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Safety Series

Safety information, tips, and tools for the Human Service field and its families

PROPER HAND WASHING

stop the spread of germs that make you and others sick

Many illnesses are spread through touch. The single most important defense against spreading infection is proper hand washing.

Hand washing is often taken for granted because it can be routine. Even if you think you have done a good job washing your hands, they are probably not as clean as they should be. Good hand washing stops contaminants from moving from your hands to other parts of your body or to surfaces you touch.

4 Easy Steps to Better Handwashing

The elements of proper hand washing are easier than you think. To clean your hands thoroughly, remember the following:

1. **Use soap.**
2. **Use water.** Any water will do, but the hotter the better.
3. **Apply friction.** Friction helps to remove dirt and micro organisms. Rub your hands together, taking care to scrub between fingers, under rings, under fingernails, and up the wrists and lower arms. If possible, remove jewelry prior to washing your hands, as germs can lurk under rings and watches.
4. **Do not skimp on time.** You should wash your hands for at least 20 seconds. This seems like a short amount of time until you consider the rinse-and-wipe-dry method we have all probably been guilty of using at one time or another. To ensure you are spending enough time scrubbing, sing "Happy Birthday" twice (in your head or out loud, your choice).

TIP: If possible, turn the faucet off with a paper towel instead of with your clean hands.

When to Wash Your Hands

- After coughing or sneezing. Remember to cover your mouth or nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. If no tissue is available, “cover with your corner”—sneeze into your upper sleeve, NOT your hands.
- After using the toilet, changing a diaper, or assisting someone else with using the bathroom.
- Before and after preparing food or eating a meal or snack.
- Before and after you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- When you arrive at work.
- Before you leave work.
- Prior to emptying the dishwasher or setting the table or any other cleaning you do.
- After contact with someone who has been ill.
- After contact with blood or body fluids.
- After removing protective gloves. Remember, washing hands and wearing gloves are not substitutions for each other—they are meant to complement each other.
- After smoking.
- After handling pets or pet waste.
- Whenever they are soiled.

What About Hand Sanitizer?

Proper hand washing with soap and water is best, but in instances where soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizing gels or wipes are an option. Wipes and gels do not require water to disinfect, which can make them more convenient, especially if you are on the go.

Remember, keeping your hands clean is one of the best ways to keep from getting sick and spreading illnesses.

Links of Interest & Credits

www.cdc.gov - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is dedicated to protecting health and promoting quality of life through the prevention and control of disease, injury, and disability.

www.hhs.gov - The Department of Health and Human Services is the government’s principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services

www.hcpro.com - OSHA Healthcare Advisor is a free resource that provides current safety and OSHA compliance information, including expert advice and tips and tools for employee training.

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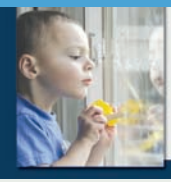
INSURANCE PROGRAMS & RISK MANAGEMENT

08/2011



WINDOW Safety

During the warmer months of spring and summer, we are all tempted to open our windows and let in the fresh air. However, when windows are left open, incidents of children falling out of them increases dramatically and can result in serious injuries or death. Window falls constitute the most serious of all injuries from falls and the most deaths.

The Best Solution for the Problem: PREVENTION!

- Supervising your children is the best way to keep them safe.
- Keep windows closed and locked when children are around.
- Keep furniture-or anything children can climb-away from windows.
- Never depend on screens to keep children from falling. Many incidents where children fall out of a window are from the child leaning on the screen.

Window Guards: To Have or Not to Have?

- Window guards need to have a release mechanism so the window can be opened in case of an emergency. Consult your local fire department or building code official to determine proper window guard placement.
- Some homes have window guards, security bars, grilles, or grates already installed. It is recommended to replace these guards if they do not have a release mechanism.
- Air conditioners will also inhibit escape in lieu of an emergency. Do not install air conditioners in windows needed for escape. There should be at least one window in each sleeping and living area that meets escape and rescue requirements.

Window Coverings

Window coverings also pose a significant threat to children and babies. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, there have been at least 200 reports of strangulation deaths involving cords and chains on window coverings since 1991.

- Keep all window cords out of reach of children. Make sure tasseled pull cords are short, and that continuous-loop cords are permanently anchored to the floor or wall.
- Move cribs, beds, furniture and toys away from windows. If a baby is placed in a crib or playpen within reach a window covering, he could easily become tangled.
- To prevent inner-cord hazards, lock cords into position when lowering horizontal coverings or shades.
- Consider installing cordless window coverings in children's bedrooms and play areas.
- Repair window coverings, corded shades and draperies manufactured before 2001 with retrofit cord-repair devices, or replace them with today's safer products.

Let's face it. We do not always have the luxury of a nice and breezy central air unit. For many people, window air conditioning units are a good alternative. They are affordable and relatively easy to install. However, these units can pose safety risks if not used properly. Unsecured window A/C units can fall out of windows. If someone were to be walking underneath the window at that time he/she could be seriously injured, or even killed. In addition, if an A/C is installed incorrectly it will make it very easy for an intruder to enter the home through that window.

Window Air Conditioning Safety Tips

- Do not install an air conditioner in a window needed for escape or rescue in an emergency. It is vital to have at least one window in each sleeping and living area that meets escape and rescue requirements.
- Be sure to install window air conditioners according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Make sure the window and window frame being used are in good condition.
- Make sure the unit is installed securely. Support the A/C from underneath or firmly fasten it from inside. Metal brackets and mounting rails should be used for a safe installation.
- Supporting metal brackets should be fastened to the building envelope and strong enough for the size and weight of the unit.
- Secure leveling objects in order to prevent movement and shifting due to vibration from the A/C and weather conditions.
- Install the A/C so it remains in place when the window is opened, and so the window cannot be opened accidentally.
- When in doubt, hire a professional.
- Never use an extension cord or power bar to supply a window air conditioner, these units must be plugged directly into a receptacle.

Emergencies

Windows provide a secondary means of escape if your home is on fire. It is important to have a planned emergency escape plan, and to teach it to your children. Practice this plan with them, and ensure they know how to use a window safely under these circumstances.

Links of Interest

www.nsc.org
The National Safety Council works to prevent injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads through leadership, research, education, and advocacy.

www.homesafetycouncil.org
The Home Safety Council is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing home related injuries through education.

GAS GRILLING Safety

Your grilling experience should yield delicious food—not create risky situations. Following basic safety guidelines will help make sure you are managing the risk associated with using gas grills.

Perform Maintenance Checks

Ensure grills are cleaned and maintenance checks are completed before grills are used for the first time each year.

- Check the tubes leading into the burner for any blockage from insects, spiders, etc.
- Check the grill hoses for cracking, brittleness, holes, and leaks. Make sure there are no sharp bends in the hoses or tubing.
- Replace scratched or nicked connectors.
- Check propane tanks for problems and to ensure they are filled.
- Don't forget that grills do not last forever. Use maintenance checks as an opportunity to assess the need to replace the grill.

Know How to Use the Grill

- Staff should be trained in advance how to use the grill safely. If a staff member has not received training and demonstrate a good understanding of how the grill works, they should not operate the grill.
- The grill should be monitored by staff at all times while in use and until it is cool.
- When lighting the grill, keep the top open. If the grill does not light in the first several attempts, turn off the gas and wait 5 minutes to allow the gas to dissipate.
- If the burners go out during cooking, turn all gas valves off. Open the lid and wait 5 minutes before attempting to restart the grill.
- Do not lean over the grill when igniting the burners or cooking.
- Keep a fire extinguisher accessible.
- Use long-handled grill utensils that will allow you to be a safe distance from the grill while cooking.
- Do not wear loose clothing while cooking at the grill.
- Always shut off the valve to the propane tank when the grill is not in use.
- When changing propane tanks, ensure the valves are in the off position.
- Do not attempt to move the grill while it is either still in use or still hot.
- Do not use aerosol cans around the grill as these may be flammable.
- If there are any problems with the grill, discontinue use until the problem is resolved.

Keep the Grill in a Safe Place

- The grill should be placed on a stable, even surface that is well ventilated and not underneath hanging branches.
- Never use a grill indoors.
- Use the grill at least 10 feet away from the house or any building.
- Do not use the grill in a garage, porch, or under a surface that can catch fire.

Cleaning the Grill

- Grills should be cleaned after each use. This includes removing any grease or food that may have stuck to the grilling surface and the outside of the grill.

Store the Grill

- During the summer months when the grills are not in use, they should be covered with a plastic grill cover. This is to protect the grill from the weather. Grills should remain outside on a level area.
- At the end of the season, a maintenance check should be performed before the grill is stored. Grills should be stored indoors during the off season. Grills and propane tanks should be stored separately.

Did You Know?

- According to the U.S. Fire Administration, some 6,500 barbecue grill fires injure Americans accounting for property loss of over $27 million annually.
- Most of these grill fires result from accidents related to malfunctioning propane gas grills. Prevent these types of accidents by performing regular maintenance checks.

Links of Interest

www.cpsc.gov - The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, a government agency, is committed to protecting consumers and families from products that pose a fire, electrical, chemical, or mechanical hazard or can injure children.

www.hpba.org - The Hearth, Patio & Barbecue Association is an international not-for-profit trade association established to represent the hearth and barbecue industries and offer safety tips and information on both.

www.nfpa.org - The National Fire Protection Agency is the world's leading advocate of fire prevention and an authoritative source on public safety.

Buying Toys
for Children with Disabilities

Buying Toys
Elements to Look For in a Toy

Multisensory Appeal
- Lights, sounds, and movement.
- Contrasting colors, scents, and textures.

Method of Activation
- Provides challenge without frustration.
- What is the force required to activate?
- Number and complexity of the steps required to activate.

Where Will the Toy be Used
- Can the toy be used in a variety of positions, such as side lying or on a wheelchair tray?
- Is there space in the home, and will it be easy to store?

Opportunities for Success
- Can play be open-ended with no definite right or wrong way?
- Is it adaptable to the child's individual style, ability, and pace?

Current Popularity
- Is it a toy most any child would like?
- Does it tie-in with other activities like T.V., movies, books, etc?

Self-Expression
- Does the toy allow for creativity, uniqueness, and choice making?
- Will it give the child experience with a variety of media?

Adjustability
- Does it have adjustable height, volume, speed, level of difficulty?

Child's Individual Characteristics
- Does the toy provide activities that reflect both developmental and chronological ages?

Safety & Durability
- Consider the child's strength in relation to the toy's durability.
- Are the toy and its parts sized appropriately?
- Does the toy have moisture resistance?
- Can it be washed and cleaned?

Potential for Interaction
- Will the child be an active participant during use?
- Will the toy encourage social engagement with others?

Source:
The National Lekotek Center
www.lekotek.org

Safety Tips

General **Toy Safety**

- Stuffed toys should be washable.
- Fabric toys should be labeled flame resistant or flame retardant.
- Art materials should specify on packaging that they are nontoxic.
- Avoid toys with cords or long strings.
- Painted toys should be covered with lead-free paint.
- Avoid thin plastic toys that could break, creating sharp edges.
- Purchase a choke tube to test small parts for choking hazards.

Opened Toys

- Immediately dispose of plastic wrappings and small pieces of packaging before they become dangerous play things.
- Read instructions for proper use and set up.
- Keep toys appropriate for older children away from younger siblings.

Safety at **Home**

- Regularly check wooden toys for splinters and metal toys for rust.
- Properly store outdoor toys to protect from wear and damage caused by rain and snow.
- Repair or throw away any broken toys.
- Regularly clean toys with antibacterial cleaners.

Links of Interest

www.sportime.com
Leading supplier of physical education equipment.

www.ableplay.org
Free toy rating system and shopping guide based on type of disability.

www.lekotek.org
Information regarding toys and play for children with special needs.

www.specialneedstoys.com
TFH offers a wide range of special needs toys.

www.cpsc.gov
US Consumer Product Safety Commission

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For information regarding product recalls, go to **www.cpsc.gov**
Stay tuned for ISA's Safety Recall Program.

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Carbon Monoxide
The Silent Killer

Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colorless, tasteless, and virtually odorless gas. It is produced by the incomplete burning of solid, liquid, or gaseous fuels. Appliances such as furnaces, ranges, water heaters, and room heaters which are fueled by natural gas, oil, kerosene, liquefied petroleum, coal, or wood can produce CO. Burning charcoal and running cars also produce Carbon Monoxide. CO displaces oxygen in the blood stream making it extremely poisonous, and sometimes fatal, to people and animals.

Prevent CO Poisoning

- Appliances should be installed, maintained, and used according to manufacturer's instructions and local building codes. Consult a professional when necessary.
- Have heating systems inspected and serviced annually. Chimneys and flues should be checked for blockages, corrosion, partial and complete disconnections, and loose connections.
- Gas appliances such as ranges, ovens, or clothes dryers should not be utilized for heating purposes.
- Portable fuel-burning equipment or charcoal grills should not be used inside a home, garage, or vehicle.
- Turn off any gas-powered engine such as lawn mowers, snow blowers, or chain saws when inside a garage or basement.
- Install and use an exhaust fan vented to outdoors over gas stoves and other fuel-burning devices when possible.
- Never sleep in a room with an unvented gas or kerosene space heater.

Know the **Symptoms**

Carbon Monoxide affects people differently based on it's concentration in the air, the length of exposure, and each individual's health condition. Symptoms of CO poisoning may include:

- Headache
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Impaired vision
- Loss of consciousness
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Confusion
- Impaired coordination

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Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Since many symptoms of CO poisoning can be easily mistaken for less severe illnesses, and Carbon Monoxide is virtually undetectable by the human senses, it is recommended that CO Detectors be installed throughout homes and buildings. Below are some guidelines for buying and installing CO Detectors.

- Before purchasing a CO Detector, check the packaging to make sure it is listed with Underwriter's Laboratories (UL), Standard 2034 or that it meets the requirements of the IAS 6-96 Standard.
- When choosing a location for the CO detector, make sure it can not be covered by furniture or draperies. Avoid corners as they do not get good circulation.
- Install CO detectors in hallways near each sleeping area of the building.
- Test CO detectors regularly according to the manufacturer 's instructions, and make sure they are working properly.

Did You Know?

- Over 200 people die and several thousand receive treatment each year due to Carbon Monoxide poisoning.
- CO Detectors cost as little as $20 and can be purchased at hardware or home goods stores.

If the Alarm **Sounds**

- Treat every alarm signal as a real emergency!
- If anyone is experiencing symptoms of CO poisoning, get out of the building immediately and seek medical attention.
- If no one is experiencing symptoms, press the reset button. If the alarm continues to sound, call the fire department.
- Have the building, including all fuel-burning appliances and chimneys inspected by a professional.

Links of Interest

www.carbonmonoxidekills.com
Offers free Carbon Monoxide information and resources.

www.epa.gov
United States Environmental Protection Agency

www.cpsc.gov
Consumer Product Safety Commission

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AVOIDING SIDESWIPE ACCIDENTS

According to the **National Safety Council's** Injury Facts 2007 Edition, **Sideswipe accidents** account for a total of **840,000 accidents** annually. **93,000** of those result in **non-fatal injuries** and account for **1,000 deaths.**

Sideswipe accidents usually occur while passing other vehicles or when merging onto or off of a highway. It is important to use precise observation and judgment skills when entering a highway. Quick decisions must be made regarding how fast other vehicles are traveling and which gap is safe to move into. Speed must be adjusted in the acceleration lane to make merging with highway traffic easier. When switching lanes on a highway, the driver should turn their head and physically check for a clear lane; making sure not to completely rely on the rear-view mirror. There is a fairly large blind spot in mirrors, a car may be sitting right in that blind spot and without physically turning one's head, that car will not be seen when switching lanes.

Reduce Sideswiping Accidents

- Ensure that all mirrors are clean and properly adjusted before getting on the road.
- Avoid unnecessary lane changes.
- When lane changes are necessary, signal lane change intentions well ahead of time.
- Take time and look carefully before moving into a neighboring lane. Keep an eye out for cyclists, pedestrians, and other vehicles.

SPACE

Properly managing the space around a vehicle can help avoid an accident. While it is not always possible to control how close other vehicles are following, a driver can strive to keep a cushion of space around the vehicle. If a dangerous situation develops, having enough space around the vehicle allows a driver time to react.

Space to the Sides

Make sure you always have an "out" in case you have to change lanes. Keep the vehicle centered in the lane. Aim to keep a space cushion on one side of the vehicle.

Give Space to Others

In the interest of safety, be prepared to give space to other vehicles. Be alert and look for cues that signal the intentions of other drivers. It's every driver's responsibility to keep traffic moving smoothly. Allow space in traffic for other vehicles to merge or make lane changes smoothly.

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Avoiding Rear-End collisions

According to the **National Safety Council's** Injury Facts 2007 Edition, Rear Ending accidents account for a total of **3.3 million accidents** annually. 700,000 of those result in non fatal injuries and account for **2,000 deaths.**

Rear–end collisions are among the **most common auto accidents** every year in the United States. By staying alert and anticipating problems, drivers can avoid hitting others–and help keep others from hitting them.

Avoid **Getting Hit**

- Know what's going on around the vehicle. Adjust both inside and outside mirrors before moving the vehicle and use them frequently.
- **Flash the vehicle's brake lights.** Tap the brakes when standing, moving slowly, or preparing to stop.
- Check brakes often to ensure that they are working properly. Keep brake lights clear of dirt and snow.
- Signal well before turning or changing lanes.
- Maintain speed limits and keep pace with traffic when road and weather conditions permit.
- **Get rid of tailgaters.** Slow down gradually by removing foot from the brake. If the tailgater doesn't move, change lanes safely. Use extra caution when slowing down or changing lanes. Don't be distracted by the tailgater.
- Stay clear of other driver's blind spots. A vehicle suddenly swerving into another vehicle's lane will cause the driver to brake hard, increasing the possibility of a rear–end collision.
- Raise the hood if the vehicle stalls and is unable to be removed from a traffic lane. Do everything possible to help others see the disabled vehicle. Use emergency flashers and, if available, flares and reflective markers. Stand away from traffic while awaiting help.

Avoid **Hitting Others**

- **Apply brakes early.**
- Pay strict attention to traffic flow. At 40 mph, a vehicle travels 60 feet in one second, meaning even short distractions can make a difference.
- Practice good vision habits. Leave enough distance between cars to allow a good view of what is ahead.
- Look for situations which could cause the driver ahead to stop suddenly. Their problems affect everyone around them within a second or two.
- Even though ice may make it impossible to stop in time, a driver can often swerve to the right to avoid a vehicle ahead. Swerving to the left is an almost certain invitation for a head-on collision.
- Increase following distance to accommodate road and weather conditions.
- **Stay alert for dangerous signals** such as:
  - Brake lights on the vehicles ahead. Immediately release the gas pedal and be ready to brake.
  - Problems in adjacent lanes. Watch for brake lights and slowing traffic in nearby lanes. Expect other drivers to swerve quickly out of their lane.

Avoid **Whiplash**

Whatever vehicle is being driven, maximum whiplash protection will come from a properly positioned head restraint. To work well, the top of the restraint should reach at least as high as the top of the driver's ears and be less than three inches from the back of the driver's head.

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prevent FREEZING pipes

Frozen water in pipes can cause water pressure buildup between the ice blockage and the closed faucet at the end of a pipe. This may lead to to pipes bursting at their weakest point. Pipes in attics, crawl spaces, and outside walls are particularly vulnerable to freezing in extremely cold weather. The following precautions may help prevent freezing pipes this winter.

- Fit exposed pipes with insulation sleeves or wrapping to slow the heat transfer. The more insulation the better.
- Seal cracks and holes in outside walls and foundations near water pipes with caulking.
- Keep the thermostat set to a minimum of 55 degrees during winter months to help prevent pipes from freezing.
- Drain and store outdoor hoses. Close inside valves that supply the outdoor hose bibs and open the outside hose bibs to allow water to drain. Leave outside valves open so that any water remaining in the pipe can expand without causing the pipe to burst.
- Drain water from swimming pools and water sprinkler lines before the cold weather hits.

Did You Know?

- An eighth-inch crack can leak 250 gallons of water per day.
- Plastic (PVC) pipes as well as copper pipes can burst.
- Frozen water expands by 20% of it's original volume.

Colder Days

- Allow a very slight trickle of warm water to drip from the faucets to help keep your pipes from freezing.
- Open cabinet doors to allow heat to get to uninsulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.

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if they FREEZE

Thawing Frozen Pipes

- Shut off the building's main water supply.
- If indoors, get towels and buckets to catch the water as it melts.
- Locate and open the faucet that is connected to the frozen pipe to allow the pipe to drain.
- If there are metal pipes, wrap rags or towels around the frozen pipe and pour boiling water over the rags. Start close to the faucet and work back to the part that is frozen.
- A hairdryer may also be used to melt the ice. Again, start close to the faucet and work back towards the frozen area. Do not stand in water or have wet hands when using electric appliances.
- Heat lamps are good for thawing pipes that are inside walls or floors in the building. Direct the lamp at the frozen area of the pipe. Leave a foot of space between the lamp and the wall, pipe, or floor.

What **N⃠T** to Do

- Do **N⃠T** attempt to thaw a frozen pipe using a blowtorch, kerosene or propane heater, charcoal stove, or any other open flame device. This is a serious fire and carbon monoxide hazard.
- Do **N⃠T** let water come in contact with electricity while attempting to thaw pipes using any type of electrical device.
- Do **N⃠T** leave pipes unattended while trying to thaw them using an electric appliance.
- Do **N⃠T** pour antifreeze in your water lines unless directed by a professional. Antifreeze is environmentally harmful, and is dangerous to humans, pets, wildlife, and landscaping.
- Do **N⃠T** take chances. If you feel like the situation is out of control, contact a plumber immediately.

Links of Interest

www.prepare.org
A division of the Red Cross dedicated to serving the vulnerable population including seniors, children and people with disabilities by providing relevant information regarding disaster preparedness.

www.redcross.org
The American Red Cross website.

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