

Take Time to be Safe This Summer!

AGRI-VIEWS

by Chuck Otte, Geary County Extension Agent

Here we are at Memorial Day weekend. For most people, Memorial Day marks the “start” of summer. From now until Labor Day many of us will be on the go seemingly day in and day out. There’s places to go, yard work to be done, fun gatherings with family and friends. There’s also a lot of chances to get hurt out there as well. I grew up in the 60s. Need I say anything more? Accidents happen and there’s no way to guarantee that no one will get hurt at any time. But there’s also a lot of things that are easily preventable and that’s where we need to focus attention in this upcoming busy summer!

Vehicle safety has to be first and foremost starting with seat belts. Forget the fact that it’s the law to wear them and all those third hand accounts of Uncle Mel that survived the accident because he didn’t have his seat belt fastened. Seat belts save lives. They keep you within the most protected part of the vehicle in an effort to keep you safe. I don’t care if you are traveling around the block or from one coast to the other. If you are in a vehicle with a seat belt, wear it!

The sun is this planet’s greatest friend and humans biggest enemy. Over two million people annually are diagnosed with skin cancer. One person dies every hour from skin cancer (melanoma). The more you are exposed to the sun, the more likely you are to develop skin cancer. Some people with certain complexions, etc. are more prone to skin cancer, but no one is immune from developing skin cancer. Forget the golden tan, protect your skin! Wear sun screen, wear hats, wear long sleeves. Avoid getting sunburns. Not only do they hurt, but it’s an indication that you’ve gotten too much sun. Then have an annual checkup with your doctor specifically looking for skin cancer. Like many cancers, it is quite treatable, if detected early!

If you spend a lot of time outside, in natural areas, like I do, you need to protect yourself against biting insects and the arborviruses (arthropod borne viruses) they may carry. I have people that contact me on a regular basis scared to death of copperheads, but they do nothing to protect themselves against mosquito or tick bites. West Nile Virus and Lyme Disease are very real and they are in Kansas. I have a friend in New Jersey who has fought Lyme Disease for over 15 years. It isn’t pleasant! There are other arborviruses that are knocking at the doors waiting to come in to the USA that are as bad or worse than West Nile. Use insect repellents anytime you’re going off pavement!

I could go on for pages, but let me wrap up with yard work. We use a lot of potentially dangerous equipment to maintain our yards, gardens and landscape. Having once ran my fingers through a power saw let me be the first to remind you to wear safety equipment, keep guards in place and only use equipment as described in the instruction manual! Much of this equipment is loud, May 22, 2014 fast, and more powerful than we are so treat it with respect. Wear hearing protection and eye protection. You may not think that the engine is that loud, but it mounts up over time and damage can’t be undone. Wear appropriate clothing for the task at hand. Shorts and flip flops are not the thing to wear if you are headed out with a line trimmer or edger.

Summer is a great time. There is so much to do and so much fun that we want to have in such a short period of time. But there’s only one of you. None of us are invincible and we can all be injured. It’s up to you to look out for you and your family. So have a great summer, but please take the time to be careful and safe!