

Daily Union  
Saturday, August 8  
Laundry Room Safety

I recently attended a national Family and Consumer Sciences professional conference. One of the sessions I attended was sponsored the American Cleaning Institute (ACI). Since 1926, this group (originally founded as American Soap and Glycerine Producers) has represented a wide variety of business and industry partners' who manufacture and market cleaning products. ACI focuses on research, education, policy, and advocacy from both the business and consumer perspective.

One of the key consumer messages this group has been focusing on for the past few years is laundry safety. Many homes, with good reason, have laundry facilities that are easily accessed by family members. This means that everyone, including children, also have access to the materials, chemicals, and equipment used in the process of laundering.

Young children are especially curious and exploratory, but really all children learn best by exploring their environment. They touch, taste, smell, and listen to their environment as a natural process. However, these characteristics of childhood make the laundry area a significant safety concern. Accidents happen unexpectedly and quickly, but steps can be taken to reduce this potential in the laundry room.

**Read Labels:** Cleaning products are mandated by law to print specific warnings on their labels to help you know of the risks and precautions to take when using that product. It is also important that you read the directions for using the product properly. Improper use of the product can have harmful outcomes to you and your family.

**Store Products Correctly:** It is important to keep laundry products out of the reach of children. Even when the storage is in a cabinet above the washer or dryer, kids like to climb on top of these appliances and can access the cabinets more easily than you might expect. Use cabinet locks (like those used with lower kitchen cabinets) to secure all cleaning products. Make sure products are securely closed and put away after each use.

Do not change products from their original container. Not only is it import to know what the product is in each container, it is important to have ready access to the directions and product warnings printed on the container. If you were to call the Poison Control Center in the event of an accident, they will ask you for this information so that they can give you accurate and effective steps that need taken.

**Attentive Product Use:** Avoid distractions when you are doing laundry so that you don't accidently use the wrong product or forget to put the product away. Make sure you read the

directions and use the product as it is intended to be used. Especially take the time to look over the product caution labels. If you spill a product on the floor or other surface, clean it up immediately. Cleaning products are most often alkaline in nature thus making them abnormally slippery. A fall from spilled laundry soap can be prevented with a quick and thorough clean-up. Avoid mixing cleaning products. In doing so, you are blindly mixing chemicals and the reaction can be deadly.

One of the newer laundry products on the market has, although effective for its purpose, proven to be especially dangerous for children. Single-load liquid laundry packets are widely available with increased consumer demand over the past couple of years. Although they have been proven to be effective laundry detergents, they have also proven to be a considerable safety concern for children.



According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC), in 2014, poison control centers in the United States received reports of 11,714 unintended exposures to highly-concentrated packets of laundry detergent by children 5 years of age and under. That number for this year (and it's not over yet) is at 6,046. The AAPCC reports the following physical effects exposure (ingesting, inhaling, absorbed into eyes or skin) to these packets can have. *"Some children who have gotten the product in their mouths have had excessive vomiting, wheezing and gasping. Some get very sleepy. Some have had breathing problems serious enough to need a ventilator to help them breathe. There have also been reports of corneal abrasions (scratches to the eyes) when the detergent gets into a child's eyes."* Source: [www.aapcc.org/alerts](http://www.aapcc.org/alerts)

To make sure your family does not add to this year's AAPCC statistics for this type of accident, keep single-load laundry packets out of the reach of children, educate your family and friends about the danger of these laundry products, and make sure you keep your own laundry area safe and secure.

Should your be exposed to one of these laundry packets, immediately call the Kansas Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 (a 24 hour service). For more information about home and consumer safety, contact me at the Geary County Extension Office at 238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!