News Release

For Immediate Release

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NEW STUDIES REINFORCE NEED TO PROMOTE PROPER POOL MAINTENANCE AND SWIMMING BEHAVIORS

WASHINGTON, D.C. (September 13, 2010) – On the heels of the Water Quality and Health Council’s summer-long campaign promoting proper swimming behaviors and pool maintenance, four new studies were published in Environmental Health Perspectives this week that examined chlorinated swimming pools and the potential effects of disinfection byproducts on human health. Disinfection byproducts (DBPs) are chemical compounds that are formed unintentionally when chlorine and other disinfectants used to protect swimmers react with organic matter, including perspiration and urine in water.

Initial media coverage of the reports has suggested swimming in pools may be linked to cancer and asthma—statements unsupported by current scientific evidence.

Judith Nordgren, Managing Director of the American Chemistry Council’s Chlorine Chemistry Division, issued the following statement in response to the studies:

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) calls chlorine a vital part of the first line of defense against bacteria and viruses that can make swimmers sick. Chlorine has been used safely and effectively in pools and spas for decades precisely because it kills most germs within minutes.

“Reporting on the studies, some in the media jumped hastily to suggest alternatives to chlorination for disinfecting swimming pools that might impact public health adversely. Unlike other disinfectants, chlorine provides a residual level that continues to disinfect long after it’s applied, helping to prevent cross-contamination among swimmers. Chlorine is also easy to monitor, and levels can be adjusted based on pool conditions.

“Any science-based research that examines complex pool chemistry is a step forward and can help better manage chlorinated pools. As the authors themselves state, these studies rely on small numbers of swimmers in two Barcelona swimming pools with high bromine levels in the source water. Further research is needed to determine whether these results are applicable to swimming pools in the United States and other places where the bromine levels are lower. Nevertheless, we agree with these authors that ‘people need to work harder to reduce everyone’s exposure’ to disinfection byproducts.

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“Ultimately, healthy pools are a shared responsibility. The CDC encourages swimmers to play a key role in keeping pools healthy by showering before swimming and refraining from peeing in the pool. ACC’s Chlorine Chemistry Division supports the Water Quality and Health Council’s efforts to promote proper pool maintenance and healthy swimming behaviors.”

For more information, visit www.healthypools.org.

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The American Chemistry Council (ACC) represents the leading companies engaged in the business of chemistry. ACC members apply the science of chemistry to make innovative products and services that make people's lives better, healthier and safer. ACC is committed to improved environmental, health and safety performance through Responsible Care®, common sense advocacy designed to address major public policy issues, and health and environmental research and product testing. The business of chemistry is a $674 billion enterprise and a key element of the nation's economy. It is one of the nation’s largest exporters, accounting for ten cents out of every dollar in U.S. exports. Chemistry companies are among the largest investors in research and development. Safety and security have always been primary concerns of ACC members, and they have intensified their efforts, working closely with government agencies to improve security and to defend against any threat to the nation's critical infrastructure.