

San Antonio Apartment Association Shares Summer Heat Safety Tips

More than 339,000 San Antonians live in apartment communities. With some hottest days on record already this year, the San Antonio Apartment Association (SAAA) offers helpful pool and heat safety tips to help keep this summer safe and healthy for everyone.

Summer is pool season in San Antonio and most apartment communities include instant access to one or more swimming pools maintained by on-site staff. While pools are among the most sought-after and enjoyed amenities, they require supervision, especially for small children. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of death from unintentional injury for children between the ages of 1 and 4 years old.

SAAA encourages everyone living at an apartment property or home with a swimming pool to keep the following pool safety tips in mind:

- Never allow children in the pool area without adult supervision. Even if they don't plan on swimming, a child can slip and fall into a pool, become unconscious and drown or injure themselves.
- Paddling pools present risks, too. A single inch of water covering a child's mouth and nose can cause drowning.
- Do not allow children to swim alone, even if they are good swimmers. Small children should always be within an arm's distance of a supervising adult in the water. Consider age-appropriate swim aids or safety devices but remember they do not replace adult supervision.
- If you are at the pool as a group, assign an adult as a "water watcher" – the person supervising the pool area at all times. It only takes 20 seconds for a child to drown and, contrary to popular belief, they rarely give any "signs" of distress.
- Enroll your children in swim lessons and learn CPR. You may save a life!
- Always secure access to swimming pools. All apartment pools have fences and self-closing and latching gates to prevent children from entering the pool area unattended – notify management immediately if they are not in working order or if anyone props them open.
- Learn the location of and how to use pool safety devices. Apartment pools are equipped with devices intended to prevent death or injury. These items include drain covers, a shepherd's hook and a reaching pole, a throwing rope, a ring buoy, as well as a landline phone to call for help in case of an incident. If any of these devices are missing or in disrepair, notify management immediately.
- Finally, we encourage you to be a good neighbor. If you see any unattended children at the community pool, urge them to leave the pool area and report the incident to the manager immediately.

As summer temperatures are rising, so does the risk of heat-related injury. SAAA encourages all apartment residents to check on a neighbor, especially an elderly resident who might be at risk for a heat-related illness, during these hot months and report any concerns about their health and safety to the proper authorities.

To keep cool and safe this summer, the apartment association encourages residents to educate themselves and their friends and neighbors about the signs of heat stress, which include headaches; dizziness and confusion; loss of appetite and feeling sick; excessive sweating and pale, clammy skin; cramps in the arms, legs and stomach; fast breathing or pulse; fever of 100F or above; and extreme thirst; as well as steps to prevent it.

Indoors, you can stay comfortable and keep your energy bill in check with these “cool” tips:

- To help reduce the temperature in your apartment, use your oven and other heat-making appliances less often and for shorter time periods.
- During the day, keep your blinds and/or curtains closed, particularly in windows that face west.
- If your front door needs weather-stripping to keep the cool air inside your apartment and the hot air out, ask the manager.
- If you have a ceiling fan, make sure the blades go in the right direction. During the summer, fan blades create the coolest breeze if they're moving counterclockwise. If you are not certain how to switch the fan blades' direction, your maintenance or management team can help.
- Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated and help you feel cooler.
- Don't put a lamp or another device that gives off heat next to your thermostat – that may cause your AC unit to run longer than necessary, resulting in higher utility bills.

Know the limits of your AC

It's important to note that air conditioning units are manufactured to cool down indoors to approximately 20 degrees below the outside temperature. On near-triple-digit days, an AC unit might only be able to effectively cool down an apartment to 75-80 degrees Fahrenheit. Setting the AC unit far below that temperature means it will run continuously, increasing your electric bill without lowering the indoor temperature much. And, the added strain on the machine increases the likelihood of damage to the unit.

Take simple steps to make sure the air conditioning is operating correctly:

- Most air conditioning return vents are in the ceiling, or high on the wall. If yours is lower, make sure you don't have furniture or anything else blocking the return vent.
- Make sure your AC filters are changed frequently so air can circulate well in your apartment. Dirty filters block your cool air flow.
- When your AC unit is blowing air, but the air doesn't feel cold, turn the unit off and notify the property manager immediately. Most leases require you to communicate this issue in writing, which also gives you a record of filing the request. Your unit may just need coolant, but there may be a leak. Running an air conditioner with insufficient coolant can damage the unit and require a more extensive repair.
- Is your unit “leaking” fluid? That's probably water from the overflow condensate drain – a small pipe or hose that comes from a pan under the unit – often above your bathroom or closet ceiling. Let your manager know immediately so that the maintenance team can clear out the main drain quickly or make other needed repairs.

According to the Texas Apartment Association lease contract, AC repairs need to be made in a reasonable amount of time but are not deemed an emergency repair (as long as the apartment home has a screened window that opens). How long a "reasonable time" is will vary depending on the availability of labor, materials, and utilities. With the current supply chain shortages of parts and labor, repairs may take a little longer than usual. It is important to notify management immediately of any problems, to avoid unnecessary delays or other damage resulting from an AC unit in need of repair.

With school out for summer break, adequate supervision is critical to keeping kids safe. SAAA recommends parents secure a caregiver for younger children who are not emotionally or physically mature enough to be left unattended. If parents decide to leave their kids home alone, SAAA recommends the following precautions:

- Talk to your child about whether he or she can go outside. If so, set boundaries about where they can and can't go – e.g., the boundaries of the apartment community/common areas.
- Be sure your child knows what to do in case there's an emergency. Ensure they know how and when to call 9-1-1, have your mobile and work phone numbers, and know where the management office is on the property.
- Designate a trusted neighbor your child can go to or call if they're scared or if there's an emergency and they can't reach you.
- Impress upon your child the need to keep the front door locked at all times. Caution them not to open the door or talk to anyone who knocks or rings the bell, no matter what they say. If the person claims to be maintenance or property management, make sure your child knows how to call the property office to verify before opening the door.