

Summer Safety (Part 1)

The kids are home for the summer. This means a significant change in schedules, sleeping patterns, social activities, and household routines. As a parent, you have to adjust to either extreme high energy levels or lack-luster efforts to do chores or take on more responsibility. Regardless of whether your children want to dive in to every activity or stay at home and play video games all day, you should revisit some basic home safety rules to keep everyone safe.

Answering and using the phone has a different "ring" (pun intended) to it depending on the age of your children. Older children might have their own cell phone and will disregard the ring tone of your phone when you are out of the room. However, often younger children will race to answer the phone before you can get to it. If you have younger children at home for the summer, you should review appropriate and safe phone etiquette. Begin by sharing what information they can share on the phone and what information is unsafe for them to share. Help them understand how telling a stranger their name or their address could be dangerous. For example, clever solicitors may try to talk children into sharing enough information to help them steal the identity of one or more residents. Teach them how to take a message and write down a phone number.

If your home is equipped with a land line, place a small notebook by the phone for them to write in. Discourage them from telling strangers a specific time when you will be able to return the call. This may indicate to the caller that there is no adult in the home for a period of time. Instead, have them tell the caller you are busy and that you will call back as soon as you can. Practice taking and making phone calls with your child. This will help them know what to do should they answer a phone call from a stranger.

Register your land line phone or cell phone number with the National "Do Not Call" program to reduce the number of calls you get from solicitors. This list is designed to help reduce the number of phone calls you get from solicitors. Once your phone number is on the list, it will remain there indefinitely until you request it to be removed from the list. You should register land lines as well as cell phone numbers. Call 1-888-382-1222 to get your phone numbers on the Do Not Call list or go online to register at www.donotcall.gov. This won't prevent you from getting ALL unwanted calls as it is geared toward reducing sales calls. You may still get calls from political campaigns, charities, or companies/organizations collecting survey information.

Create and review emergency plans with your children before something unexpected happens. Fire, tornado, and flood emergency plans are the three most likely needed Geary County.

As part of helping children understand what to do in case of a house fire, explain to children how to check doors for heat. Warn them that hot doors mean hot door knobs

and could burn their hands if they touch them. Discuss evacuation routes from the home and identify a safe location for everyone to meet outside of the home. Practice multiple times with the source and location of the fire changing with each evacuation. For example, evacuation routes from a 2-story house change significantly if the fire starts in the stairwell, an upstairs bathroom, the attic, or the main-level kitchen. Again, practice the drill from the beginning to end so that everyone ends up at the same meeting location.

Identify what the family members should do in case of a tornado. In my last article, I offered actions to take in preparation for such storms. This week, I am adding to that information by sharing the necessities for a basic emergency disaster kit.

If you don't already have an emergency pack for someone to grab as you seek shelter that would be a great family project to do together. Using a duffle bag or back pack helps make the kit portable. The Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) recommends these basic items you can put in a back pack to use in case of emergencies:

Water* – bottled water should be placed in your emergency kit for short term emergencies

Food* – pack a few granola bars and non-perishable protein such as nuts and peanut butter

Battery-powered radio and back-up batteries – you want to be able to hear what is happening in your area and a radio will likely be your best alternative when there is no electricity

Flashlight with extra batteries – no electricity means no lights!

Whistle – to signal for help when your voice wears out

First Aid Kit, Manual Can Opener

Moist Towelettes and Several Garbage Bags with Plastic Ties – for personal sanitiation

Dust Mask – to protect your lungs from contaminated air

Wrench or Pliers – to turn off utilities

Local Maps

Important Phone Numbers List – laminated, if possible

*Pack a 3-day supply of non-perishable food and water for each person who would be using your designated storm shelter area.

Safety in the home should never be an afterthought. Prevention is key in avoiding physical harm and loss of property. Every family needs to regularly practice a well thought out safety plan to ensure the best chance of avoiding accidents and loss. Next week, I will offer some tips for both adults and children on safety in the kitchen as kids take on more responsibilities at home. For more information about creating a family safety plan, contact me at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!