

Safety Sentinel

Dec 2013

Fond du Lac County Safety Committee Mission Statement

It is the Fond du Lac County Safety Committee's mission to provide safety awareness, education, and advocacy to all Fond du Lac County employees, while recognizing it is both the employer and employee's responsibility to maintain a safe work environment.

Winter Safety Tips for Children

As the weather turns chilly, new dangers for kids are appearing; but these winter safety tips for children can help keep them safe, warm and healthy through the coldest months of the year.

Why Winter can be Dangerous

Winter weather can be dangerous in several ways. The dropping temperatures and wind chills create climatic hazards, while the general indoor lethargy of winter can create health hazards due to overeating and less activity. Winter sports, holiday gifts and winter nutrition also present unique hazards that parents should be aware of in order to safeguard their children's health and well-being. With careful planning and supervision, however, children can enjoy the fun and freedom of playing indoors or outdoors on chilly winter days without substantial risk.



Types of Winter Safety Tips for Children

Not every type of winter hazard is applicable to every child, but understanding the basic risks and how to minimize them can help parents protect their children from the ravages of winter.

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Safety Tips – Snow Plows

Following are some safety tips for you and your family to keep in mind:



1. Stay at least 200 feet back from a snow-plowing or salt-spreading truck to avoid injury or other problems.
2. Plow trucks often have to back up. There may be blind spots in the mirrors. For your safety, do not pull directly behind a plow truck, as the driver may not be able to see you.
3. When cleaning driveways or parking lots, do not deposit snow on the street. This can cause safety problems for other motorists.
4. Plow trucks typically push snow to the passenger side of the truck (right side when looking at it from the rear). Never attempt to pass a plow truck on the right side since there can be significant amounts of snow on that side of the vehicle.
5. Dim your headlights when approaching a snow plow truck.
6. Do not pull out in front of a snow plow truck.

Source:
<http://www.westlafayette.in.gov/egov/docs/1233856447950.htm>

---- Cut and return inter-office mail marked "Safety Suggestion Box" or give to a Safety Committee Member ----

New Location–Safety Suggestion Box - City/County Govt. Center, 4th floor lobby, next to the County bulletin board.

Safety Suggestion

Date: _____

Please share any safety concern or suggestion:

Name (optional) _____

January is Radon Action Month

Radon is an odorless, radioactive gas that seeps into your home from underground. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Test kits are available from the County Health Department (\$10 - short term test kit; \$23.50 - long term test kit). If the kit is shipped out, there is a \$2.50 additional charge.

For more information on radon, see www.lowradon.org or contact the County Health Department, 929-3085.

Fireplace Safety

More than 6,000 people end up in emergency rooms for injuries associated with fireplaces and fireplace equipment ... and most of the injuries occurred with children under five years old.

Approximately 14,000 house fires each year are started by fireplaces. Most of these fires escalated beyond the fireplace because of an overloaded fire or damage to the fireplace, such as missing bricks, obstructed flues, ignition of nearby combustibles, and flying sparks.

Keep your family safe by following these tips:

- Inspect the fireplace.
- Have chimneys inspected annually. This reduces the risk of fires and carbon monoxide poisonings due to creosote buildup or obstructions in the chimneys. To locate a certified sweep, go to www.csia.org or call 1-800-536-0118. A certified sweep can also perform maintenance on wood stoves or help remove gas logs from a fireplace.
- Keep the top of chimneys clear of tree limbs or debris.
- Always open the damper before lighting the fire and keep it open until the ashes are cool. This will avert the buildup of poisonous gases, such as carbon monoxide.
- Never use gasoline, charcoal lighter or other fuel to light or relight a fire because the vapors can explode.
- Do not treat artificial logs like real logs.
- Always use a screen around the fireplace to keep sparks from flying out and to prevent accidental clothing ignition.
- At holiday time, make sure the Christmas tree is not close enough to be ignited by a spark.
- Always make sure that the fire is completely extinguished before going to bed for the night or when leaving the house.

Source: www.about.com "Fireplace Safety - Facts to Help You Operate Your Fireplace"

Snow Thrower Safety Alert

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) wants you and your family to be safe when using snow throwers. In a recent year, there were approximately 590 finger amputations involving snow throwers. CPSC estimates that each year on average there are approximately 5,740 hospital emergency room-related injuries associated with snow throwers. CPSC has received reports of 19 deaths since 1992 involving snow throwers. Two people died after becoming caught in the machine. Five deaths were caused by carbon monoxide poisoning resulting from leaving the engine running in an enclosed area.

Injuries most frequently occurred when consumers tried to clear the auger/collector or discharge chute with their hands.

CPSC offers the following safety tips for using snow throwers:

- Stop the engine and use a long stick to unclog wet snow and debris from the machine. Do not use your hands to unclog a snow thrower.
- Always keep hands and feet away from all moving parts.
- Never leave the machine running in an enclosed area.
- Add fuel to the tank outdoors before starting the machine; don't add gasoline to a running or hot engine. Always keep the gasoline can capped, and store gasoline out of the house and away from ignition sources.
- If you have an electric-powered snow thrower, be aware of where the power cord is at all times.

Most snow thrower injuries happen when consumers try to clear snow from the discharge chute or debris from the auger/collectors. Always stop the engine before attempting to clear snow and debris from any part of the snow thrower.



From the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, Washington, DC

Winter Safety Tips for Children – continued

Playing Outside

The cold temperatures and biting winds are the most obvious hazards when children play in the snow. Children who are not prepared for winter climates can suffer frostbite, hypothermia and severe chills that can lead to illness, poor judgment and even permanent injury. To avoid the dangers of cold weather:

- Dress in multiple layers to play outside, including extra layers for legs, feet and hands.
- Always wear hats and gloves when playing outdoors in cold weather; the biggest proportions of body heat are lost through the head and hands.
- Limit the amount of time spent playing outdoors to safe intervals, and bring children inside periodically to warm up.
- Remove all wet clothing immediately and change to dry clothes if going back outdoors.
- Wear sunscreen on all exposed skin to guard against burns from bright sunlight and snow glare.
- Do not permit children to play outdoors in poor weather such as snowstorms, extreme cold or high winds.
- Wear brightly colored outer clothing that is easily seen from a distance.
- Do not dress children in winter wear with drawstrings - they can cut off circulation and make frostbite a greater threat, and loose drawstrings may present a strangulation hazard.
- Teach children to avoid playing near snowplow areas.
- Do not permit children to dig snow tunnels or forts that may collapse and bury them.
- Avoid snowball fights that can lead to injuries from dangerous projectiles.
- Keep roofs, gutters and awnings free from snow and icicle buildup that could collapse and injure a child. Similarly, do not permit children to pull icicles from the roof.
- Teach children never to touch or lick exposed metal (fences, flagpoles, etc.) in winter.
- Do not allow children to eat snow. It may contain pollutants, dirt, fecal matter or other contaminants, and the cold snow can chill a young child's body to dangerous levels.
- Regularly de-ice or sand sidewalks, driveways, patios and other areas where children may play.

Winter Sports

Winter sports can be a great way for children to stay active and enjoy colder temperatures, but each sport presents its own unique hazards. These winter safety tips for children can help them enjoy sports safely and comfortably.

- Always use proper safety equipment and gear, including sports goggles and helmets, while playing winter sports.
- Engage in safe sports behavior such as following the rules of the game and eliminating horseplay that can lead to accidents and injuries.
- Enroll children in lessons from a qualified professional for advanced winter sports such as figure skating, skiing and snowboarding to ensure they learn safe techniques.
- Only play winter sports in safe, approved locations rather than using seemingly frozen ponds, unknown hillsides or other potentially dangerous locations.



Staying Healthy

The long days of winter often keep children indoors, which can lead to hours of inactivity. Furthermore, children are more likely to contract illnesses during the winter months because they are in more confined spaces. To stay healthy during the winter, consider these safety tips:

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet that includes fruits and vegetables.
- Teach children proper hand-washing techniques to kill germs and bacteria or use hand sanitizer if necessary.
- Keep children home from school and other public places if they are sick.
- Ask a pediatrician about the necessity for flu vaccines for young children.

Holiday Safety Tips

The holidays are a time of fun and excitement, but they can also be dangerous. Inappropriate toys, indulgent foods and unsafe decorations can create hazards that may cause injuries to children of all ages. These safety tips can help avoid the greatest risks:

- Do not use "candy" style ornaments or holiday decorations that may fool young children.
- Limit the amount of holiday sweets and treats children are allowed to eat.

- Choose unbreakable ornaments for safe tree decorations, and be sure no ornaments are small enough to be swallowed.
- Only give age-appropriate toys and gifts to children.
- Check toy recall notices for any holiday gift items.

Heating Tips

The natural reaction to falling temperatures is to raise the heat, either through external, supplemental heaters or by turning on a fireplace or other open flames. These safety tips can keep away the winter chill without risk:

- Keep candles, kerosene lamps, and other open flames out of reach of children at all times.
- Do not put a space heater in a child's room.
- Teach children fire safety procedures, including how to spot potential hazards.
- Do not allow children to play in fires such as roasting marshmallows in a fireplace.
- Practice family fire drills to reinforce safe behavior.
- Do not use electric blankets for young children.

In Conclusion

By following the proper winter safety tips for children, parents can ensure that their sons and daughters will be warm, happy, and safe during the coldest months of the year, and seeing them enjoy winter safely will warm any parent's heart.

By Melissa Mayntz - <http://safety.lovetoknow.com>

How to Meet the Challenges of Winter Driving Sheriff Mick Fink

Although the official start of winter this year is not until December 21, Wisconsin likely will be hit with the usual onslaught of ice, snow, and limited visibility that makes driving difficult, if not impossible, at times. To survive treacherous winter driving conditions, motorists must be patient and follow common-sense precautions.

When there's ice or snow, many motorists skid off the road or crash because they were driving too fast for conditions. The posted speed limits are for dry pavement, and those speeds may be hazardous when roads are slick. The slogan 'Snow Means Slow' also applies to four-wheel drive and other heavy duty vehicles, which need ample distance for stopping on slippery roads, just like other vehicles. A citation for driving too fast for conditions Wis.Stat.346.57(3) costs \$213.10 with four demerit points.

Winter weather also can limit visibility, so drivers must remove all frost, ice and snow from their vehicle's windows. You must be able to see in all directions at all times to avoid crashes. Clearing only a small patch on a windshield or rear window is not sufficient. Clearing snow and ice from the lights, hood and roof also helps improve visibility and safety.

According to state law, a vehicle's windshield, side wings, and side and rear windows must be kept clear at all times Wis.Stat. 346.88(4). Violating this law costs \$175.30 with two demerit points assessed on the driver's record.

During severe winter storms, the wisest decision often is to stay put and not drive. Police officers frequently respond to vehicles in the ditch and chain-reaction crashes when there was no real need for the drivers to be on the road at all. Slowed or stalled traffic on slippery roads also delays snowplows and tow trucks that are trying to get the roads cleared.

To minimize the dangers of winter driving follow these safety tips:

- Always wear your seat belt even if traveling a short distance. You and your passengers absolutely need this protection even in low speed "fender-bender" collisions.
- Watch for slippery bridge decks. They ice up quicker than adjacent pavement.
- Look farther ahead than you normally do. Loss of traction and other actions by vehicles ahead of you will alert you sooner to upcoming slippery spots and other hazards.
- Brake early and correctly. It takes much longer to stop in adverse conditions.
- Don't pump anti-lock brakes. With anti-lock brakes, the correct braking method is to "stomp and steer."
- Don't be overconfident about the traction of four-wheel drive vehicles, which generally won't stop or grip the road in curves any better than two-wheel drive vehicles.
- Avoid cutting in front of trucks, which take longer than automobiles to slow down or stop.
- Leave plenty of room for snowplows. By law, you must stay back at least 200 feet from the rear of a snowplow.



Toy Safety

Protect your family and see what hidden hazards to watch out for.

Avoid Common Hazards:

1. Choking

Choking is the most common cause of toy-related deaths. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), at least 41 children aspirated or choked to death from 2005-09 on balloons, toys, or toy parts.

Bigger is better: Do not buy small toys or toys with small parts for children under age 3. If a toy or part of a toy can pass through a toilet paper tube, don't buy it for a child under age 3, or any child who still puts things in his/her mouth.



Read and heed warning labels: Toys with small parts intended for children between ages 3 and 6 are required by law to include an explicit choking hazard warning.

Never give young children small balls or balloons: Small balls, balloons and pieces of broken balloons are particularly dangerous, as they can completely block a child's airway. Balls for children under 6 years old must be more than 1.75 inches in diameter. Never give latex balls to children younger than 8 years old.

2. Magnetic Toys with Powerful Magnets

New, powerful small magnets used in most magnetic building toys, toy darts, magnetic jewelry, and other toys can fall out of small toys and look like shiny candy. If a child swallows more than one magnet, the magnets can attract each other in the body (in the stomach and intestines) and cause life-threatening complications. If a child swallows even one magnet, seek immediate medical attention.

3. Watch or "Button" Batteries

Keep watch or "button" batteries away from children. If swallowed, the battery acid can cause fatal internal injuries.

4. Noise

Children's ears are sensitive. If a toy seems too loud for your ears, it is probably too loud for a child. Take the batteries out of loud toys or cover the speakers with tape.

5. Strangulation Hazards

Mobiles: Keep mobiles out of the reach of children in cribs and remove them before the baby is five months old or can push him/herself up.

Cords: Remove knobs and beads from cords longer than one foot to prevent the cords from tangling into a dangerous loop.

Drawstrings: Clothing with drawstrings on the hood can get caught on fixed objects like playground equipment and pose a strangulation hazard.

6. Lead and Other Toxic Chemicals

Some children's toys and cosmetics may contain lead or other toxic chemicals, including phthalates. While most lead and phthalates are being phased out of toys beginning in 2009, older toys may still contain them.

Toys with PVC Plastic: Avoid toys made of PVC plastic which could contain toxic phthalates posing developmental hazards; choose unpainted wooden or cloth toys instead.

Lead: The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), PIRG and children's health groups have found high levels of lead paint on toys, as well as high levels of lead in vinyl lunch boxes and bibs, and in children's costume jewelry. All lead should be removed from a child's environment, especially lead jewelry and other toys that can be swallowed. To test jewelry for lead, use a home lead tester available at the hardware store, or simply throw costume jewelry made with such heavy metals away.

Other chemicals: Read the labels of play cosmetics and avoid products with xylene, toluene, or dibutyl phthalate.

Source: <http://www.uspirg.org/home>