

NASCO SAFETY BULLETIN



NATIONAL AQUATIC SAFETY COMPANY
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Title: **Fountain Drownings**

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Four people, three children and an adult, drowned in Ft. Worth, Texas in a large water fountain called the Water Garden on Wednesday, June 16, 2004. This accident is currently being investigated, but whatever the particular circumstances are that led to this tragedy, one thing is clear – drownings can and do occur in water that was never meant for aquatic recreation.

The following is a quote from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram (TX) on August 13, 2001 titled: *Irresistible Oasis: City Can't Stop Tide Of Water Gardens Bathers*, "Nestled in flower beds and built into concrete walls, the little signs politely ask people not to swim, wade or bathe in the Fort Worth Water Gardens. But the whooshing waterfall, spouting fountain and cool blue pool are too tempting for visitors sweltering in the summer sun. So they jump in - all the time. "This has been going on forever," said Dee Hardin, superintendent of downtown city parks. "Swimming is not allowed in the Water Gardens - at all. It is prohibited. There is a city code against it. It is posted on the signs. "I don't know what to do to get them out of the water."

What This Means To The Aquatic Industry:

Even if you have all the guards, training, signage, barriers and procedures necessary for a safe environment for your water rides and swimming pools, any water fountain, decorative pool or pond could also be the site of a drowning. In order to protect yourself and the public as much as possible, you should follow the commonly accepted guidelines related to any aquatic environment that could be considered dangerous:

1. Have a barrier so that direct access to the water fountain, decorative pool or pond is restricted.
2. Make sure that the area is well maintained: that includes secured drain grates, elimination of entrapment hazards, properly maintained pumps, proper water levels, etc.
3. You should also look at whether reach poles and/or life saving rings for lay rescuer use are appropriate. In the Ft. Worth drownings, the newspapers reported that it was a sequential drowning where the new victim kept jumping into the fountain to rescue the previous victims.
4. Have signage forbidding entry into the water fountain, decorative pool or pond together with the appropriate warnings.
5. Make sure that anyone caught in the restricted areas is subjected to whatever legal action is available, removal from the facility, fines, legal summons, charge of trespassing, etc. so that a lawyer will be able to point out that you take the restrictions seriously.