonstration of the effectiveness of targeting drowning as a major public health problem. Clearly, with adequate attention and effort, drowning is a largely preventable cause of death.

Interestingly, the statement draws on a range of research, in particular that from TASC arising from the sub-continent and Asia that in recent years demonstrates a compelling link between swimming and water safety education and a reduction in death by drowning.

The Position Statement was formally launched at the World Water Safety 2007 Conference held in Portugal during September 2007, and published in the November edition of the *International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education* (IJARE).

A key theme arising from the conference was that child drowning is a serious problem both in developed and developing nations. In some developing nations, drowning is the leading cause of death for children, outstripping even disease. Although developed nations generally appear to be safer from accidental injury than developing nations, the proportion of child drowning remains very high in each.

Appreciation is extended to the ILS Education Committee and Lifesaving Commission and to the many contributors who gave their time, expertise and research documents to develop a pivotal document in our quest to reduce the incidence of death by drowning across the world.

The full Position Statement on Swimming and Water Safety can be found at http://www.ilsf.org/about/statements_05.htm

Headquartered in Leuven, Belgium, the International Life Saving Federation is a not for profit confederation of national and regional lifesaving organisations throughout the world.

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