Historical Drowning Data

New York State Bathing Facility
Drowning Statistics
1987 – 2020
Geographic distribution of reported drownings at regulated swimming pools and beaches in NYS.

Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases
Drownings at regulated pools and beaches compared to all drownings of New York State residents.
The number of drowning incidents may vary greatly from year to year, which may in part be due to weather conditions. Nice weather increases number of exposure days for patrons.

Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases

**State:** Operated by NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and Department of Environmental Conservation.

**Children’s Camp:** Day and Overnight regulated under Subpart 7-2 of the SSC.

**Temporary Residence:** Hotel, Motel, Campground, Bungalow Colony regulated under Subpart 7-1 or Subpart 7-3 of the SSC.

Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases
Beaches have a much higher average drowning rate than pools. Possible factors include: greater number of bathers, water clarity, currents, depths and bottom conditions.

The time periods above correspond to significant changes to supervision requirements in the State Sanitary Code for bathing facilities.

*Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases*

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Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases
Other than State Park Bathing facilities, the number of drownings is proportional to the number of facilities for each facility type.

Based on the number of facilities, the proportion of drownings at State Parks is higher than for other facility types. However, this can be misleading because the proportion does not take into account the actual numbers of bathers, which are generally very high at State Park facilities.

*Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases*
As expected, more drownings occur during summer months when outdoor swimming facilities are open.

Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases
Most drowning occurs after noon. The highest incidence of drowning occurs at the end of the day between 4:00 and 6:00 P.M. Some possible factors include: more bathers during this time of day, bather fatigue, lifeguard fatigue.

Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases
There is a high incidence of drownings that occur when low numbers of bathers are present. Diligence in supervising bathers is needed at all times, not just when there are large numbers of bathers.

*Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases*
A significant number of drownings occur in water less than 5ft. deep. Diligence in supervising bathers is needed for any depth of water, not just for deep water.

*Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases*
DROWNINGS at REGULATED FACILITIES
Water Depth at Location of Submersion 1987 - 2020

Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases
At regulated bathing facilities, males are about 4 times more likely to be drowning victims than females. Many people think that toddlers are the most at risk, which is true for drownings in all settings; however, at regulated bathing facilities most drowning victims are between 6 and 25 years old.

*Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases*
Black males and females have a significantly higher drowning rate than White and Hispanic males and females.
A similar assessment is planned for all drowning data in the future.

Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases
It is commonly thought that most drowning victims are “non-swimmers”. When swimming abilities were determined, people who were considered to be “swimmers” drowned more frequently than “non-swimmers”.

Risk vs. exposure - Although non-swimmers may be more at risk of drowning because of their inability to swim, their exposure is often less because they spend less time in the water. Swimmers have a lower risk of drowning based on ability; however, their exposure may be greater because they spend more time in the water.

*Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases*
Many drowning incidents occur at lifeguarded facilities. It is believed that this is because the number of bathers present is much greater at lifeguarded bathing facilities.

**Supervision Level III / Responsible person:** Non-lifeguard supervisory personnel present at the bathing facility.

**Supervision Level IV / Temporary Residence Sign Option:** No facility supervisory staff present at the Temporary Residence (hotel, motel, campground, bungalow colony, etc.). Patron use rules are posted on signs at bathing facilities.

*Source: New York State Department of Health Bathing Facility Incident Databases*