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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
BC Coroners Service

### **MAJORITY OF CHILD DROWNING DEATHS ARE PREVENTABLE**

BURNABY – Eighty-eight per cent of child drowning deaths referred for review over the past three years in British Columbia were preventable, according to a report released today by the Child Death Review Unit (CDRU) of the BC Coroners Service.

The CDRU reviewed 33 cases of child drowning deaths from 2000 to 2006. The children came from communities across the province.

“We know from our review that active adult supervision of children in or near water is critical,” said director of CDRU Kellie Kilpatrick. “Children are fascinated by and drawn to water; it is imperative that we as parents and caregivers take all the precautions necessary to reduce the risk of drowning.”

Key findings from the report include:

- Of the 33 deaths reviewed, 29 were preventable;
- Male youth (13-18 years-old) were at the highest risk for drowning;
- Male preschoolers (1-4 years-old) were the second highest risk group;
- Aboriginal children and youth were at higher risk for drowning;
- In the majority of cases where supervision was required, a lapse in supervision was found to be a contributory factor;
- Drowning can occur in very shallow water; and,
- Children can drown quickly and quietly.

The report examines contributory risk factors including risks associated with swimming pools, swimming ability of children, and hazardous water conditions like cold water and drop-offs. It also encourages parents, caregivers and youth to alter perceptions about the risks of children drowning. It is important to understand that children who have had swimming lessons are still at risk for drowning in situations without proper supervision. It is also important to adhere to known water safety practices such as teaching children to use personal floating devices or lifejackets while boating, and educating yourself with first aid and CPR courses.

The CDRU Report on Drowning 2007 is available online at [www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/coroners/child-death-review/docs/report-drowning2007.pdf](http://www.pssg.gov.bc.ca/coroners/child-death-review/docs/report-drowning2007.pdf)

The Child Death Review Unit of the BC Coroners Service is committed to a comprehensive review of all child deaths to better understand how and why children die, and to use those findings to take action to prevent other deaths and improve the health, safety and well-being of all children in British Columbia.

The BC Coroners Service is part of Emergency Management BC, an overarching body mandated to ensure co-ordinated emergency response in crisis and disaster situations. EMBC also leads prevention initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life for all British Columbians through enhanced public safety.

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