

# The Safety Book For Your Family

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## Our Accident Epidemic

A few years into the future, a new drug-resistant virus suddenly appears in the United States, striking indiscriminately: newborns and senior citizens are felled; it takes a particularly heavy toll on teenagers and young adults. About 120,000 die each year, and millions more are disabled, some permanently. A person will leave home in the morning and, later in the day, a loved one will receive the terrible news that he or she has died or is seriously ill.

The disease quickly becomes headline news. There is no cure, but preventive measures are found and publicized. As these are developed, organizations create elaborate plans to inform their employees.

Still the disease rages. It is usually contracted as the result of an individual's failure to take proper precautions. Worse, many people are infected as a result of others' failure to follow the preventive guidelines.

This fictional virus would surely stir a national effort to find a cure. Yet today, something is causing widespread death and injury, and the response is surprisingly muted. We're talking about accidents, and our apparent willingness to tolerate such a huge casualty toll year after year, when good safety habits, practiced consistently, could save thousands of lives each year.

The only acceptable grade when it comes to safety is 100 percent. For example, in your house you might have stairs that you use thousands of times a year. A grade of 99.9 percent isn't good enough, because that one fall could be fatal.

All of us have top priorities in life, but most of us do not consciously make safety a top priority. To have a better chance to fully experience and enjoy our priorities, we need to add personal and family safety to our top-priority list.

In our early years, we too often take the attitude that accidents will never happen to us. Even when we get older and presumably wiser, this attitude never entirely goes away. But if we wish to enjoy life to its fullest, safety must become part of our personal lifestyle, a twenty-four-hour commitment.

One purpose of these articles is to alert you to the many hazards you and your family face in daily living - from driving the family car, to cooking, to swimming, to taking those first steps as a toddler. The goal is to help you beat the lifetime odds of dying in an accident (1-in-30 for males; 1-in-50 for females).

It wasn't too long ago that children rode their bikes through the streets without wearing safety helmets. Car seats for children were flimsy contraptions that offered no protection. Potent medicines didn't have safety caps to guard against curious children rifling through the medicine cabinet, and few parents gave serious thought to childproofing their houses.

Family safety awareness has come a long way since then, yet most families still lack a systematic approach to safety. The information that is available comes to you in a variety of ways - magazines, newspapers, TV, and the School of Hard Knocks. Rather than the traditional piecemeal approach, these articles will give you and your family an organized and comprehensive way to address safety issues.

### Is An "Accident" Really An Accident?

A basic reason why we don't pay more attention to safety is that the word "accident" is used incorrectly. The dictionary defines accident as "an unexpected and undesirable event, something that occurs unexpectedly or unintentionally, fortune or chance." There is no quarrel with the "undesirable," but the belief that accidents are unexpected or the result of fortune or chance is misleading.

For example, is an accident unexpected when someone using a ladder reaches out too far and falls instead of taking time to reposition the ladder? Does an accident occur by fortune or chance when a person consistently tailgates and then, in a moment of inattention, slams into the driver ahead of him? Is it fate when a boater drinks too much and then collides with another boat on a lake at night?

The obvious answer is no! Most accidents can be better described as failures; failures on our part and failures on the part of others.

## Personal Safety Plans

The key to a safer lifestyle is developing a Personal Safety Plan for every member of your family.

Each life is different. To make a safety program truly effective, it must be tailored to the individual. Family size, ages of family members, type of home and furnishings, domestic activities, recreational interests, and personal travel all differ.

Using these articles, you can develop a Personal Safety Plan for each family member.

For the plan to really work, you must take the time to review the information periodically. For example, families that boat should review their boating safety file before each season.

The following are elements of a comprehensive Personal Safety Plan for you and your family to incorporate:

1. *Leadership*: There must be a safety leader within the family, one person who inspires and challenge the others to act safely. The leader establishes a safety policy and encourages setting standards for safe conditions and practices. The leader prompts the others and ensures that they are adequately equipped and educated. The leader also sets the example.

2. *Education*: Identify the hazards each family member faces on the road, at home, and in leisure activities. Use the table of contents and articles to make a list of your family's activities and the related hazards.

After developing the initial safety plans, encourage everyone to become a leader, particularly with regard to his or her own safety. A Personal Safety Plan will not work unless each person is committed to doing things safely. This effort also involves periodic reviews and updates of Personal Safety Plans.

3. *Training*: Lack of knowledge or skill is the cause of many accidents. Training activities ensure that everyone acquires the knowledge needed for safety in all activities. Sometimes this occurs by formally teaching safe practices; at other times, it happens through self-study.

4. *Safety standards*: There are safety standards for homes, vehicles, and public areas. These standards were bought with someone's blood, and are the result of accident investigations. Someone must research the standards and verify that they are met. For example, be sure ground fault circuit interrupters are installed in bathrooms and the kitchen.

5. *Buying safe products*: Many tools and materials used in homes, hobbies, or other forms of recreation, have hazardous properties. Become familiar with them, tell family members about them, and buy the items that are least hazardous.

6. *Personal protective equipment*: Some hazards can be controlled with proper personal protective equipment, from clothing to protect against poisonous plants, to goggles or safety glasses to protect against chemicals or flying objects. The person involved must study the specific hazard, obtain suitable protection, and use it.

7. *Emergency preparedness*: Natural disasters and technological accidents can affect personal safety; and the effects vary from one situation to the next. As a family, consider potential disasters, make emergency plans, and hold emergency drills.

8. *Care of the injured*: First aid can prevent complications of injuries. Suitable first-aid kits need to be obtained and the family trained in first-aid techniques.

9. *Inspections*: Make periodic examinations of facilities, equipment, materials, and practices, to ensure that they continue to meet safety standards.

10. *Family meetings*: People need to be reminded about key aspects of safety and the prevention of accidents. Hold family discussions quarterly, to review safety in the home and in the activities family members participate in. To assure their involvement, let the children assume some of the leadership.

## Personal Safety Plan Example

The following is an example of a Personal Safety Plan developed using the articles. The plan is designed for working parents, with a three-year-old in daycare, who own a home in a Midwestern city, and enjoy outdoor activities. (Not all of the potentially applicable articles are listed in the example below.)

You may make copies of individual articles to put in a binder for each member of your family. To facilitate periodic reviews, highlight the safety tips that you find particularly helpful.

<u>Article</u>	<u>When to Review</u>	<u>Action Items</u>
<u>Driving</u>		
Around Big Trucks	Semiannually	
Defensive Driving	Semiannually	
Diverted Attention	Semiannually	
Expressway Driving	Semiannually	
Fall and Night Driving	Fall	Install new wiper blades
Long Distance Driving	Before a trip	Get car serviced
Road Rage	Semiannually	
Speeding	Semiannually	
Winter Driving	Winter	Install snow tires if needed
<u>Home</u>		
Bathroom	Semiannually	Install ground fault circuit interrupters
Electrical	Semiannually	
Fire Detection & Response	Semiannually	Change smoke detector batteries in Oct.
Home Heating Equipment	Fall	Get furnace serviced in September
Kitchen	Semiannually	Install safety locks on cabinets
Lawn Mower	Spring	Get mower serviced
Painting	Before painting	
<u>Leisure and General</u>		
Adult Sports	Spring	Meet with trainer to develop fitness plan
Bicycles - Adults	Spring	Inspect helmets; buy new ones if needed
Boating	Late spring	Test life jackets annually
Food Poisoning	Semiannually	
Heat Stress	Summer	
<u>Children</u>		
Babysitting Tips For Parents	Semiannually	Verify sitter has been trained
Car Seats	Semiannually	Get installation checked by expert
Child Care	Semiannually	Review safety procedures with staff
Holidays	Semiannually	Check safety at grandparents' homes
Toys	Quarterly	Check toys for hazards due to wear

## The Odds Of Dying In An Accident: 1-in-30 for Males; 1-in-50 for Females

The lifetime odds of being killed in an accident are approximately 1-in-30 for males, and 1-in-50 for females. As difficult as that may be to believe, the facts support the statement. Rounding the numbers for the sake of clarity, here's how they are arrived at:

Each year, approximately 2,000,000 males and 2,000,000 females are born in the U.S., and over 70,000 males and 40,000 females die in accidents. The number of people killed in each age bracket stays relatively constant every year, i.e., the number of one-year-olds killed is about the same, as with two-year-olds, and 55-year-olds.

During a male's lifetime, over 70,000 of his peers will be killed in some type of accident. Dividing 2,000,000 by 70,000+ gives us the 1-in-30 approximation. Likewise, dividing 2,000,000 by 40,000+ gives us the 1-in-50 approximation for females.

About 115,000 Americans are killed in off-the-job accidents each year, and approximately 5,000 die in on-the-job accidents. Here are annual fatality statistics from the National Safety Council's 2008 Injury Facts publication:

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Number of Deaths</u>
Motor-vehicle	44,700
Poisoning	25,300
Falls	21,200
Choking	4,100
Drowning	3,800
Fires, Flames and Smoke	2,800
Mechanical Suffocation	1,100
Natural Heat or Cold	800
All Other*	16,200
Total	120,000

\* Most important types included are: firearms, struck by or against object, machinery, electric current, and air, water, and rail transport.

### Major causes of additional male deaths

Drunk Driving (9,000); Motorcycles (3,600); Pedestrians (2,000); Drug Overdoses (5,000); Drowning (2,000); Work-related (4,000).

## More Reasons to Have a Twenty-four-hour Safety Attitude

- The lifetime odds of being killed in a motor-vehicle accident are about 1-in-100.
- Accidents are the leading cause of death for people from ages one to forty-one.
- Accidents rob Americans of more years of life before they reach age sixty-five than any other cause of death, including cancer, heart disease, homicide, and AIDS.
- Over 20,000,000 people suffer temporary or permanent disabling injuries from off-the-job accidents each year

## **About The Author**

John Myre is the author of the award-winning family safety book, *Live Safely in a Dangerous World*. From 1992-2002, he was the editor and publisher of *Safety Times*, an off-the job safety publication for businesses and organizations. He founded the publication in 1992.

His prior experience includes thirty-four years as a financial and risk management executive with Southwestern Bell Corporation. A graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, he has achieved the Associate in Risk Management (ARM) designation. He has been a speaker at several safety conventions, has written articles for safety and risk management publications such as *Professional Safety* magazine and *Business Insurance* magazine, and is the author of the off-the-job safety chapter in *Safety and Health Management Planning* (Government Institutes, 1999).

More information about the book and Personal Safety Plans for the entire family can be found at <http://www.safetytimes.com>.

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The updated topics in this book were originally published in *Live Safely in a Dangerous World*.

## **Awards for *Live Safely in a Dangerous World***

*Live Safely in a Dangerous World* is a proud winner of the 2006 Parent to Parent Adding Wisdom Award, the only award program to ever be honored by Disney.com.

In the 2003 Independent Publisher Awards competition, which included more than 1,500 books, *Live Safely in a Dangerous World* was selected as one of the Ten Outstanding Books of the Year. It won the award for the category "Most Likely To Save The Planet."

The book also received an Honorable Mention award in the 2003 *Writer's Digest* 10th Annual International Self-Published Book Awards competition, in the Nonfiction category. The book was one of 68 books honored. Over 2,100 books were entered.

In addition, a Chinese-language edition has been published in China.

## DRIVING SAFETY INTRODUCTION

Driving a car is one of the most routine activities we engage in, but it's also one of the most dangerous. Over 40,000 people are killed in motor vehicle accidents each year.

These 40,000 deaths translate into lifetime odds of 1-in-100 of dying in a motor vehicle accident.

Another discouraging number associated with motor vehicles is that 1-in-2 of us will suffer a temporary or permanent disabling injury\* in a motor vehicle accident.

With odds like these, your only answer is to develop a defensive driving attitude when you get into a car. As the articles in the Driving section show, there are many steps you can take to reduce the odds you will be one of these statistics.

One of the most important steps you can take is to develop an attitude to make every driving trip a "perfect trip." This includes such things as wearing seat belts, obeying speed limits, and driving defensively under all weather and traffic conditions.

Driving a car should be one of life's pleasures, not one of life's tragedies.

The principal causes of motor vehicle deaths from the 2008 National Safety Council Injury Facts publication are:

Collision Between Motor Vehicles	18,500
Collision with Fixed Object	13,400
Pedestrian Accidents	6,100
Noncollision Accidents	5,300
Collision with Pedalcycle	1,100
Collision with Train	200
Other Collision	100
Total	44,700

\* A disabling injury is an injury that disables you beyond the day of the injury.

# Never Argue With A Big Truck

*It was late on the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and Tom was still two hours from his destination. He was cranky and tired, and the transport truck in front of him was hogging the passing lane on the steep incline. Tom flashed his lights several times and honked his horn angrily. The inside lane was blocked by a truck, too. Tom stayed in the passing lane at 20 miles per hour and stewed.*

*Things changed dramatically on the downgrade. A third truck came up behind him quickly, and the three 18-wheelers kept him wedged between them as they careened down the mountain at 70 miles per hour. His small Buick was never more than ten feet from disaster. The episode taught Tom a new respect for big trucks and their drivers.*

*While most drivers are courteous professionals, trucks are potent dangers and should be handled with respect and caution.*

**According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, about 5,000 people die annually in crashes involving large trucks. In collisions between large trucks and cars, 98% of people killed were in the car.** To safely manage your encounters with these behemoths:

## **Avoid Their Blind Spots**

Because they sit so high, drivers may appear to have total vision of the road. Instead, they have more blind spots than ordinary drivers. They are called "No Zones" because cars should avoid them. A big rig's four blind spots are:

-immediately in front, sometimes as much as 20 feet if the truck has a long hood.

-on either side of the cab. The right side blind spot is especially dangerous, because trucks like to swing into the right lanes to avoid troubles in the road ahead.

-up to 200 feet in the rear.

• Remember: If you can't see the driver of a truck in his side mirror, he



cannot see you, either. To be seen, pull ahead or drop back.

• Don't cruise beside a truck for a long time, because if the driver needs to change lanes quickly, he might not know you're there.

• Keep your lights on in bad weather. It helps truck drivers see you amidst the spray.

## **Pass With Care**

• On two lane roads, blink your lights to let a driver know you want to pass, whether it's day or night. If he blinks back, you can pass him safely. If he doesn't blink back, he is telling you it's not safe to pass. Wait and try again later.

• If a truck driver behind you blinks his lights, he wants to pass. Blink back and give him the time and room he needs.

• If a truck approaches quickly on a steep downhill grade, pull to the right and let him pass. He may have lost his braking power.

• When you pass a truck, wait until you are at least far enough ahead to see its headlights in your rearview mirror before you move back into the lane.

• Stay as far away as possible when encountering a truck on the highway to reduce the wind blast.

## **Proper Spacing**

Even on dry pavement, trucks need twice as much stopping

distance as cars.

• Cooperate with truckers by allowing plenty of safety cushion for the truck. In heavy traffic leave room for a truck to change lanes.

• Give trucks enough room to turn, especially on the right side for both left and right turns.

• Do not tailgate a truck (or any other vehicle). If he stops suddenly, you could find yourself wrapped around his rear axle. Tailgating also blocks your view of the road ahead.

**Rule of thumb:** Stay 4-5 seconds behind a truck.

• When you are following a truck, position your vehicle at the side of the lane so you can be seen in the truck's mirrors.

• Another hazard of following a truck too closely is a tire blowout and flying debris.

• Be careful when you are behind a truck that has just entered the highway; it takes longer for a truck to pick up speed.

• In wet weather use more caution.

• If a trucker tailgates you or makes you angry, signal and get out of the way. Don't retaliate. It's a losing battle. Try to get some identification (safely) and report the incident. ■

# Local Highway ... Global Hazards

All it took to turn a routine April morning commute into a 98-car nightmare of wreckage and mayhem was a little rain, sudden bright sunshine, and some careless drivers.

"This is a wreck that just didn't need to happen," said a spokesman for the Missouri Highway Patrol in St. Louis. "The real blame is on people driving too fast for the conditions and following each other too closely in inclement weather. Vehicles were kicking up a lot of mist and causing glare. Someone looked ahead and saw traffic backed up, hit the brakes, and then started to skid. That's how this whole mess got started."

For about 40 people, the pileup ended in an emergency room. Amazingly, no one ended up in a morgue.

Remember, even local, familiar roads are dangerous if you take them for granted.

## Master The Merge

According to the American Automobile Association, more collisions happen on or near expressway entrances and exits than on any other place on interstate highways. To lower your risk:

- Stay 3-4 seconds behind the vehicle in front.
- If necessary, use the entire acceleration lane to get your vehicle up to traffic speed. Driving too slowly or stopping suddenly may cause a rear-end collision.
- If you can't see a gap in traffic, slow or stop only at the end of the acceleration lane or on the shoulder.
- Take a final look in the mirrors and check your blind spot before joining traffic.
- Match your speed to that of vehicles already on the road.
- Get in the proper lane well in advance of exiting. Be sure to signal your exit at least 500 feet before you



reach the exit ramp.

- If you miss your exit, do not stop. Never back up on a highway.

## Cruise Control

- Concentrate on your driving - no talking on the phone, food, drinks or lively conversations.
- If you're going to an unfamiliar location, get good directions.
- Constantly scan 20-30 seconds ahead for potential problems.
- Maintain a safe following distance by staying 3 to 5 seconds behind the car ahead. Increase the distance as your speed increases, and at night and in bad weather.
- Only use the left lane for passing. If you are traveling on an expressway with three lanes, treat the far right lane as a slower-speed through lane, the middle lane as a faster through lane, and the far left as the passing lane.
- When you are in the right hand lane, give a break to drivers who are entering the highway. Either adjust your speed or move into another lane.
- Check your mirrors every five seconds.
- When changing lanes, check your blind spots **before** making your move. Remember the three steps:

look-signal-move.

- Do not drive in another driver's blind spot. If you find yourself in this position, drop back or safely accelerate.
- If you must pass another vehicle, accelerate to get the pass over as quickly and safely as possible. Before pulling back into the right lane, make sure you can clearly see the road surface in front of the vehicle you passed in your rearview mirror.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, about 800 people die in work-zone crashes each year.

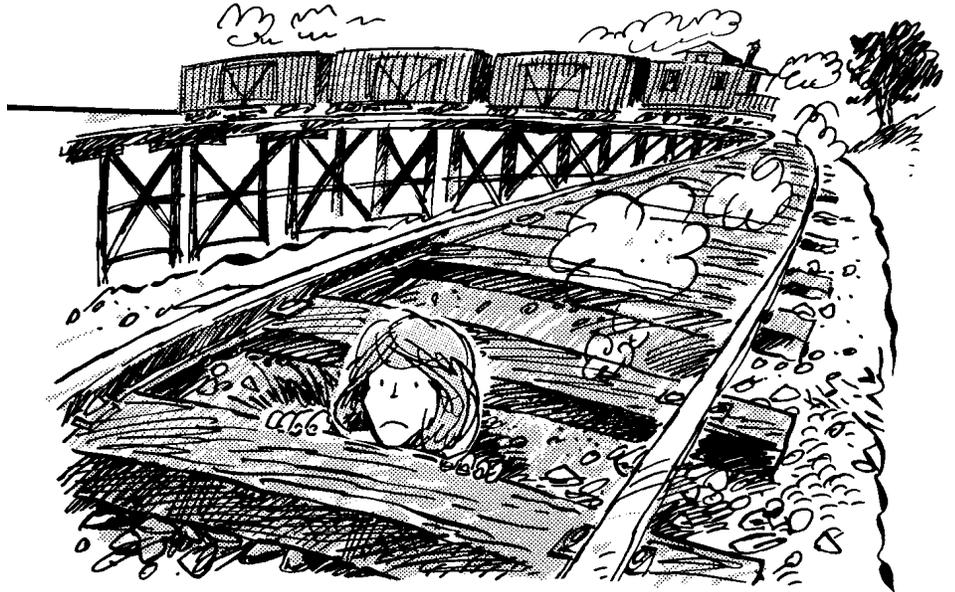
- Be aware of road construction signs, work crews, and signs requiring you to reduce speed and change lanes. Slow down. If you get caught in a lengthy delay, relax and make the most of it.

## Tailgaters

- If you have room, let your turn signal flash five times before moving to the right.
- In heavy traffic, slow down slightly without braking. This will allow the tailgater to pass you, or provide more time to stop in an emergency. ■

# Safety Training

*Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time. All Erin had to do was walk across the elevated railroad trestle, and she could trim some time from her walk home. Halfway across what she thought were unused tracks, a train appeared. Trying to run, she tripped on the tracks, so Erin lowered herself over the side of the trestle and hung on. The intense vibration shook her off, and she dropped sixty feet to the ground. Miraculously, she landed in a thick bush, narrowly averting the rocks surrounding it, and her worst injury was a swollen ankle. The "shortcut" resulted in a death defying fall and a trip to the hospital.*



## Vehicle Warnings

**According to Operation Lifesaver, an average of eight collisions between trains and motorists occur every day. Over 350 people are killed each year, and about 1,000 are seriously injured. A motorist is 40 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured in a collision with a train than in a collision with another motor vehicle.**

- Look, Listen and Live is the basic rule. Obey all highway-rail crossing signs and signals.

- Don't rely on warning signals. They could be broken. If you suspect a signal is malfunctioning, or if you feel vision at the crossing is restricted, e.g., high weeds, call the police or the railroad. You may want to find another route.

- Expect a train any time. Most trains don't follow set schedules.

- As you approach a railroad crossing: slow down when you see the **R X R** advance warning sign; open a window; turn off the radio and fan; stop talking; look both ways; and listen for a train whistle.

- You must stop if red warning lights are flashing; warning bells are ringing; there's a STOP sign, or the gates are lowered. It's the law.

**NOTE:** More than half of all train-vehicle crashes occur when a driver disregards flashing red lights or gates that warn of a coming train.

- Never race a train to a crossing. Always assume you'll lose.

- Never stop on a crossing or shift gears. When traffic is heavy, wait until you are sure you can clear all of the tracks.

- If you start across the tracks and the warnings activate, continue to the other side. Don't stop or attempt to back up.

- Watch out for a second train when crossing multiple tracks.

- Its large mass makes it difficult to judge the speed and distance of an oncoming train. Be careful.

- Remember, trains cannot stop quickly. It can take a mile or more to stop once the brakes are applied.

- Be doubly alert at night and in bad weather. Don't overdrive your lights. In many nighttime collisions, cars run into trains.

- Many rail-car collisions occur near a driver's home because people take a rail crossing for granted. Don't fall into that trap. Build possible delays into your schedule.

- Keep alcohol, distractions and

fatigue out of your car.

- If your car stalls on the tracks, get everyone out immediately and get a safe distance from the tracks. Call the police. If no train is coming, post lookouts and try to get the car off the tracks. Be ready to get away fast. If a train approaches, run toward the train to avoid flying debris.

## Personal Warnings

**In recent years, over 500 people have been killed annually while trespassing on railroad rights-of-way and property.**

- Do not walk, run, cycle or operate all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) on railroad tracks and property or through tunnels. Furthermore, these activities are against the law.

- Cross tracks only at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings. Observe all warning signs and signals.

- Do not hunt or fish from railroad trestles. There is only enough clearance on tracks for a train to pass. They are not meant to be sidewalks or pedestrian bridges.

- Do not attempt to hop aboard railroad equipment at any time. A slip of the foot can cost you a limb. ■

# A Little Sound Advice

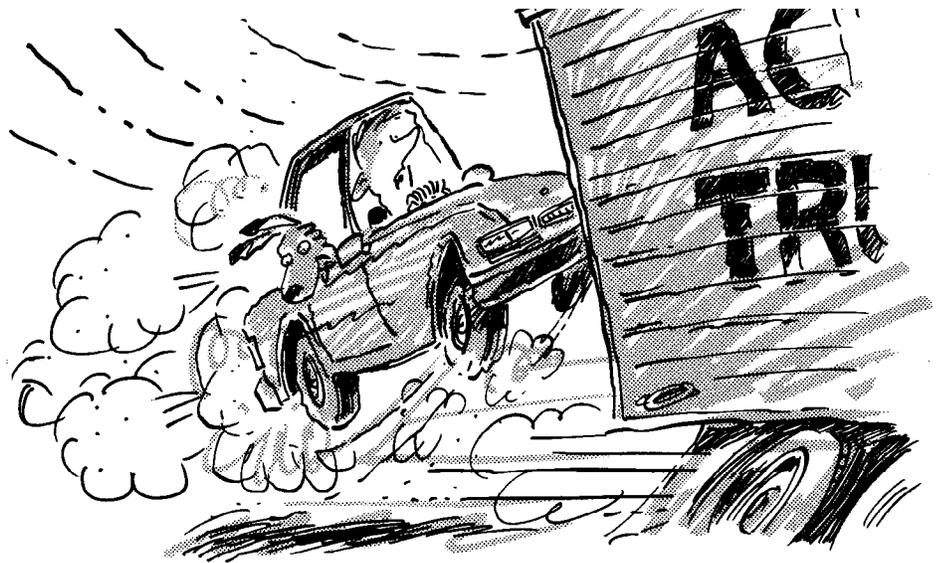
*Suzy loved her compact car. It was easy to maintain, efficient, and very maneuverable. It was small, like her. She could settle into the driver's seat and feel the little car almost wrap around her. She felt in total control. When she hit the ice patch that winter morning, she lost control, however. The car turned over, rolled three times and pinned Suzy into the steering wheel, inflicting fatal injuries on the young woman. The strengths of her little car had become its greatest weakness.*

There are many reasons people buy small cars. For all their advantages, however, small cars generally absorb more force in a collision than a heavier car. **According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, people in small cars are injured more often and more severely than those in larger vehicles.** Still, like Suzy, many of us maintain our love affairs with our small cars. The challenge for drivers is to make up in safety awareness what their vehicle may lack in size and weight.

## See And Be Seen

In a small car, you are up to nine inches lower than the driver of a large car. Barriers, medians, curbs, guard rails, and roadway obstacles may make it harder for the drivers of small cars to see and be seen. Most accidents involving small cars actually occur because drivers of large vehicles have trouble seeing the small car. Here are a few suggestions to help you compensate for your disadvantage:

- Realize that because you are closer to the ground, your range of vision is limited. You will also catch more glare off the road at night and in wet weather. Exert caution and respect for those things you cannot see. If your vision is restricted in any



way, *slow down!*

- Leave a "cushion of space" between you and other vehicles. Your purpose is to defend yourself from the dangers around you.
- Drive with your lights on during the daylight hours, especially in inclement weather.
- Do not ride alongside or behind larger vehicles. You are likely to fall into their blind spot.
- Try to keep your car where it is visible in the rear view mirror of cars ahead of you.
- Keep in mind that dark colors, such as black, dark green, or brown, are less visible than bright colors.
- If you think a larger vehicle does not see you, flash your headlights on and off, or honk your horn.

## You Win With Defense

- When purchasing a car, pay special attention to safety features.
  - **Always** wear your safety belt.
- According to the National Safety Council, lap and shoulder belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent, and reduce the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent.**
- Do not drive aggressively. Resist

the temptation to weave or slip through tight spaces, even if you think you can.

- Sudden changes of wind can greatly affect control of a small car. Such changes can occur when passing or being passed by larger vehicles, or when driving on stretches of highway open to wind gusts. Grip the steering wheel at 9 and 3 o'clock and move to the far side of your lane, away from the larger vehicle. This applies to windy conditions as well.
- Use the side and rear view mirrors constantly. Know what is behind, beside, and ahead of your car at all times.

## Highway Tips

Most small cars do not have the engine power of large vehicles, and most highways in the United States have been engineered for larger cars. With that in mind:

- Small cars must accelerate rapidly on the entrance ramp to a highway. Don't wait until you reach the expressway.
- For that same reason, allow plenty of distance and time when passing a vehicle, or merging. ■

## HOME SAFETY INTRODUCTION

If there's any place where we feel safe, it's in our homes. Away from the traffic and daily hassles, we have the opportunity to relax and enjoy some of life's simple pleasures.

However, we can not relax our safety awareness in the home. More than 30,000 of us die each year in and around our homes, and approximately 7,000,000 of us suffer temporary or permanent disabling injuries in home-related incidents. In fact, more disabling injuries occur at home than in the workplace and motor vehicle crashes combined.

The principal causes of deaths at home, based on the most recent National Safety Council statistics, are:

Falls	12,800
Poisonings	9,600
Fires, flames and smoke	3,500
Choking	2,000
Suffocation	900
Drowning	800
Natural heat or cold	600
Firearms	500
All Other*	6,700
Total	37,400

\* Most important types are struck by or against objects, machinery, and electric current.

# Cookin' With Gas

Ummmm! Ummm! Smells good! Somebody just broke out the gas grill, and the neighborhood is awash in the yummy smells of hamburgers, steaks, brats, and hot dogs. Just wants to make you smile, doesn't it? Or cry. **The Consumer Product Safety Commission reports that more than 15,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year due to injuries associated with gas and charcoal grills.** However, there are ways to assure your grilling tears are limited to the culinary effect of slicing a thick, juicy Vidalia onion.

## Getting Started

- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions for your grill. Review them each year.
- Place the grill in an open area out of doors at least ten feet away from a building and away from pedestrian traffic. Keep it away from shrubbery and dry vegetation.
- Resist the temptation to cook in a garage, tent, house, or any other enclosed area when the weather is bad. Opening a garage door or window or using a fan may not reduce carbon monoxide to safe levels.
- Do not use a grill on top of or under any surface that will burn, such as a porch or carport. The wooden deck attached to your house is not a good place to barbecue.
- Wear a heavy apron, long pants and an oven mitt. Cover your forearms with a mitt that extends over your elbow, or wear a long-sleeved, close-fitting shirt.
- All tools should have long handles to keep your hands and clothing away from the heat and flames.
- Keep children and pets away from a hot grill. Never leave a lighted grill unattended.
- Reduce grease flare-ups by trimming excess fat. Keep a spray bottle of water handy. Use baking soda, a fire extinguisher, sand or a garden hose to control any fires.
- As soon as possible, clear away all your cooking equipment. This



will assure kids don't get into it.

- If you use electric starters, accessories or a grill, be sure they are properly grounded. Never use them in wet weather.

## Using Gas Grills

- Have your tank filled by a qualified dealer. Overfilling can be dangerous.
- Store the gas cylinder outside and be sure the gas is turned off at the tank to prevent unintentional ignitions. Leave it upright and in a cool area.
- Never use an LP cylinder if it shows any visual sign of damage.
- Never attach or disconnect a cylinder, or move or alter fittings, when the grill is in operation or hot.
- If the burner doesn't ignite quickly, turn off the gas and leave the lid open. Wait five minutes before you try to light it again.
- Check the hose(s) and connections frequently for leaks by using a soap-and-water mixture. Escaping gas will appear as bubbles. Tighten the connections, or call a professional to repair the grill.
- Clean the tubes annually with a bottle brush or pipe cleaner.
- Clean the grill twice a year. If you use a wire brush to clean the grill, be sure to wipe the grill with a cloth or paper towel to remove any wire strands.

- Be especially careful at the beginning of the "barbecue season." Many incidents occur after a grill has been unused over a period of time, or after a gas container has been refilled and reattached.

- Do not attempt to repair the gas container valve or appliance yourself. See your LP gas dealer or a qualified repair person.

## Charcoal And Other Fixings

- Use the starter fluids designated for your grill. Place the capped can and matches away from the grill. Never use gasoline or kerosene.
- If the coals start to flag or are slow to catch, fan them or use dry kindling and rolled-up newspaper to give a boost. Adding liquid fuel could result in a flash fire.
- If you use instant light briquettes, do not use lighter fluids or electric, solid or metal chimney style starters. If you need to add briquettes, add regular briquettes only.
- Close nearby windows and doors when cooking.
- When finished, close the vents and allow the ashes to cool 48 hours before disposing. Wrap them in heavy-duty aluminum foil and put them in a metal container that has no other combustible materials. Be careful. Seemingly "dead" charcoal can re-ignite hours later. Soak with water for added safety. ■

# Balancing Act

*For years, Gail kept her favorite captain's chair with its comfortable seat cushion beside her kitchen pantry. Not only was it an attractive piece of furniture, it was also perfect to stand on for reaching objects stored high in the pantry. On a stylistic whim, she replaced the flat cushion with a thicker version. The next time she climbed onto the chair, the surprising thickness of the new cushion caused her to lose her balance and crash to the floor, injuring her shoulder and striking her head.*

Falls are the leading cause of preventable deaths in the home. According to the National Safety Council, each year about 12,000 people die from falls in their homes. Anyone is susceptible to a fall. However, with forethought, most falls can be prevented.

## On The Stairs

**Stairs and steps account for over 40 percent of all fatal falls in the home.**

- Maintain treads, risers and carpeting in mint condition. Be sure carpeting won't move or slide.
- Keep stairs clear of obstructions, **always**. Never use them as a temporary shelf.
- Keep stairwells well lighted.
- Place a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs.
- Install sturdy handrails on all stairways, regardless of length or frequency of use. One rail is a necessity, but one on each side is ideal.
- Always use the handrail when you are walking the steps.
- Do not carry bundles that can obstruct your vision. Make two or three trips if necessary. Use a laundry bag to carry laundry.
- Teach children the safety procedures to follow when using the stairs.
- Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairs when small children are in the house.
- Never use throw rugs near stairs.



Tape or tack them to the floor wherever they are used.

- For those with impaired vision, mark the length of each step with bright or glow-in-the-dark tape, especially the bottom step.

## Avoiding Bedroom Nightmares

- Tidy the bedroom before going to sleep. Clear a path between the bed and the bathroom or doorway.
- Do not bound from bed the instant you wake up. Sit on the edge of the bed to get your bearings and your balance.
- Keep a flashlight by your bed, and a lamp if possible.
- Keep all dresser drawers closed when they are not in use.
- Have a phone next to the bed.

## All Around The House

- Never stand on a chair or box. Buy a sturdy stool or safety ladder.
- Move cautiously. Don't rush through the house to answer a telephone or door bell.
- Arrange furniture so that walkways are as wide as possible.
- Secure loose wires and cords, preferably around the edge of the room.
- Immediately pick up toys and

clutter, and wipe up spills. It takes only a second for a serious incident to happen.

- Make porches and balconies off limits to young children, and use safety gates. Make the openings small so a young child cannot fall through. Never trust a railing to support your entire body weight.
  - Watch out for pets in your path.
  - Move chairs and furniture away from windows where young children might use them to reach a window. Windows in rooms used by small children should have fire-safe guards.
  - Be extra careful with bifocals.
- Looking through the reading portion can distort your depth perception.
- Around the house, avoid wearing high heels, clogs and slippers with open heels. Walking in socks or stockings is risky, too. Wear shoes and slippers with nonskid soles.
  - Use nonskid wax on bare floors.
  - Make sure all areas are well lighted, including outside areas where you walk at night.
  - If you fall: try to relax; let your arms and legs give like a spring to absorb the impact of the fall; and roll with the direction of the fall. ■

# Unvarnished Truth About Refinishing

*Alice bought the end table at a country auction and was saving it for the perfect, miserable day in February. She gathered up her refinishing materials and headed to the basement. It was warm and comfortable, at first. But soon she became light headed and nearly fainted as she made her way to the stairs. Stumbling, she managed to climb into the clean air of her kitchen. There wasn't a gas leak in her basement. Alice had fallen victim to the fumes from the paint thinner she was using.*

As Alice learned, a simple task like woodworking can be hazardous to one's health. Most solvents evaporate quickly, filling a room with fumes. The result can be acute, though temporary intoxication, drowsiness, and headache.

**People with heart or lung disease and pregnant women should avoid products that contain solvents. According to Consumer Reports, the Consumer Product Safety Commission received reports of 55 injuries and 10 deaths linked to the accidental inhaling of fumes from cleaning, painting, and home repair products in a 2 1/2 year period, and those figures are likely undercounts.**

Whenever you tackle refinishing projects, please keep the following in mind.

## Ventilation Is A Must

The chemicals used for refinishing work are powerful.

- When possible, work outside.
- Indoors, you must have adequate ventilation. To produce proper airflow, make sure there is good cross-ventilation. Many indoor spaces, particularly basements, have very poor air movement qualities.
- Make sure that at least two windows or doors can be opened to produce proper airflow.
- Use a fan or other forced-air device to increase air movement.



Careful: Some solvents are extremely flammable and should not be used around fans, appliances, and heating equipment. The friction and sparks produced may lead to fires. Read the labels!

## Know The Materials

- Follow the label directions. All stores are required to have safety data sheets on their products. Ask the salesperson to provide you with the appropriate data sheet for the product you are buying. Additional information can be obtained from the manufacturer.

- If you're not willing to educate yourself, skip the project, or leave it to a professional.

- Is the solvent ingredient necessary? Often, you can substitute a product with little or no solvent for a higher-solvent product.

- Don't use more than one solvent product at a time, and don't use one right after another.

- Store leftover solvents, cleaners, and paints in labeled and sealed containers.

- Dispose of used products according to the manufacturer's guidelines, or call your local hazardous waste organization.

## Proper Precautions

The dust created by sanding wood can trigger an allergic reaction and cause diseases, such as dermatitis,

bronchitis, and asthma.

- Wear pants, socks, shoes, head covering, and a long-sleeved shirt when sanding or stripping paint.

- Gather necessary personal protective equipment before starting.

- Some chemicals might irritate or damage your eyes or skin - which means you need the appropriate gloves, goggles, or an apron or protective suit when you use them.

- Choose chemical-resistant gloves that are unlined and made of neoprene or butyl. If there's a hole or tear in a glove, discard it.

- Do not use regular household gloves that can tear easily.

- Wear the appropriate mask to reduce dust and solvent exposure. Note: A mask without a filtering mechanism does not protect against chemical exposure.

- Fumes from some chemicals sink. If you're bent over while working, you may inhale more vapors than when standing.

- Don't drink alcoholic beverages on the day you use solvents. Alcohol can heighten toxic effects.

- If you take medication, ask the doctor about adverse interactions.

- Store solvent products out of children's reach and lock them up.

Keep children and pets out of a room containing solvent fumes. A dose that does not affect you could be fatal for them. ■

# House Warming Hints

Home heating equipment that provides warmth and comfort on a cool day also brings deadly risks if used incorrectly. **According to the National Fire Protection Association, fires associated with home heating equipment result in about 45,000 fires and over 200 fatalities across America every year.**

Here are a few tips to keep your house cozy and safe.

## Start With The Basics

- Have your heating systems inspected by a professional before the start of each heating season.
- Install smoke detectors on every level of your home, including the basement, outside sleeping areas and in rooms with space heaters. Put carbon monoxide detectors outside sleeping areas, and in rooms with a fireplace or stove, unvented gas or liquid heaters, or a furnace.
- Keep flammable items at least three feet from a heater, fireplace, chimney, stove and chimney pipe. This includes papers, wallpaper, curtains, clothing, and bedding.
- Keep a fire extinguisher handy, and know how to use it.

## Be Cautious With Portable Heaters

- Buy a heater that has been approved by a nationally recognized independent testing lab, and has automatic shut-off safety features.
- Always turn heaters off when leaving a room or going to bed.
- Never use a heater in a room where children or incapacitated adults are unsupervised.
- If you have an electric heater:
  - Do not curl the cord and do not bury it under carpeting. The heat from the cord could start a fire.
  - If the cord overheats, stop using the heater and have it serviced.
  - Don't use an extension cord. If you must use one temporarily, be sure it is marked with a power rating at least equal to the heater.
  - Periodically check for fraying or



splitting wires. Do not try to repair a broken heater yourself. Take it to a qualified service center.

- Avoid using kerosene heaters. They are illegal in many areas. If you must use one: make sure you use the correct fuel; follow manufacturer's directions exactly; never refill a kerosene heater when it is hot; and never fill it indoors.

## Hot Tips For Fireplaces and Stoves

- Have the chimney inspected by a certified sweep at the start of each heating season. If you regularly use the fireplace or stove more than four times a week, or use soft or green woods, have it inspected more often.
- Never leave small children unattended near a fireplace or stove.
- Block out animals and sparks with a mesh screen spark arrester on the chimney, and keep the roof clear of leaves, pine needles, overhanging branches and other debris.
- Never use flammable liquids to light or stoke a fire.
- Do not burn paper, boxes, trash, or pine boughs. The particles can float out onto the roof.
- To reduce creosote, use hardwoods seasoned for at least a year.

- Don't burn preservative-treated wood. The ash will contain chemicals that are a hazardous waste.
- Remove ashes only in a metal container with a tight-fitting lid. Put the ashes outside, away from combustible materials.
- Don't overload a fireplace. A roaring fire can overheat your walls or roof and lead to an inferno. Also:
  - Read the instructions before lighting an artificial log. These logs can burn unevenly and release abnormal levels of carbon monoxide.
  - Be sure the fire is out before you go to bed or leave the house.
  - To avoid flying sparks, use a sturdy screen made of metal or heat-tempered glass.
  - If you purchase a stove, buy one that bears a label from a reputable testing lab, and have it installed by a certified company. Also:
    - Frequently check and clean flues for creosote.
    - Keep a window ajar to avoid a buildup of combustion products.
    - If there is a roaring noise inside the house from the chimney area, or sparks and/or flames shooting from the chimney top, call the fire department immediately. If the chimney cracks or if heat radiates through it, the house may catch fire. ■

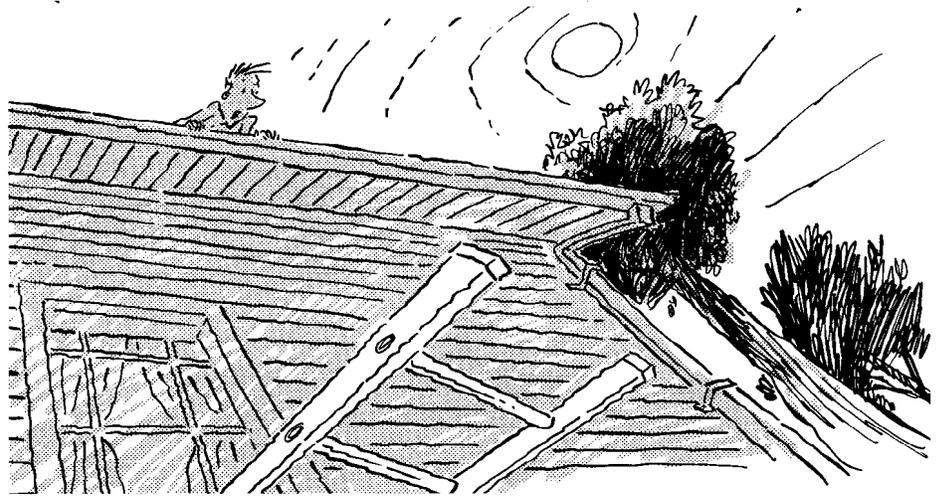
# Ladder Tips (Climber Falls)

*Man! What a great day to patch that loose shingle at the base of the chimney. Sun's out, not a cloud in the sky, light breeze, high of 87 degrees. Mick took the ladder from the garage, removed his shirt, and shooed Carol shopping. Five minutes after she was gone, he knocked the ladder to the ground. Let's see. The wife and kids are gone. The neighbors are on vacation. Mick lives on a street where there is little traffic. Mick sat on the roof for four hours, which gave him plenty of time to fix the shingle, and get so badly blistered from the sun that he missed two days work.*

**Annually, there are more than 150,000 injuries associated with ladders that require emergency room treatment.** Most ladder incidents are caused by a loss of balance, or by a ladder's being placed on a slippery surface. Others are caused by sheer foolishness. Almost all of them could have been avoided.

## Before You Climb

- For any project involving a straight ladder, consider hiring a professional.
- Choose the proper ladder for the job. Wood and fiberglass ladders are best for working around electrical sources, although any type of ladder can conduct electricity if wet.
- Before climbing a ladder, check it thoroughly to be sure it's safe. Look for missing, damaged or loose parts. Be sure the nonslip feet aren't worn. If there is a problem, get a new ladder. Repairing a damaged ladder is taking a risk.
- Verify the weight capacity, and include tools you carry in your calculation.
- Indoors or outside, place the ladder on a firm, solid surface. If you must put the ladder on a soft surface, place a board under the ladder's feet to provide firm footing.
- Always have a person steady the ladder on windy days or if there's a question about the ladder's stability.



- When using an extension ladder outside, place the ladder about one-fourth of the length of the ladder away from the wall. For a quick estimate, place your toes against the ladder feet. Stand erect and extend your arms straight out. The palms of your hands should rest on the base section rung nearest to shoulder level.
- Wear clean, dry, slip-resistant shoes, and be sure the rungs of the ladder are dry.
- If you use a ladder in front of a door, lock the door and barricade the other side.
- Never use a folded-up stepladder as a straight ladder. The feet won't be square on the ground, and the ladder may slip.
- Never lean a ladder against a window pane or other unstable surface.
- Do not climb a ladder if you have been using alcohol, have balance problems, are subject to fainting spells, are using medicine, or are physically handicapped.
- Do not paint a wood ladder.
- Arrange for someone to check on you periodically.

## Avoiding A Crash Landing

- Never climb with equipment in your hands. Use your pockets, an equipment belt, a tool pouch, or raise heavy objects with a hand line.
- For added stability, tie the top of the ladder to a support, or use special

devices available from your hardware store.

- To climb or descend, face the ladder and grip the rungs firmly with both hands.
- Keep your body between the rails at all times, and never reach or lean too far to the side. Rule of thumb: Your belt buckle should never extend outside the ladder rail.
- Hold on to the ladder with one hand. If you must use both hands, put one leg around a rung.
- If you need to shift to a new position, climb down and reposition the ladder. Don't try to shift the position while standing on the ladder.
- On a straight or extension ladder, don't climb higher than the fourth rung from the top. On a stepladder, don't climb higher than the second rung from the top.
- Be sure the ladder extends 3-5 feet above the edge when climbing onto a roof. This added length is needed to step safely onto the roof. Do not climb the ladder above the roof top.
- When moving a metal ladder, lower it to avoid touching a power line. Better yet, never place a ladder where it could slide into power lines. Give them a wide berth.
- Descend immediately if high winds or rain begin. ■

# Poison Control

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are more than two million unintentional human poisoning exposures a year in the United States, and approximately 20,000 deaths. About 10,000 deaths occur in the home, many of them due to drug overdoses.

These are frightening statistics and unnecessarily high. The first and best antidote is caution.

## Good Advice And Bad Medicine

- Keep these telephone numbers by your phones: poison control center, doctor, and hospital.

- Always follow label directions.

Poisoning can occur by eating, drinking or inhaling a substance, or getting it on the skin or in the eyes.

- Always read the label on any medication before you take it.

- Discard drugs that are past their expiration date, or look or smell unusual. Contact your pharmacist for disposal instructions.

- Never take a medicine prescribed for another person. There might be side effects you do not know about, or an interaction with your medicine.

- Don't take drugs in the dark.

- To avoid overdoses, use a daily pill organizer.

- People with poor eyesight and failing memory are at greater risk for unintentional drug misuse.

## This Isn't Kid Stuff

More than one million unintentional poisoning exposures among children under six are reported to U.S. poison control centers each year. Almost 90 percent of these incidents occur in homes and involve common household items.

- Lock up all medicines and keep medicines in child-resistant containers. However, don't rely solely on these containers. They are *child-resistant* not *childproof*.

- If you're interrupted while using a product, take the product or child with you, or lock up the item.

- Never leave open medications out of your sight.

- If you must keep medicine by the bed when kids are around, use a lockable tackle box.

- Grandparents: Put away and secure poisonous items before kids arrive. A disproportionately high number of childhood poisonings involve grandparents' drugs.

- Place purses, bags and suitcases out of reach.

- Teach children not to eat or drink anything unless it is given to them by an adult they know.

- Never refer to any kind of medication as "candy" even when trying to coax children to take it.

- Avoid taking medications in front of children. They will want to copy your actions.

- Child exposures often occur in late afternoon or early evening when supervision may not be as strict.

- Poisonings increase during periods when the household is disrupted (e.g. children visiting, holidays, personal crisis, moving).

- Be alert for repeat poisonings.

Children who swallow a poison are likely to try again within a year.

- If you suspect a child has been exposed to a poisonous substance:

- Remain calm, and keep the child calm.

- Look in the child's mouth.

Remove any remaining pills, pieces of plant, etc.

- Take the child and the poison to the phone. Call the poison center or your doctor. Be prepared to give your child's age, weight, the product name on the label, when it was eaten, the amount swallowed, and the child's condition.

Note: Most parents can identify the top three drugs used by children: alcohol, tobacco and marijuana. Few parents realize that inhalants are the fourth drug group most commonly abused. And remember, tobacco is often the "gateway" to other drugs.

- If you suspect your child is using illegal drugs, or abusing prescription drugs, seek professional help immediately.

## The Toxic Household

- Do not store household and cleaning products in the same place you store food.

- Keep all products in their original containers.

- Contact a local nursery or poison control center to find nontoxic plants to buy. More than 700 species of plants are harmful to humans.

Ingestion of house plants is a leading cause of calls to poison centers.

- Store cleaning supplies or other poisonous products in cabinets with childproof locks, or closets that require a key to open.

- Never mix a "home brew" cleaning product without first checking the poison control center.

## Common Household Hazards

Alcohol	<b>Bathroom</b>
Tobacco	Bath oil
Detergents	Boric acid
Drugs and pills	Creams
Plants	Deodorizers
<b>Kitchen</b>	Deodorizers
Ammonia	Drain Cleaners
Carpet cleaners	Hair remover
Drain cleaners	Hand, shaving, sun lotions
Furniture polish	Mouthwash
Metal cleaners	Nail polish and remover
Oven cleaner	Rubbing alcohol
Plants	Shampoo, wave lotion, and sprays
Rust remover	Toilet bowl cleaner
Scouring powders	<b>Bedroom / Purse</b>
Upholstery cleaners	<b>Basement / Garage</b>
<b>Bedroom / Purse</b>	Antifreeze
Cosmetics	Bug Killers
Jewelry cleaner	Fertilizers
Perfume	Gasoline and oil
<b>Laundry</b>	Kerosene
Bleaches	Lighter fluids
Disinfectant	Lime
Dyes	Lye
Stain remover	Paint
<b>Storage Places</b>	Paint remover / thinner
Batteries	Tree and lawn spray
Moth balls / sprays	Turpentine
Rat / insect poisons	Weed killer
	Windshield cleaner■

## LEISURE AND GENERAL SAFETY INTRODUCTION

When we engage in leisure activities, safety too often is not a top priority. We are usually doing something that is enjoyable, and our focus is getting the most out of our free time.

However, unless you keep your 24-hour safety switch on, what started out as a day of fun can end up being a day of regrets.

The principal causes of leisure deaths, based on the most recent National Safety Council statistics, are:

Falls	6,700
Poisonings	3,600
Drowning	2,900
Choking	2,900
Water Transport	700
Air Transport	600
Railroad	500
Mechanical Suffocation	400
All Other*	6,400
Total	24,700

\* Principal causes are: excessive natural heat or cold, firearms, fires and flames, and machinery.

# Drive Safely

There are some serious hazards associated with the game of golf that have nothing to do with water and sand. You have your lightning. And the intoxicated fool in the runaway golf cart. And the screaming slice bearing down on you like a heat-seeking missile. However, the hazard most likely to strike you is a serious back injury. Swinging a golf club puts a tremendous strain on the back. As a result, golfers injure their backs more than any other part of their body. **The score card shows that back injuries constitute up to 50 percent of all the injuries sustained by male golfers.** That includes professionals. In the 1980s, Jack Nicklaus's career almost ended because of back problems.

Injuries do not have to be par for the course for golfers or other sports enthusiasts. Too many people take up a sport to get in shape. They would be much better off getting in shape before they take up a sport.

## First Rule: Get In Shape

- Choose a sport that is right for you. Consult a physician before you begin a new sport, especially if you are over 35, overweight, easily fatigued, smoke heavily, have a history of family or personal health problems, or take medication.
- Take the time to visit with an exercise professional to develop a personal training and stretching program. Make sure you know how to stretch just before and after you engage in the activity, and warm up. Professional athletes take time to stretch and warm up properly. So why should you cut corners?
- Take lessons. Learn from a qualified/certified instructor.
- Stay hydrated. Drink water or sports drinks before, during and right after playing.
- If you are injured or sore, stop the activity and give the muscles time to heal. Stretching can make them worse.



## Be FOREwarned

According to the National Safety Council, about 50,000 golfers require emergency room treatment each year, including over 8,000 golf cart incidents.

- Learn the proper swing and body mechanics from a pro.
  - Always warm up before you play. Spend a few minutes swinging both the irons and the woods.
  - Protect your back. Don't bend from the waist. Use your legs. Squat, and get help lifting heavy objects like golf bags from the trunk.
  - Don't hang your feet out of carts or drive drunk; drive at a moderate speed; and avoid inclines.
- On the course, golf etiquette and safety go together.
- Before any practice swing or shot, be sure no one is close by or in a position to be hit by the club, the ball, or any stones or twigs that could be moved by your swing.
  - Never hit a golf ball if others are in range. If you're hitting to an area you can't see, take time to be sure the area is clear.
  - Warn others if you're making a shot from a bad lie.

- Heed lightning warnings. Get inside a building as quickly as possible. If a shelter is not available, move toward low ground and avoid lone trees. Do not hold golf clubs.

- To avoid insect stings and tick bites, don't walk through woods and thick grass.
- Wear a hat and sunscreen with a 30 SPF.
- Contact the U.S. Golf Association at [www.usga.org](http://www.usga.org) for tips on course etiquette.

## Weeknight/Weekend Warrior Tips

- **Almost 75 percent of softball injuries involve sliding.** Avoid sliding if possible. If you do slide on occasion, practice the proper technique. Encourage your league to use breakaway bases, since almost all sliding injuries involve fixed bases.
- **Each year, hospital emergency rooms treat nearly 40,000 people for sports-related eye injuries.** Wear sports eyeguards when participating in activities that could injure your eyes.
- Buy quality equipment and keep it properly maintained. Be sure it fits your size and shape. ■

# Advice To Float Your Boat

*You really have to wonder what Shirley and her friends were thinking as they roared their motorboat up and down the Mississippi River. First, they drank too much alcohol under the steady gaze of a hot July sun. Then they forgot to check the gas gauge and ran out of fuel. Finally, drifting at the mercy of the river, they failed to put on their life jackets. Is it any wonder that when the boat struck a barge and sank, the member of their group who could not swim drowned. Just a little clear-headed thinking could have prevented a tragedy.*

**In a recent reporting period, almost 700 people died in nearly 5,000 recreational boating accidents.** To stay safely afloat:

## Know The Basics

- Take a boating-safety class to learn basic seamanship skills. **Nearly 70 percent of boating fatalities involve an operator who didn't complete such a course.** To take a class, contact a local safe-boating organization, or visit the U.S. Coast Guard website at [www.uscgboating.org](http://www.uscgboating.org).
- Know the rules and regulations of the area you will be navigating.
- Get a free vessel safety check and a list of recommended safety equipment from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary or U.S. Power Squadron. Make sure all items are on board and work.
- Before you cast off, be sure you have tools to make repairs.
- Be sure the boat is in top operating condition, with no tripping hazards, sharp edges exposed, or fire hazards.
- Maintain fuel and ventilation systems as directed in the owner's manual and state and federal requirements.
- Check the fuel system for leaks or signs of deterioration. Replace immediately a corroded fuel tank, or hoses that feel cracked, brittle, swollen, damp, or mushy.



- Heed regulations concerning fire extinguishers, and keep them in good condition and readily available.
- Give someone your itinerary.
- Close hatches and openings before fueling. Turn off electrical gear and appliances. No smoking.
- Fill tanks 90-95 percent full to allow for expansion. Fill portable tanks off the boat.
- After fueling, wipe up all spills. Open all hatches. For inboard engines, run the bilge blower at least four minutes before starting up.
- Never start the engine until all traces of vapors are eliminated. Your nose is your best detector.
- Check for power lines in your path before launching.
- **About 25 percent of boating deaths involve alcohol.** The marine environment accelerates impairment. Tests have shown only one-third the amount of alcohol that makes a person legally impaired on the road is enough to make a person equally impaired on the water. If someone does drink, use a designated driver.

## Life Jackets Are A Must

**Over 50 percent of fatal accidents are due to capsizes and falls overboard.** They usually result from overloading, poor weight distribution, high-speed maneuvers, leaning over the edge, and operator error.

- **Almost 85 percent of people who drown in boating-related incidents were not wearing a life jacket.** All occupants should have a Coast Guard-approved life jacket. Make sure life jackets are selected and fitted for each passenger.
- If you stand up for *any* reason in a small boat, wear a life jacket.
- Don't sit on your life jacket when it is not in use. The weight could damage the protective shell.
- Test your life jacket annually.
- Children and nonswimmers should wear a life jacket on any small boat or near water.

## Chart A Safe Course

- Be especially careful the first few trips of the season. Your skills might be rusty.
- Many accidents are the result of a collision with another boat or an object in the water, such as rocks, pilings, or debris. Stay alert. Use many of the same defensive measures you employ to drive a car.
- The overwhelming majority of capsizings occur on small boats because of sudden weight shifts. Move carefully and cautiously. Everyone should remain in their seats while the boat is in motion.
- Travel at safe speeds. Avoid sudden and sharp high-speed turns.
- Give swimmers, skiers, and divers plenty of distance. Be especially alert near boat docks.
- Before heading out, check the latest local weather forecast.
- Head for shore when the weather turns bad. Everybody should immediately don a life jacket. Sudden wind shifts and choppy water can mean a storm is brewing.
- Carry a portable radio for weather reports. A cellular phone, and a marine radio when venturing far from shore, are good additions.
- If your boat capsizes, don't panic. Stay with the boat.
- Don't boat alone.
- Wear your life jacket. It floats ... you don't. ■

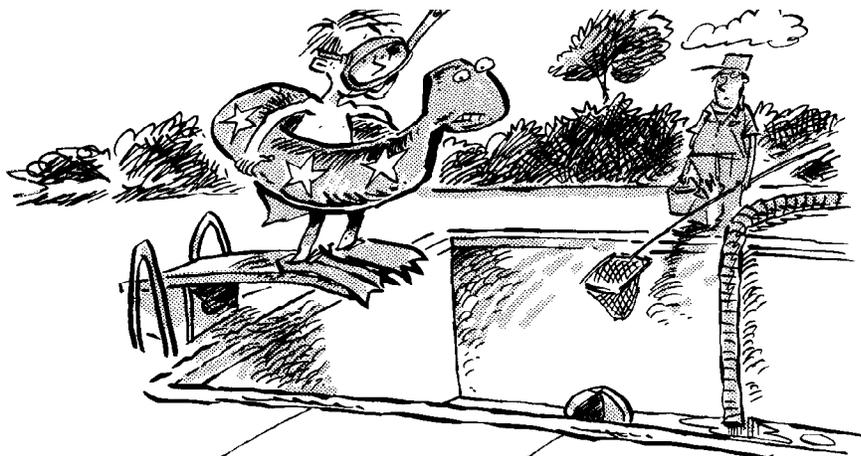
# Head Up! Hands Out!

*You couldn't even call it a dive. It was more like a lunge. Mary had been standing at the shallow end of the pool enjoying her drink and talking to a friend when Dave sneaked up behind her and pushed her into the water. Instead of jumping in feet first, Mary instinctively dived in, throwing her drink in the air and screaming good naturedly. In the midst of the fun, she banged her head into the bottom of the pool and severed her spinal cord. What began as a playful prank ended in a terrible tragedy and a lifetime of paralysis.*

**Diving incidents cause over 500 spinal cord injuries each year that result in some type of paralysis, according to the National Spinal Cord Injury Association. The most likely victim of these incidents is a young man between the ages of 13 and 30, and alcohol is involved in about half the cases.** Before you take your next plunge, pause to consider:

## Look Before You Leap

- Plan your dive. Check the depth of the water and make sure there is sufficient room to dive. There should be at least 25 feet of clear dive path in front of you.
- Never dive head first into six feet of water or less, where most diving injuries occur.
- Check the area you are about to dive into for obstacles above and beneath the water. If you are not certain what the conditions are below the water, do not dive.
- Never assume you know the depth of a familiar piece of water. Droughts, shifting sediment, and tides may cause the depth to change.
- Always jump feet first on your first plunge, even if you think it's safe to dive.
- Don't dive through objects such as inner tubes.
- Never dive or swim alone.
- Consider taking diving lessons from a qualified instructor.



- Alcohol and water do not mix. Don't swim or dive if you have been using alcohol or drugs. Diving requires clear thinking before and during the dive. Even half a drink, or some medicines, can impair a diver's judgment and control.

## Rules For Pools

- Many diving injuries occur in swimming pools, particularly backyard pools. To protect yourself and others, follow these basic rules:
- Never dive or slide head first into shallow, above-ground pools.
  - In an in-ground pool:
    - do not dive off the side of diving boards, slides or other pool equipment.
    - never dive or slide head first in the shallow end.
    - do a diving board test to gauge its spring before using it.
  - Always jump directly forward from the edge of the pool or the diving board.
  - For night diving, be sure the lighting is good.
  - Never run or engage in horseplay.
  - There are only two proper ways to use a pool slide: sitting, going down feet first; or, lying flat on your belly, head first. All other methods present a risk of serious injury. If headfirst slides are to be attempted, the pool slide must exit into deep water.

## Survive Your Dive

- Keep your dives simple. Don't attempt dives with a straight vertical entry. They take a long time to slow down and must be done only after careful training and in pools designed for competitive diving.
- Don't run and dive. That can give you the same impact as a dive from a board.
- Plan a shallow dive.
- During the dive, keep your head up, arms extended, hands flat and tipped up. Your extended arms and hands help you to steer up to the surface, and protect your head.
- When you dive, be ready immediately to steer up and away from the bottom. Arch your back.

## Managing The Unthinkable

- If you think a spinal injury has occurred:
- do not try to move the victim unless his or her life is in danger.
  - float the person face up until help arrives. Do not pull them from the water.
  - get trained help.
  - avoid unnecessary movements. Proceed slowly and gently.
  - immobilize the neck by making a vise with your hands and arms.
  - If there is a spinal cord injury, contact the National Spinal Cord Injury Association (<http://www.spinalcord.org>) for assistance. ■

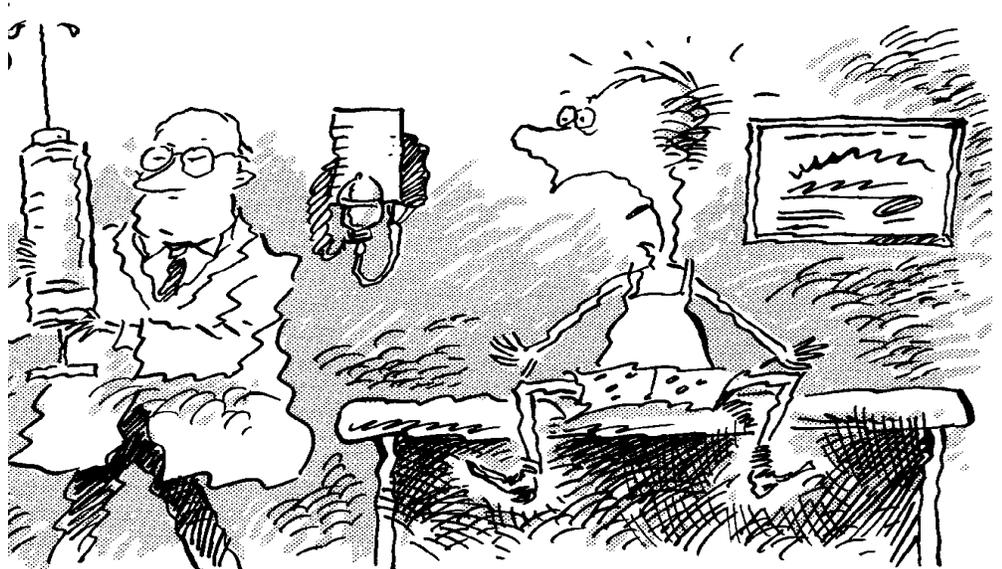
# Global Warning

United States residents take more than 50 million trips abroad each year. Unfortunately, many of them do not make the return trip, and 6,000 Americans die on foreign soil each year. There are far more serious issues, it turns out, than not being able to locate a rest room in an emergency. Here are some things to consider to help assure you put your return ticket to use.

## Before You Go

While we think of food and diseases as the main culprits, highway travel is the biggest threat to the safety of the overseas traveler. This is especially true in developing countries, where accident rates are between 20 to 50 times as high as rates in developed countries.

- Plan itineraries with safety as your primary consideration. As much as possible, reduce the amount of highway travel required to see various sites.
- Talk to your doctor about your trip. Get vaccinated. Ideally, this should be done four to six weeks prior to travel.
- Pack extra dosages of all your medications. Your medicines might be unavailable at your destination. Carry them with you on the plane.
- Bring a brief summary of your medical history.
- Bring a medical kit appropriate to your destination. Include medications and supplies, such as a water-purifying chemical or device.
- Your physician or travel agent can help you identify a good doctor and hospital at your destination. If you haven't done your planning and find you need a doctor, ask at the front desk of a luxury hotel, or check with U.S. facilities or the Embassy.
- Visit the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for health precautions at various destinations.
- For information on safety, contact



the State Department at [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov).

## Hey, But I'm Hungry!

- Pay careful attention to safe food and water guidelines for the country you are visiting.
- You may need to avoid ice cubes, iced drinks, and noncarbonated bottled fluids made from water of uncertain quality. Boiling water is the most reliable method to make water safe to drink.
- Foods of particular concern include: salads, milk products, raw meat, and shellfish.
- Only eat meat, poultry, and seafood that have been thoroughly cooked.
- Vegetables should be freshly cooked. Peel fresh fruits yourself.
- Brush your teeth with bottled water.

## Travel Hazards

- On the plane, move your feet and legs every 15 minutes. A few travelers experience blood clots on long flights.
- If you drive, familiarize yourself with the car, local driving rules, habits and road signs **before** leaving.
- Drive defensively and never think you know what the other driver is going to do. Drivers in different

countries do not follow the same rules that we do.

- Don't get bitten. Many diseases are not preventable by vaccines or drugs. In buggy regions, keep your arms and legs covered. Use a strong insect repellent. Avoid scented cosmetics.

Mountain sickness afflicts one-fourth of visitors to altitudes above 6,000 feet. The symptoms include headaches, fatigue, shortness of breath, followed by appetite loss, nausea and sleeplessness. Untreated, it can be highly dangerous. Following are some tips for avoiding or minimizing altitude sickness:

- Check with your doctor on a possible medication you can take, and what drugs to avoid.
- Ascend gradually. If possible, spend a night or two at 5,000 feet before going higher.
- Take it easy. Don't jog, ski, or perform vigorous exercise the first day. Ease into physical activities on the second day.
- Drink a lot of water. And **don't** drink alcohol.
- Eat carbohydrates. They require less oxygen to metabolize than fats. ■

# Just Horsing Around

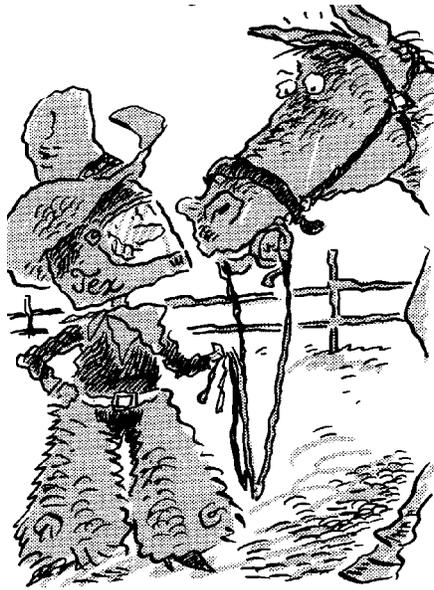
To watch the cowboy movies, you'd think falling off a horse was as painless as a walk in the park. Wrong, Red Rider! The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimates there are about 70,000 injuries associated with horses and riding each year, and 150 deaths. There are about 6,000 head or spinal injuries annually, and probably no horse riding incident caught the public's attention more than the tragedy that befell Christopher Reeve.

Horses helped us settle the West, but sometimes it's not so easy to settle *them*. Whether you are a novice or an experienced rider, here are some tips to stay safe in the saddle.

## Some Preliminaries

- Falls are the most common of all riding injuries. Always wear a properly secured, hard-shell riding helmet that has been certified by the Safety Equipment Institute. Wear the helmet at all times when working around horses. **Studies show that the number of head injuries could be reduced by a third, and the number of severe head injuries could be cut in half if riders would wear equestrian helmets.**

- Batting and bike helmets are not acceptable for horseback riding.
- Wear smooth-soled riding shoes that cover the ankle. The shoes should have at least a half-inch raised heel to prevent getting a foot caught in the stirrup and being dragged.
- Wear long pants to prevent chafing, and possible infections.
- Clothing must be snug to avoid becoming tangled with the saddle.
- Wear well fitting gloves to protect hands from blisters, rope burns and cuts.
- Don't wear jewelry, bracelets or flapping clothing that might startle a horse, or get caught.
- Inform the stable of your experience level. If you're a beginner, get instructions from a certified trainer and ask for a quiet, small horse.
- When approaching a horse, speak



softly so the animal hears you coming; walk where the horse can see you; stroke him on the neck or shoulder first; and approach from the shoulder at an angle.

- Do not run, yell or play behind a horse.
- Avoid a horse's blind spot. Do not walk or stand directly in front of or behind a horse. If you must walk behind a horse, stay at least 15 feet away.
- Do not feed a horse from your hand.
- Do not touch a strange horse unless its owner says the horse would welcome the attention.
- Walk around a horse, not under its body, neck or tie rope.
- Carry a cell phone for emergencies, but keep it turned off.

## Saddle Up

- Check all leather pieces for wear or cracking.
- Check stitching for loose or broken threads.
- Inspect the cinch strap that secures the saddle to the horse's back. It should be solid and tight.
- Be sure the saddle and stirrups are properly adjusted. With your foot in the stirrup, there should be a 1/4" clearance between each side of your shoe and the stirrup.
- Always mount in an open area

away from objects you could fall on or the horse could get caught up in. Use a mounting block if necessary.

Most injuries occur when a rider is unintentionally separated from the horse. To stay with your horse:

- Avoid riding on heavily traveled roads. Watch for traffic at all times. Wear light colored clothing.
- Ride single file on trails and roads. Keep at least one horse length between horses.
- Don't ride alone. The lead rider should warn of upcoming hazards.
- Ride on the soil. Make sure the footing is good.
- Watch for unusual objects in the horse's path.
- If you need to adjust your equipment or clothing, dismount.
- Never tie or wrap yourself to a horse. The Horsemanship Safety Association says you should always be able to escape your horse in three seconds or less.
- Never ride double.
- In a lightning storm, dismount and go to a low area, but not under a tree.
- Make sure an up-to-date first aid kit is available at all times.

## Kids And Horses

Kids love horses. What child has not asked for a pony at some point? According to the American Medical Equestrian Association, before you grant your child's wish, he or she should have:

- The desire to ride.
- The muscle strength to hold the proper position in the saddle.
- The balance to remain on the horse.
- The ability to understand instructions and follow directions.
- Neck muscles strong enough to support fitted, approved headgear.
- A saddle that fits the child and the horse.
- Only then should you find the proper calm horse and the certified instructor who has the experience and patience to teach your child. ■

# Wheels Of Misfortune

*It was a typical case of "anything you can do, I can do better." Mona had been a very good ice skater as a girl, and she had even played on a few ice hockey teams. She was athletic and tough as nails. When the teenage boy next door jokingly challenged her to a rollerblade race, the competitor in her quickly accepted the dare. Mona, Super Mother and Editor of the Local Newspaper, laced on a pair of borrowed skates, took a quick practice run, and rolled to the starting line. Ten yards into the contest, she hit a rough piece of pavement, and she skidded to a stop on bare hands and knees, breaking her wrist in the process. Her accident didn't make the front page of her paper, and Mona felt lucky it didn't make the obituary page, either.*

More than 15 million people participate in rollerblading, or inline skating. And that includes many adults. **About 25,000 skaters are treated in hospital emergency rooms every year.**

## Dress For Failure

Fractures to the wrist and lower arm account for nearly half of all injuries to skaters. Lacerations, abrasions, head injuries, and concussions are also a danger. The proper equipment can cut down on the danger when the inevitable spill occurs. Equipment includes:

-a helmet with a hard plastic shell and padding underneath. It should have a chin strap, and it should not block your vision or hearing. Be sure to purchase helmets that meet the recommended safety standards set by ANSI or Snell. An approved bicycle helmet will do.

-elbow and knee pads designed for skating. They should have a hard shell cover and fit snugly so they don't slide out of place.

-wrist guards. They should have a hard plastic splint on the top and



bottom. Wrist guards and elbow pads help reduce the risk to these areas of the body by more than 80 percent.

-a good pair of gloves.

• Purchase the proper skates (or boot), based on your skating experience and exercise goals. For best results, an inline skate boot should fit snugly but allow for a little extra toe room in the front. Go to a store with knowledgeable sales people.

• Wear a thin liner of silk or polypropylene under a medium-weight athletic sock. Thick, all-cotton socks do not keep the feet dry and contribute to blisters and other foot problems.

## Don't Skate Around The Basics

• Before you start take a lesson, including how to fall safely, from a qualified instructor. Contact a local retailer, or visit the website of the Inline Skating Resource Center at [www.iisa.org](http://www.iisa.org).

• Achieve a basic skating level before taking to the road.

• Observe all traffic regulations.

• Skate on smooth, paved surfaces away from heavy traffic and crowds of people.

• Do not skate on surfaces that have water, dirt, sand, or gravel on them. You'll lose traction and control of your skates.

• Avoid intersections at the bottom of hills.

• Do not skate at night. It is difficult to see obstacles in your path, or to be seen by others.

• Skate on the right side of paths, trails, and sidewalks.

• Warn pedestrians when you are approaching from the rear.

• Inspect your boots each time you skate.

• Rotate the wheels when they begin to wear unevenly.

• Skate defensively, especially on streets. Skaters are more invisible and vulnerable than bicyclists.

• Check out a new route by bicycle or car before skating it.

## Skateboard Warnings

**About 100,000 skateboarders require emergency room treatment each year, according to the CPSC.** Skateboarders with less than a week of experience have the most injuries, usually due to falls.

• Learn how to fall safely.

• Do not ride a skateboard in the street. And never hitch a ride on the bumper of a moving vehicle.

• Check out the area for holes, bumps, rocks, and debris before you ride. Seek out parks and areas designated for skateboards.

• Never skate in the rain.

• Always skate with friends. If you are injured, you will need help.

• Wear closed, slip-resistant shoes, a helmet, wrist braces, gloves, and special padding for knees, elbows and hips.

• Before using a board, check it for hazards. Serious defects should be repaired by a professional. ■

# Drinking Problems

*Her parents were so happy that Suzy had graduated from high school. Next was college, then a job, followed by marriage and children. The opportunities were endless. If there was ever a night worthy of a toast, this was it. And, of course, one toast led to another as the adults celebrated Suzy's bright future. Behind the scenes, Suzy and her friends sneaked in a couple toasts of their own. Later, while driving her friends home, Suzy, carried away by excitement and alcohol, took a turn too fast. The car flew off the road, killing two of her friends. Suzy's bright future was clouded forever.*

All too often, alcohol plays a prominent role in our celebrations, and the results can be tragic. Here are some suggestions to help you keep a healthy perspective on your party attitude.

## For Parents Of The Teen Party Host

- Mothers Against Drunk Driving offer these suggestions for an enjoyable teen party:
  - Set your ground rules with your teen before the party. Stress shared responsibility for hosting the party. Plan the party together.
  - Notify police when planning a large party. This will help police protect you, your guests and your neighbors.
  - Plan to be home, and conspicuous, during the entire party.
  - Select a location that allows comfort and adequate supervision.
  - Replenish the food trays and the drinks yourself. Your occasional presence will help keep a lid on unwanted activities such as drinking.
  - Discuss the legal drinking age for alcohol with your child, and be sure you both enforce the law.
  - Alert yourself to signs of alcohol or other drug abuse by teens.
  - Notify the parents of teens who arrive at the party drunk or under the influence of any other drug to ensure the teen's safe passage home.



- Limit the party attendance (no party crashers!) and set start and ending times. Call the police at the first signs of trouble.

## For Parents Of Teens Attending

- Know where your teenager will be. Get the address and phone number of the party host.
- Tell your child you expect a phone call if the location is changed.
- Contact the parents of the party-giver to:
  - verify the occasion.
  - offer assistance.
  - explain your rules for your child, including a curfew and your stand against drinking.
  - make sure a parent will be present, and will actively supervise.
  - be sure alcohol or drugs will not be permitted.
- If you don't like the answers you're getting from the host, don't let your child go.
- Tell your child never to ride home with a person who has been drinking or taking drugs. About forty percent of all traffic fatalities are alcohol related. During holiday periods the percentages increase significantly, to around fifty percent.
- Know how your teen will get to and from the party. If necessary, provide the transportation yourself.
- Establish a time your teenager should be home and enforce it.

## Adult Parties

If you are the host:

- Establish designated drivers in advance of the party.
- If underage people are coming, involve them in planning alternative activities. Supervise the activities.
- Avoid making alcohol beverage consumption the party's focus.
- Serve foods that are rich in proteins. Eating slows the rate at which the body absorbs alcohol.
- Don't serve salty foods that make people want to drink more.
- Measure mixed drinks with a shot glass to avoid over-pouring. Pour sensible (one ounce) drinks. Do not let guests pour their own.
- Stop serving alcohol to someone who is obviously intoxicated.
- At least 90 minutes before the end of the party, stop alcohol service and provide alcohol free beverages with food such as desserts.
- Arrange a ride for people who drank too much, or allow them to spend the night.

If you are attending:

- Eat before and while you're drinking alcohol. Food in your stomach slows alcohol absorption to a level the liver can better handle.
- Make your first drink a large glass of water, juice, or soda to quench your thirst. Never drink alcohol because you're thirsty. You'll drink too much, too fast.
- Stand away from the bar. Dance, mingle and talk to the guests.
- Space drinks to a maximum of one an hour. Alternate between alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks.
- Stop drinking alcohol 90 minutes before the party is over. There is no other way to sober up. Black coffee won't do it, and neither will a cold shower or other so-called "remedies." Only time will make you sober enough to drive safely.
- Be able and ready to say no if you've had enough or just choose not to drink alcohol. ■

# When You're Joggin' Use Your Noggin

*Susan was a slave to her schedule. Rain or shine, she laced on her running shoes and set out on her daily jog. She left at the same time, ran the same route, and arrived home at the same time. It was like clockwork. And the schedule that gave Susan comfort gave the mugger opportunity. Susan knew there was trouble the moment he pulled his car beside her on the curb and asked for directions. She kept running, he kept following. This day belonged to Susan, though. A mounted policeman crossed her path, and she yelled for help. The car sped off, but was caught two blocks later. The driver was wanted for armed robbery and rape, and admitted that he had singled out Susan because he knew when and where to find her.*



## On Your Mark

- If you are a new runner, visit your physician for a complete medical examination if you have high blood pressure or lipids; a personal or family history of health problems; or if you are: over 35 years of age; overweight; physically inactive and easily fatigued; a smoker.

- Get fit before starting to run. Consult a medical professional for strengthening exercises and stretches for running.

- Warm up before you run. Afterwards, cool down to enable your body to gradually return to normal.

## Plan Carefully

- Choose a safe time and place to run. Walk the route first.
- If possible run on grass or dirt. Knee injuries can occur if you run on hard surfaces.
- Avoid running on roadways. However, if you must run there:
  - avoid peak traffic hours.
  - run on the shoulder facing traffic at all times.
  - obey all traffic signals.
  - do not run on snow or ice covered roads. Automobile drivers have

enough distractions.

- Wear light colored clothing at dawn or dusk, and bright clothes in daytime.

- Alter your route. Don't be predictable, which would allow someone to assume you would pass by at a certain time. Think of Susan.

- If you must run at night or in inclement weather, choose well-lighted, populated areas. Wear highly visible white or reflective clothing. To improve your chances of being seen, carry a flashlight.

- Save the safest area of your route for the end of your run. You are most fatigued then and less able to deal with an emergency situation. Reserve some energy for emergencies.

- Make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of a car, even when you have the right-of-way.

- Avoid running on narrow, twisting or hilly roads with no shoulders. You are hard to see, and when two cars approach each other, a hazardous situation occurs.

- Carry personal identification, including the person to contact in an emergency, and important medical information, such as blood type or allergies.

- Join a running association to get training tips.

## Stay Alert At All Times

- Never run with headphones.

- Avoid running near doorways, alleys, or dense shrubs.

- Always tell someone where you will be running and when you will return. Better yet, run with a friend.

- If you use a jogging path, run during the popular hours.

- Do not wear bright or expensive jewelry. It can attract thieves.

- Ignore verbal harassment.

- Do not daydream. Run with your head up. Be aware of your surroundings.

- Know the places where you could get help if necessary.

- Avoid areas with aggressive dogs. The best way to treat a barking dog is to act as if you are ignoring it, but stay alert for an attack.

- Do not run between a dog and its owner, especially a child.

- If you suspect a car is following you, run the other way. Don't hesitate to holler "I'm being followed" if you suspect someone is following you. Draw attention to yourself. ■

# Shoosh! Shoosh! Ouch!!!

The tragic deaths of Sonny Bono and Michael Kennedy remind us that sliding down the side of a mountain, like any recreational activity, must be approached with safety in mind.

**Each year approximately 35 people die while skiing/snowboarding, and over 100,000 are injured.** The good news is serious injuries are rare among America's millions of skiers and snowboarders. The better news is that almost all these injuries can be avoided.

## Getting Ready

- Get in shape and learn how to warm up. If you don't have a regular workout routine, exercise four to six weeks before you ski. Don't expect to ski yourself into shape.

- Use the proper equipment. Buy or rent from experts who can instruct on its proper usage. If you own equipment, have a professional check it at the beginning of each season.

- Before starting, take lessons from a qualified instructor. Learn how to fall safely.

- If you are at the intermediate level, take more lessons before you move on to advanced terrain.

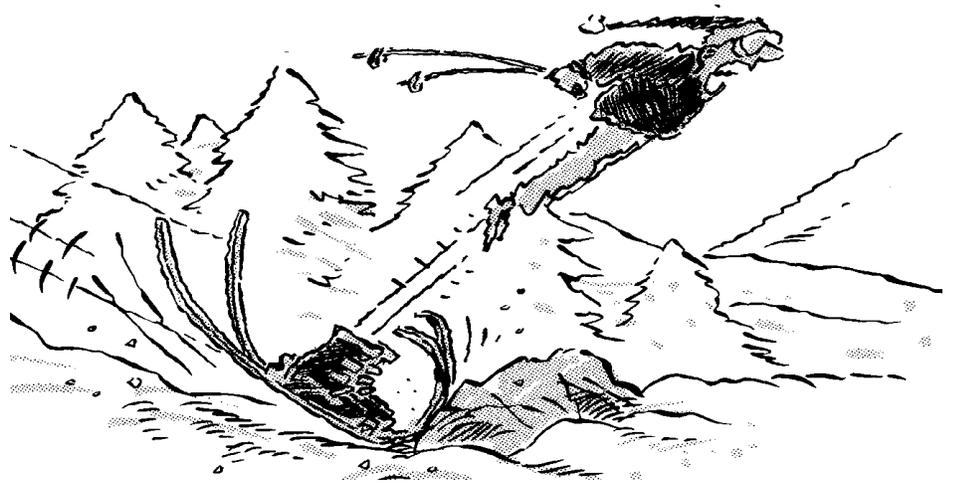
- Ask an expert to adjust the setting of the bindings according to your height, weight and skill level. Too tight and the skis won't fall off when you fall. Too loose and a ski might come off underneath you.

- Dress in layers. Wear a waterproof and wind-resistant shell. Invest in waterproof mittens or gloves, and a warm hat.

- Wear eye protection designed for skiing.

- Boots should fit snug in the heel and around the ankle, but allow for some toe movement.

- **According to the American Medical Association there are nearly 3,500 potentially serious head injuries each year related to snow skiing.** Wear a helmet, but experts stress the first line of defense is skiing responsibly. While they protect the wearer from some



injuries, helmets provide limited protection to skiers moving at higher speeds.

- Ski sober. Liquor dulls your abilities and dims your judgment.

- Wear sun protection. The sun reflects off the snow and is stronger than you think, even on cloudy days.

## Downhill Etiquette

The National Ski Areas Association publishes "Your Responsibility Code" for skiers. (Go to <http://www.nsaa.org/nsaa/home> for more education materials.)

1. Always stay in control, and be able to stop or avoid other people or objects.

2. People ahead of you have the right of way. It is your responsibility to avoid them.

3. You must not stop where you obstruct a trail, or are not visible from above.

4. Whenever starting downhill or merging into a trail, look uphill and yield to others.

5. Always use devices to help prevent runaway equipment.

6. Observe all posted signs and warnings. Keep off closed trails and out of closed areas.

7. Prior to using any lift, you must have the knowledge and ability to load, ride and unload safely.

Other tips include:

- Know your limits. One study found novices are 10 times more likely to be injured than experts.

- Don't overdo it. You are most vulnerable at the end of the day when fatigue begins to set in.

- Most ski injuries occur when skiers reach high speeds and lose control. Make round, continuous turns to stay in control. Don't ski on a slope that scares you.

- When possible, keep 10 feet or more between you and other skiers.

- If you pass another skier, shout, "On your right! Or "On your left!"

- Give skiers with disabilities a lot of space.

- At the bottom of the slope, move out of the way as quickly as possible.

- Trail and slope conditions vary constantly. Ski from the reality of the situation, not your memory of it.

- Be careful not to become dehydrated. Drink water continuously.

- To avoid hypothermia, go into the lodge to warm up periodically.

- Avoid skiing alone. If you do go out alone, tell someone your plans.

## Snowboarding

**About 30,000 snowboarding injuries are treated in emergency rooms each year. Almost half of the injuries occur during the first three attempts at the sport.**

- Take lessons before you begin.

- Practice skiers' etiquette tips.

- Wear a helmet. ■

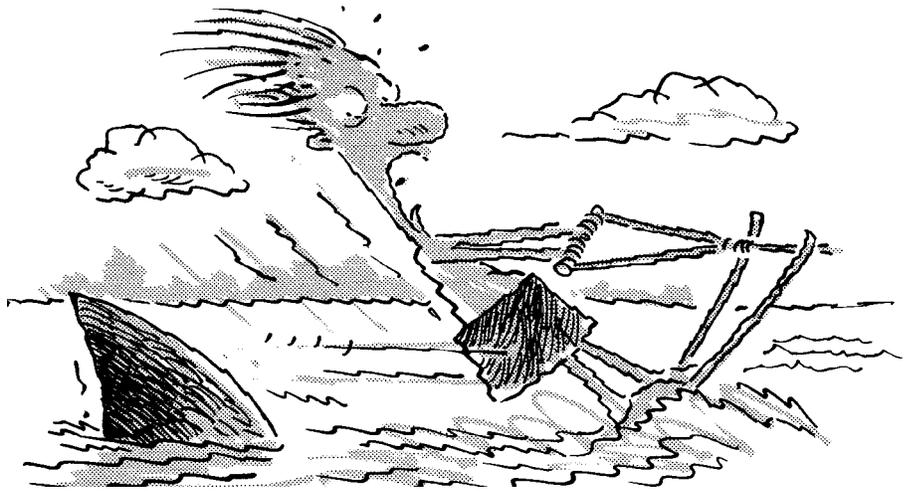
# Dangerous Water Falls

*Kathy was sure she was ready for this. True, she hadn't been on water skis for 15 years, but she had skied a lot as a girl. Water skiing, she reasoned, was no different than riding a bicycle. It all comes back to you once you climb on. So, even though Josh didn't want to drive the boat faster, Kathy insisted he crank it up. Faster! Faster! Ahh! The exhilaration of the wind in her face and the water at her feet. Ouch! The pain of losing control and flying head over heels, landing on her back, and having to be pulled from the water with a seriously sprained shoulder.*

**According to the National Safety Council, about 5 million Americans water ski each year, and approximately 6,500 require emergency room treatment.** Most of these injuries are the result of carelessness and poor preparation.

## Driver Prepare

- Learn and obey the "rules of the road" on water.
- It takes three to water ski:
  - the skier,
  - the tow boat operator,
  - an observer in the boat. The driver cannot watch and know if the skier has fallen while also seeing where the boat is going.
- Operate in a corridor at least 200 feet wide, giving a safety area of 100 feet on both sides of the boat. The ski path should be at least 2,000 to 3,000 feet in length.
- The boat driver is responsible for keeping the skier away from dangerous areas. Take time to get familiar with the shoreline, shallow areas and obstructions. Keep the boat a safe distance from the shore, docks, and objects in the water.
- Be alert for boats entering the ski area. If one does, shut down the engine and wait for the area to clear.
- Always pull novice skiers slowly. High speeds are not essential to pleasurable water skiing.
- Always approach a skier in the water on the driver's side of the boat.



- Picking a skier from the water is a dangerous proposition. Your boat engine must be turned off and the propeller must be fully stopped.
- The boat should run parallel to the shore and come in slowly when landing.
- When your skier is down, raise a ski flag to alert other boaters.
- Equip your boat with a wide-angle rear-view mirror.
- A towing pylon, boarding ladder and speedometer are also advisable.

## Skier Beware

- Know how to swim!
- Do not ski in unfamiliar waters where there could be unseen dangers. When skiing in new waters, take along someone familiar with the area.
- Never ski in shallow water, at night, or in front of another boat. Rough water is particularly dangerous since waves and a running sea will prevent the tow boat from keeping a smooth speed and course.
- Always wear a properly fitting U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket. Life jackets are required in most states. The life jacket should be Type III, approved by the Coast Guard, and designed as a ski vest. It should fit snugly, and it must keep the skier face up in the water if he or she falls.
- The skier and the boat driver should agree in advance on the gen-

eral boat path, and signals to use.

- If a skier falls, he or she should clasp both hands overhead to be seen and to signal they are OK. In a congested boating area, a downed skier should hold up a ski to show that everything is okay.
- Buy age-appropriate skis. Make sure the bindings are snug, but will release in case of a fall.
- Wear a helmet to protect against head injury.

*Some of this information came from U.S.A. Water Ski, at [www.usawaterski.org](http://www.usawaterski.org).*

## Other Water Hazards

- Don't stay on the water too long. The sun, wind, waves and vibration can make you tired.
- Whether you are pulling or being pulled, do not drink alcohol, take prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications, or use illegal drugs that can impair your judgment.
- Use and renew sunscreen.
- Some special advice for those who like to water-tube:
  - Stay well away from shore. Most injuries occur when water tubers come too close to shore.
  - Before water-tubing, inspect the rope for fraying and the tube for defects.
  - Wear a Type III life jacket.
  - Two people should be in the boat. ■

## KIDS' SAFETY INTRODUCTION

Children and youth are the most vulnerable members of society. A combination of inquisitiveness, lack of knowledge, and feelings of invincibility contribute to this vulnerability.

It is up to adults to protect children in their early years, and then to guide them in forming good safety habits as they acquire the knowledge to make decisions on their own.

Unfortunately, much work needs to be done as accidents are the leading cause of death from ages one through nineteen.

The principal causes of children and youth deaths, based on the most recent National Safety Council statistics, are:

Motor Vehicle	7,800
Drowning	1,300
Fires	700
Suffocation	700
Poison	400
Choking	200
Firearms	200
Falls	200
All Other	900
Total	12,400

# Getting The Right Sitter

*Ann needed a baby-sitter for her two young children. Marisa and Kendall needed money for their summer vacation, and babysitting provided a viable income for the perky fifteen-year-old cousins. It looked like a good match for everyone involved. The girls seemed responsible, and the two young children were easy to handle. So easy, in fact, that when the girls' boyfriends stopped by one afternoon, it was easy to be distracted from their job. When a vigilant neighbor came to the door toting little Eric, who had wandered from the house instead of taking his nap, the girls were terribly embarrassed and quickly unemployed. And Ann resolved to be more careful in her next choice of a sitter.*

Trusting your children with others is a serious step. The following tips can help assure you're entrusting the right people to watch after your most precious possessions.

## Finding A Suitable Sitter

- Is the sitter at least 13 years of age and responsible enough to care for your child?
- Look for a sitter who has received training from local agencies such as the "Y" or a hospital. Ideally, find a sitter who is certified in infant and child CPR.
- Meet the sitter ahead of time for a personal interview. Introduce them to your kids to see how they interact.
- Ask the sitter for references, and call them to check on qualifications and competency.
- Pose "What if ..." questions that will show you his or her degree of preparedness for the job. Admitting they don't know an answer is seen as a more positive response than bluffing a wrong answer.

## Before You Leave Home

- Have the sitter arrive early so you can show her around your house. Be sure to point out: the location of telephones, hard-to-find light switches, the first aid kit or medicine



chest, extra keys, flashlights, and blankets. Practice using the door locks and the burglar alarm system.

- Also, instruct the sitter on the safety precautions you have taken: point out the baby gates, child resistant locks, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, electrical outlet covers, toilet locks, etc.
- Show them all the entrances to your home.
- If preparing a meal is part of the job, train the sitter in how to use the stove or microwave.
- If your child is allowed to ride a bike or scooter, skateboard or inline skate while you are away, tell the sitter where the protective gear is stored, and that it must be worn.
- Leave written information and guidelines, including:
  - who and when to call for help.
  - feeding, bathing, bedtime and special needs instructions.
  - safety tips appropriate for your children; update them as necessary.
  - your name, home address and home phone number.
  - how to reach your home from major intersections.
  - important phone numbers, including where you can be reached, the phone number (and relationship) of someone to call in case you cannot be reached, the doctor, ambulance, fire department, police, poison

control center, and veterinarian.

-phrasing for the sitter to use to answer the phone or doorbell.

## Set Clear And Rigid Rules

- Instruct the sitter to never leave your child alone - even for a second.
- Clearly establish areas which are "In Limits" and "Off Limits." For example, the sitter should know if it's permissible to play in the back yard or enter the basement.
- Allowing guests is not advisable. (Remember Marisa and Kendall?). Discuss whether it's okay to make phone calls to friends, watch TV or use the computer.
- Ask the sitter to keep the drapes or blinds closed at night and to keep both an outside light and inside light turned on.
- No smoking, drugs or alcohol are allowed.
- Tell her to get your child out of the house immediately if they see flames or smell smoke or gas.
- Show her your family gathering spot outside the house in case of an emergency evacuation.

NOTE: If you leave your child at your sitter's home, make sure you review the above information and check out the home beforehand to see that it is childproofed.

*Some information courtesy of the Safe Kids USA organization. ■*

# The Gift Of Safety

The winter holidays are upon us. And while they were not created expressly for the benefit of children, youngsters take great delight in the festivities surrounding this magical time of year. However, the magic can quickly turn to disaster by simple oversight or poor planning. **One of the greatest gifts we can give our children is our concern for their safety.**

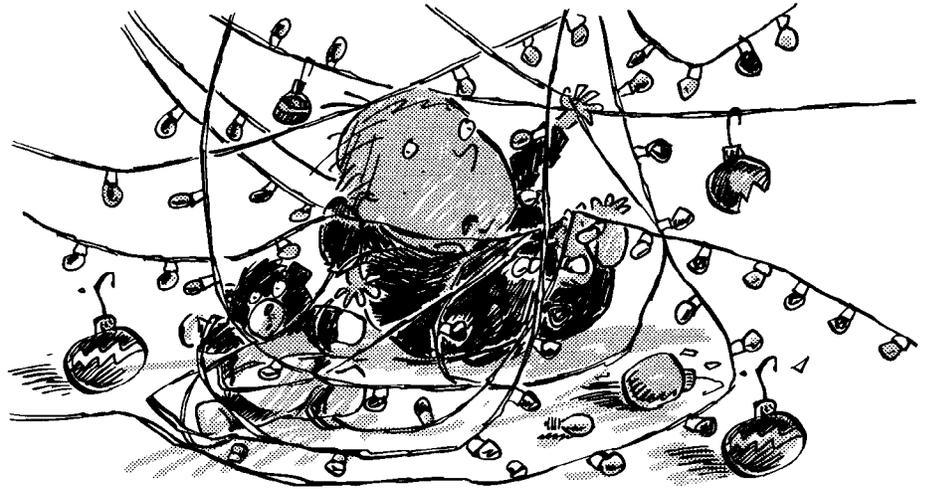
## Well Planned Decorations

Decorate your house with children in mind.

- Avoid room decorations that are sharp, easily breakable, or very small.
- Avoid trimmings or decorations that resemble candy or food. Children could mistake them for the real thing.
- Keep small ornaments, tinsel, small figurines and other decorations out of reach of young children.
- Place breakable ornaments, or those with small detachable parts, on upper tree branches.
- Keep lighting wires away from young children. Push the wires into the tree branches and clip the securely to the branches. Never allow children to play with light strings or other electrical decorations.
- Trim lower tree branches to prevent eye injuries.
- Keep candles, matches and lighters out of reach.
- Make sure all electrical decorations are safety tested. Look for the UL Label.
- Keep toddlers away from electrical fixtures. Use large outlet covers on electrical sockets that are not in use.
- Secure electrical cords so children can't pull or trip over them.

## Well Chosen Toys

- Be sure the toy matches the age, skills, abilities and interest of the child.



- Avoid toys that have sharp or metal edges, glass, cords and strings, or sharp points.
- Buy toys for infants and toddlers that are too large to fit in their mouth. Here's a valuable rule of thumb: If a toy or part can slide through an empty toilet-paper roll, it's too small for small children.
- Be sure eyes of dolls and buttons on stuffed animals are securely fastened.
- Do not allow children under age six to blow up a balloon, or be alone with one. Balloons are the most dangerous "toy" for small children.
- When purchasing toys for older children, consider the possibility they may fall into the hands of younger children.

## More Precautions

- Carefully supervise youngsters during holiday activities and parties.
- Keep toddlers away from the kitchen when cooking and baking are in progress. If they must be present, keep them in high chairs or play pens.
- If you build a fire, use a fireplace screen. Do not leave young children or the fire unattended.
- Keep "fire salts" that produce colored flames on wood fires away from children. They can make a child sick if swallowed.

- Keep round, hard foods and candies such as candy cane pieces, mints, nuts and popcorn out of reach of children under age five.
- Keep holiday plants away from children. Some are toxic. Call the poison control center if your child eats part of a plant.
- Keep alcoholic drinks and containers, baking ingredients with alcohol, and cigarette butts out of reach.
- Post poison control center and emergency phone numbers by all phones.
- If you travel to the house of a relative or friend, perform an immediate safety check. Look for such things as visible prescription drugs or poisonous products, unguarded appliances and stairs, toxic products under sinks, and unprotected electrical outlets.

Keep a close eye on your child. If it's someplace you go frequently, take along necessary safety devices for temporary use.

- When shopping with small children, sew or pin their name, address and phone number inside their clothing in case you become separated.

*Some of this information courtesy of Safe Kids USA. ■*

# Pool Perils

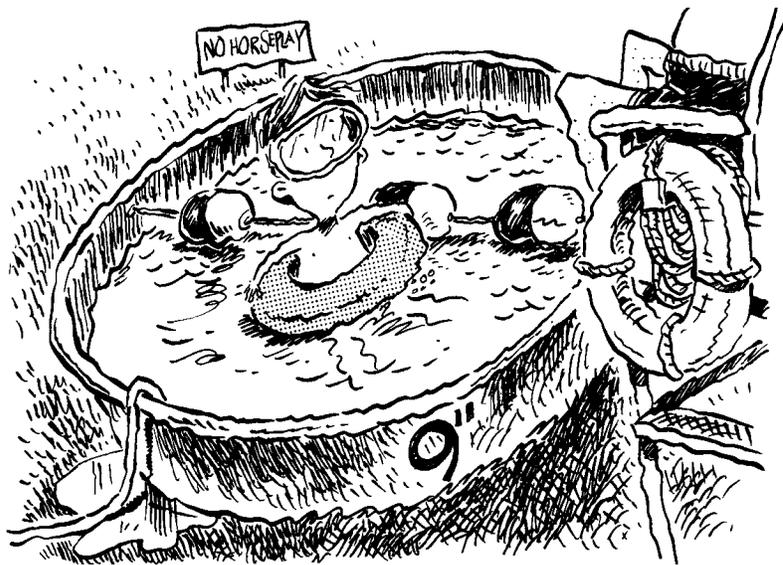
Swimming is great exercise and wonderful entertainment for children. Nevertheless, drowning is the second-leading cause of injury-related death in children. Each year, about 1,000 children drown and another 4,000 are hospitalized for near-drowning, usually in a pool owned by their family. Over 60 percent of children who drown in pools are under age four. These tragedies do not have to happen.

## Poolside Fortifications

- Install a fence at least four to five feet high, with vertical slats no more than four inches apart to keep children from squeezing through. It should have no foot or handholds that can help a young child climb it.
- The fence should completely surround the pool, and prevent direct access from the house and yard.
- The gate of the fence should be self-closing and self-latching as well. Never prop open a pool gate.
- Gate latches should be higher than your children can reach. And the latch should open away from the water, so that small children cannot use their weight to push it open.
- If the house forms one side of the barrier, then doors should be protected with alarms that produce an audible sound when a door is unexpectedly opened.
- Steps and ladders leading from the ground to an above-ground pool should be secured and locked, or removed when the pool is not used.
- Remove shrubs or trees that obstruct your view of the pool from inside the house.
- The CPSC recommends layers of protection, including fences, pool covers and alarm systems. To obtain barrier recommendations, go to <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/pool.pdf>.

## Poolside Precautions

- Keep a phone near the pool area. It is vital for emergencies, and you will not be tempted to desert a child



to answer a phone in the house.

- Keep a strong, lightweight pole at least 12 feet long with a blunt end poolside.
- Invest in a ring buoy firmly attached to a long throwing rope.
- Put ladders on both ends of the pool.
- Do not leave objects such as tables or chairs near the fence, where children can use them to climb into the pool area.
- The water depth should be clearly marked on the pool deck and, if possible, above the water line of the pool wall.
- Indicate the break between the deep and shallow areas with a semi-permanent float line.
- Always completely remove the cover before using the pool or spa. Beware: light weight, floating solar-type pool/spa covers are not safety covers. A child can become trapped under this type of cover.
- A motorized pool cover operated by a switch that meets the standards of ASTM International adds to the protection of your children but should not replace the fence between your house and the pool.

## You Can't Be Too Vigilant

Constant, vigilant supervision is the key to poolside safety when

children are nearby.

- Never leave a child alone near any body of water ... even for an instant.
- Do not assume a child can swim just because he or she has had swimming lessons.
- Do not rely on inflatable toys or water wings to keep a child afloat. They are not life jackets.
- Do not bring tricycles or wheel toys into the pool area. Children could accidentally ride them into the water.
- Forbid horseplay. Pools are for swimming, not wrestling.
- During social gatherings, designate an adult to supervise children. Rotate the assignment so the watchers stay alert.
- If a child is missing, check the pool first. Seconds count in preventing death or disability.
- Remove toys from the pool area when not in use. Toys can attract young children into a pool.
- Make sure the drains and drain covers meet current standards.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation, CPR. Baby-sitters and other caretakers should also know CPR.
- If you own a hot tub, many of these safety guidelines will apply. ■

# The 6-12 Years

How good is your memory? What do you remember between your sixth birthday and your thirteenth? Maybe the time you climbed the tree and jumped into the sandbox? Or the time you took the dare and rode your bicycle with "no hands" down Maple hill? How about that time you and Johnny found some cigarettes and decided to light one up?

Do any of these shenanigans sound familiar? Probably. Which is exactly why you worry about your own kids at a similar age. And you *should* worry. **Each year over 1,500 children in this age group die from unintentional injuries.**

It's impossible to warn of every danger facing inquisitive children, but we can alert you to some of the hazards. The rest is up to you.

## Basic Rules For You And Your Child

- Set the example, to encourage your children to do as you do.
- Teach personal safety habits in a calm and confident manner, without terrifying them.
- Tell children to:
  - never go with strangers.
  - run away when trouble arises.
  - say "NO" to inappropriate requests.
  - tell you if anyone touches them, or tries to touch them, in their "bathing-suit" areas.
- Get to know the families of friends your child may visit. Discuss safety issues with the parents, such as guns, swimming pools, older siblings, TV policy, dangerous animals, smoking, etc.
- Know where your kids play. Do not allow them to play near railroad tracks, quarries, ponds, abandoned buildings, roadways, new construction sites or other local hazards.
- Keep safety in mind when deciding on activities. Talk to the leaders to review safety procedures.
- Teach children when and how to use emergency phone numbers. If



they have doubts about whether to call, they should call.

- Post emergency numbers near the phone: police, fire, where parents can be reached, a neighbor who can help in an emergency.
- If you decide to have a gun, keep it unloaded and in a locked place separate from the ammunition. Teach your kids gun safety rules.
- Children of this age group should not use power lawn mowers.
- Don't let children play with matches, lighters or fireworks.
- Fire is always a concern. Teach this one early: **Stop! Drop! And Roll!** if their clothing catches fire. Also teach and practice what to do when the smoke alarm sounds.

## Transportation Issues

**\* Motor-vehicle incidents cause about 60 percent of the deaths in this age group.** Insist children always wear safety belts.

- All children from about 40 lbs. to 80 lbs. and less than 4'9" tall should be properly restrained in a booster seat. A child who cannot sit with her back straight against the vehicle seat back cushion, with knees bent over a vehicle's seat edge without slouching, must use a booster seat.
- All kids in this age bracket should ride in the back if possible.
- Never let a child ride in a carpool without a safety belt.

- Always hold the hand of a child under 10 when crossing a street. Supervise children until they prove they are safe pedestrians.

- Plan and enforce the safest routes to school, friends' houses, play areas and stores.

**Each year about 350,000 children under 15 are treated in emergency rooms for bike-related injuries.** To avoid injuries:

- Buy a bike they can control.
- Make them wear a helmet. Choose a new helmet with a federal label from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC). A used helmet could have flaws. To test the helmet's fit, tighten the straps and wiggle it around. If you can slip it off without unbuckling it, try another helmet. Never reuse helmets after a fall.

- Teach them to ride on bike paths, sidewalks, or in protected areas, but not in the street. And never ride after dark.

- Never carry passengers.
- Avoid loose clothing that can catch in chains and spokes.

## Don't Toy With Safety

- Keep safety in mind when selecting toys.
- Buy the right size playground equipment for your child's age and size, and make sure there are 9 to 12 inches of safe surfacing beneath it.
- Don't buy items that shoot, propel or need to be thrown if you do not have the proper playing area. The CPSC recommends that children under 14 should not use high-velocity pellet or BB guns.
- To keep children from playing with the garage door, mount the wall switch out of the reach of children.
- Cover safety precautions and gear associated with inline skates, skateboards, scooters and any new toys. Bike helmets are okay for roller-skating, inline skating, skateboarding and scooters.

*Some information courtesy of Safe Kids USA. ■*

# Playground Safety

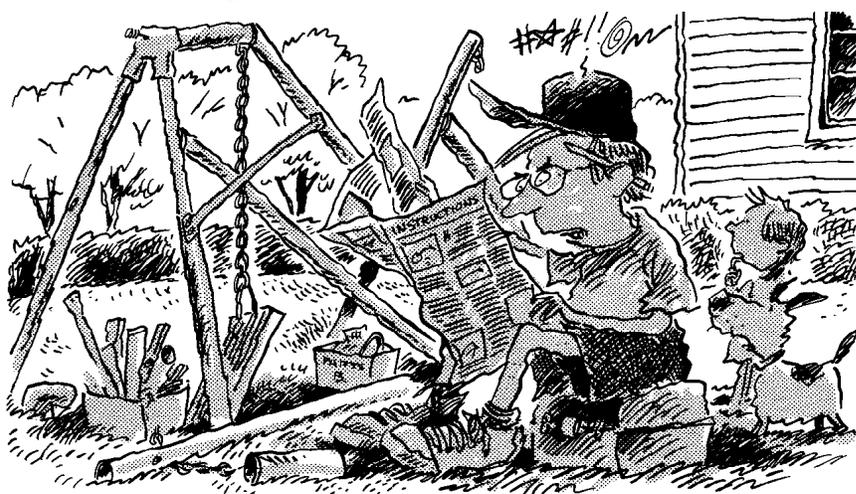
Urging kids to "Run along and play" should not amount to sending them off to harm themselves. Sadly, that's too often the result. **According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), more than 200,000 children are treated in hospital emergency rooms each year as a result of injuries related to playground equipment, and about 15 children die.** Here are some suggestions to help your kids "Run along and play *safely*."

## Safety At Home

- Buy well-made equipment and assemble it correctly. Place it on a level surface and anchor it firmly.
- **About 70 percent of all playground injuries are caused by falls.** The surface under any playground should be made of wood chips, shredded wood mulch or rubber, sand, or pea gravel, and should be at least 12 inches deep. This use-zone surface should extend six feet from the play area's perimeter.
- Swing seats should be made of soft materials, like lightweight canvas, soft rubber, or plastic.
- Do not use swings in the shape of animals. They have been associated with several deaths a year. Also, the CPSC recommends full-bucket seats for younger children.
- Do not buy equipment with open "S" hooks, sharp edges, or openings between 3.5 and 9 inches. A child's head may get caught in openings that size, and he might strangle. This hazard has been especially common on rings and guardrails.
- Install playground equipment at least six feet from fences or walls, and in shady areas or facing north.
- Place protective caps on all exposed screws or bolts. Check for loose nuts and bolts monthly.

## Do An Inspection In The Park

- Check out your public playground carefully before using it.



- Be sure there are open spaces, fences, or hedges to prevent kids from running into areas with cars.
- Make sure the use zones have the recommended surfaces. The use zone in front and back of a swing should extend out at least twice the height of the swing, as measured from the ground to the crossbar.
- Surfaces 30 inches or more above the ground need guardrails.
- The highest climbing platform for preschool children should not exceed six feet. For school-age children, eight feet is the limit.
- Swings should be spaced at least 24 inches apart, and at least 30 inches from the supportive structure.
- Moving equipment should be separated from other equipment by 12 feet, with no accessible parts that can crush or pinch fingers.
- Ideally, preschoolers should have separate areas.
- There should be no sharp points or edges that can cause cuts.
- All "S" hooks should be closed.
- Be sure sliding equipment has a platform, so kids can climb down if they want. There should be a bar across the top to force kids to sit down before sliding. Also, there should be no V-shaped openings, or open areas close to the tops of slides, where clothing could get caught.
- Avoid areas with exposed concrete footings, tree roots, or rocks.

## Play An Active Role

- Approximately 40 percent of playground injuries are due to inadequate supervision. Be sure an adult actively supervises your child.
- Do not allow horseplay.
- Make sure your child plays on age-appropriate equipment. Equipment is specifically designed for ages two through five, and five through twelve.
- Children from two through five should not play on the following equipment: chain or cable walks, free-standing arch climbers or climbing equipment with flexible components, fulcrum seesaws, log rolls, long spiral slides (more than one turn), overhead rings, parallel bars, swinging gates, track rides, and vertical sliding poles.
- Do not allow children to twist the swings, swing empty seats, or walk in the path of moving swings.
- Do not allow your child to play on hot metal surfaces, or equipment with rust, chipping, splinters, cracks, or other signs of decay.
- Never dress kids in scarves, or loose or stringed clothing, when they are going to be on playground equipment. The loose items can get caught and strangle a child.
- For more information, contact the National Program for Playground Safety at [playgroundsafety.org](http://playgroundsafety.org), or (800) 554-7529. ■

# Holiday Gift Ideas

We hate to put a chill on the holiday spirit, but when buying gifts for the kids in your life, please remember: **Each year, over 100,000 children under the age of fifteen are treated in hospital emergency rooms for toy-related injuries.** So, to keep your kid's holidays *happy*:

## Some General Guidelines

- Balloons are the most dangerous "toy" for small children. Do not allow children under the age of six to blow up a balloon, or be alone with one. Choking on balloons and pieces of balloons, small balls, small parts of toys, and tiny batteries is the **leading cause of toy-related deaths.**

- Buy toys with safety in mind. When selecting a toy, ask yourself:
  - Will the child use the toy only in the way it is intended to be used?
  - Is it chewable, breakable, detachable, flammable, or too noisy?
  - Do any parts pull off easily?
- Always check to see that eyes, noses, ribbons, and buttons on dolls and teddy bears are securely fastened and cannot be bitten or chewed off. When re-sewing, dental floss makes a strong "thread."
- Be sure the toy matches the child's age, skills, abilities, and interest.
- Select well-built, good-quality toys and equipment from reputable manufacturers and dealers. Quality toys last longer, require less repair, and are subject to regulations.
- Consider how much adult supervision will be required, if the supervision will be available, and how to keep the toy out of reach when no supervision is available.
- When buying for older kids, consider the possibility toys may fall into the hands of younger children.
- If wheels (tricycles, bikes, scooters, skates, skateboards) are on your gift list, include the necessary safety equipment (helmets, wrist guards, and knee and elbow pads). Insist on their use.



- Children should know how to safely handle riding toys before being left unsupervised. Inspect the riding area for hazards.
- Electric toys are for kids eight or older. Check electrical toys regularly for loose or exposed wires.
- All plug-in electrical toys should carry the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) mark.
- Organize toys, with no small pieces lying around. They can be tripping, choking or poking hazards.
- Buy a toy chest with a spring-loaded support that allows the lid to remain securely open. Be sure all chests have air holes that will not be blocked when placed against a wall; and there is a gap between the lid and sides when the lid is closed.
- Inspect toys regularly for safety

## Gifts To Avoid

- Age labeling is provided for safety and developmental reasons. Read instructions carefully and follow suggested age levels. Some toys to avoid include:
  - For kids under three, toys with small, removable parts. Use a small-parts tester to measure the size of the toy or part. If the piece fits entirely inside the tube, it is considered a choking hazard. You can buy testers at toy or baby specialty stores.

- Small toys that look, smell, or taste like anything resembling food.

- Toys with long ropes, chains, strings, or elastic bands that could encircle children's necks, especially if they will be placed inside a crib.

- Toys with sharp points or edges that can jab or cut.

- Toy cap guns. The caps can ignite and cause serious burns.

- Propelled toys, such as toy darts and projectiles (and BB guns until the child is old enough to take a gun training course). **Each year over 20,000 kids get treated for injuries related to non-powder weapons, such as BB or pellet guns.**

## Toys That Make Safe Gifts

To make your shopping easier, here are some age-appropriate recommendations for toys from *Safe Kids USA*.

- Under age one:** activity quilts, floor activity centers, crib gyms, soft dolls or stuffed animals without button noses and eyes, and squeaky toys.

- Ages one to three:** books, blocks, fit-together toys, larger balls, push-and-pull toys, pounding and shaping toys.

- Ages three to five:** non-toxic art supplies, books, pretend toys (play money, telephone), teddy bears or dolls, and outdoor toys, such as soccer balls or tricycle with helmet.

- Ages five to nine:** craft materials, jump ropes, puppets, books, and sports equipment. After age eight: electrical and battery-operated toys. Don't allow children under eight to change batteries.

- Ages nine to fourteen:** handheld electronic games, table and board games, model kits, musical instruments, and outdoor and team sports equipment. Never buy hobby kits, such as chemistry sets, for a child younger than 12.

- For additional suggestions on toys, visit *Safe Kids USA* at [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org) and click on the Toy Safety link. ■