



Safe Kids of St. Joseph County

Ron Melser, Co-coordinator

(574) 272-2144 or rmelser@clayfd.com

Alice Blakesley R.N., Co-coordinator

(574) 647-2694 or ablakesley@memorialsb.org

http://www.firesafetyzone.org/SafeKids_sjc

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Contact: See Above

Accidental injury death rate of children 14 and under
down by 45 percent since 1987, says Safe Kids USA
20th anniversary report

But accidental injury remains #1 killer of kids

(South Bend, IN) – The accidental injury death rate of children 14 and under has declined by 45 percent in the United States since 1987, yet accidental injury remains the nation's leading killer of kids, according to a new national report release by Safe Kids USA.

"We're losing too many children to an epidemic that can be prevented," said Mitch Stoller, president and chief executive officer of Safe Kids USA. "The 45 percent drop demonstrates tremendous progress, but we can't lose sight that accidental injury remains the leading killer of our nation's kids and that many of these injuries can be prevented."

"The drop in children's accidental deaths gives us thousands of reasons to celebrate – one for every single child that was saved from a serious or fatal injury," said Ron Melser. "But we're still losing too many kids in this country which is why Safe Kids of St. Joseph County joins the national efforts to make child injury prevention a priority."

National report findings

The comprehensive national report was undertaken by Safe Kids USA in celebration of the 20th anniversary of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations whose mission is to prevent accidental childhood injury. Entitled *Report to the Nation: Trends in Unintentional Childhood Injury Mortality and Parental Views on Child Safety*, the report examines accidental injury in the United States and its impact on children by age, gender and race, and reviews the changes in accidental childhood injury death rates in areas such as motor vehicle occupant injuries, drownings, suffocation (which includes strangulation and choking) and more. The report also compares current data to data from 1987 and 1997.

The report unveils many findings including:

- Only 58 percent of parents with children 14 and under report their child being involved in a serious accident or getting seriously injured as a major concern – a seven percentage-point drop since 1987.
- There is little change from 1987 to 2007 in the amount done by parents to ensure their child's safety – due to reasons varying from parents actually feeling the chance of their child being seriously injured is slim (especially fathers); to reporting that taking all the necessary steps are a hassle; to 20 percent of low income families (household income levels under \$25,000) saying many safety devices such as fire extinguishers and bike helmets cost too much.

- Yet when parents do take action, they are not always taking the right steps every time their child is at risk of injury. For example, 31 percent of households with children 14 and under do not consistently ensure their children ride in the back seat of a car all the time; 24 percent do not consistently supervise their children around the water all the time and 18 percent do not always ensure their children (under 10 years of age) are with an adult when crossing the street.

In addition, the report demonstrates that among children 14 and under, accidental death rates are declining except for the childhood suffocation death rate which has increased by 21 percent. (This is partly due to a re-categorization of deaths previously attributable to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.)

The injuries examined in the report are serious, many resulting in death or permanent disabilities. Many children survive, but live with significant physical and emotional health consequences for a lifetime. The stress on the children, their families and the health care system cannot be underestimated. In 2000 in the U.S., injuries to children 14 and under cost society approximately \$58 billion in medical bills, lost wages of the children's caregivers, and more.ⁱ

"The great strides made over the past 20 years in reducing accidental childhood injuries by Safe Kids USA, the American injury prevention community, parents and governments is reason for optimism," says Ron Melser. "Yet all of us can do more to create a safer environment for the children of St. Joseph County."

What parents can do

The four leading causes of death from accidental injuries to children 14 and under are suffocation (19 percent), motor vehicle occupant injuries (16 percent), drownings (16 percent) and pedestrian incidents (11 percent). Here are 10 steps Safe Kids of St. Joseph County recommends to parents that could have a major impact on their children's safety:

1. Properly secure your children under age 13 in a back seat every time they ride in a car.
2. Keep your children in the right type of car or booster seat until adult lap and shoulder belts fit them correctly.
3. Make sure your children wear a helmet and other protective gear every time they bike, skate, skateboard or ride a scooter.
4. Teach your children to cross streets at corners and look left, right and left again before crossing. Make sure children younger than 10 always cross the street with an adult.
5. Always keep your eyes on your children when they are playing in or near water.
6. Always make sure your children wear life jackets when riding on boats or playing in or near open bodies of water.
7. Install smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors on every level of your home and outside of every sleeping area. Change the batteries once a year, and test them monthly.
8. Do not place blankets, pillows or other soft items in a baby's crib. Keep small items such as toy parts, coins, buttons and beads away from children under age three.
9. Keep poisonous items, such as medicines and cleaners, locked away and out of reach of children.
10. Do not let your children play on stairs, furniture, balconies, roofs, or in driveways, streets or parking lots.

What government can do

"Our nation needs a coordinated strategy on children's injury prevention that allows us to turn research into safety strategies that save lives," says Martin R. Eichelberger, M.D., founder and director of Safe Kids Worldwide and chief of Trauma and Burn Services, Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. "From Capitol Hill to our local communities – we need to act together to make our neighborhoods and homes safer places for children to live, learn, travel and play."

Safe Kids of St. Joseph County joins Safe Kids USA in calling on national and state governmental leaders to recognize that accidental injury is the #1 threat to Indiana's children, and in response, to marshal a multi-

faceted effort (similar to what the nation has done to address drunk driving and smoking cessation) to eliminate this serious public health threat.

Some of their specific calls to action to government include:

1. Congress continuing its efforts to modernize the operations and authority of the U. S. Consumer Product Safety Commission so that it can better fulfill its critical mission of protecting consumers, especially children, from dangerous products.
2. The President and Congress providing sufficient federal budget support for the other federal agencies charged with promoting child safety. Those agencies include the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the United States Fire Administration and the Centers for Disease Control (National Center for Injury Prevention).
3. State legislators addressing specific risk areas – such as motor vehicle collisions by passing or improving laws that require all children to be appropriately buckled in a child safety seat (infant seat, forward facing child safety seat or booster seat) or seat belt in the back seat of motor vehicles.

In celebration of National Safe Kids Week, April 26-May 4, 2008, Safe Kids of St. Joseph County is holding an event on April 30th at 4pm at the Battell Boys & Girls Club.

National Safe Kids Week

National Safe Kids Week has been held annually for 20 years. This year's theme is *Twenty Years of Preventing Accidental Injury* and is supported by Safe Kids Worldwide's founding sponsor, Johnson & Johnson. In addition, Johnson & Johnson is sponsoring a Safe Kids USA public service advertising campaign with Nickelodeon and distributing safety information at retail locations. Academy Award-winning actress Marcia Gay Harden joined Safe Kids USA on April 28, 2008, to unveil a new report tracking the accidental childhood injury death rate in the United States since 1987. Some of the report's startling statistics demonstrate that in 2005 accidental injury claimed the lives of 5,162 children, ages 14 and under and in 2006 there were more than 6.2 million children's emergency room visits for accidental injuries in this age group.

For more information or for a copy of the Report to the Nation: Trends in Unintentional Childhood Injury Mortality and Parental Views on Child Safety please visit www.usa.safekids.org. The report was funded by an educational grant from Johnson & Johnson.

Safe Kids of St. Joseph County has local expert spokespeople available for interviews.

Safe Kids of St. Joseph County works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under.. Safe Kids of St. Joseph County is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids of St. Joseph County was founded in 2002 and is led by Memorial Hospital / Clay Fire Territory

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ⁱ All data in this news release is included in the Safe Kids USA Report to the Nation: Trends in Unintentional Childhood Injury Mortality and Parental Views on Child Safety, April 2008

ⁱⁱ Ted Miller et al, "The Cost of Child and Adolescent Injuries and the Savings from Prevention," Injury Prevention for Children and Adolescents: Research Practice and Advocacy, 15-64, American Public Health Association, 2005