

Daily Union Article  
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Title: Keep it Safe

Even though it is technically still spring, our summer schedules are already starting to fill up. There is much you can do and enjoy during these warm months – swimming, bicycling, hiking, gardening, camping, and so much more. When you live a full and rich life, you need to be aware of the standard risks that comes with it.

There are many reasons to focus on safety during the summer months. Sunshine and high temperatures are at the top of the list, but you also need to consider travel and recreational safety, as well. This article will focus on many different areas of safety that can protect you and your family.

### **Know Your Risk:**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) outlines a variety of summer safety risks that you should be aware of and prepared for:

- Since 2003, 43 states within the continental United States have come under a tornado watch; 49 states have come under severe thunderstorm watches; and lightning strikes occur in every state.
- Heat waves are common across the country during the summer. They are dangerous because the human body cannot cool itself properly when exposed to an extreme combination of heat and humidity.
- In 2015, there were 26 lightning fatalities.
- Wildfires kill 30 people, destroy 2,800 homes and burn more than 7 million acres, roughly the size of the state of Massachusetts, on average, per year.
- Flash flooding is the number one killer associated with severe weather.
- Air pollution can make it harder for people with asthma and other respiratory diseases to breathe. Children and teens may be more sensitive than adults to the health effects caused by air pollution. According to the EPA, poor air quality is responsible in the U.S. for an estimated 60,000 premature deaths each year.

Consider your family's preparedness for any or all of these risks and ask yourself:

- ? How will my family/household get emergency alerts and warnings?
- ? How will my family/household get to safe locations for relevant emergencies?
- ? How will my family/household get in touch if cell phone, internet, or landline doesn't work?
- ? How will I let loved ones know I am safe?
- ? How will family/household get to a meeting place after the emergency?

If you are unable to answer any one of these questions, you need to get started on making a family emergency plan. On their ready.gov website the Department of Homeland Security offers an excellent tool to help you navigate the path to building an effective emergency communication plan. You can download and print a plan that can be customized to meet your family's needs at: <https://www.ready.gov/make-a-plan>

## **Hot Cars**

The national safety council reports that on average, 37 kids die in hot cars each year in the United States. The most concentrated rates occur from Memorial Day through Labor Day, when almost 3 kids die each week. According to the NSC, more than twice as many children died in hot cars than all individuals who died in tornadoes across the country in 2016. A child's death from heat exposure in a car is 100% preventable. The temperature outside the vehicle is deceptively different than the temperature inside of it. It can rise by nearly 20 degrees in 10 minutes. That means on a mild 75°F Kansas day, the heat inside a car rises to 95°F within a matter of a few minutes. Heatstroke occurs when a person's body temperature exceeds 104 degrees and at 107 degrees, a person's body cells are damaged and internal organs start to shut down. Young children are at particularly risk because their bodies heat up 3x to 5x faster than an adult's and they don't have the body temperature regulations afforded to adults whose body will sweat to help regulate the temperature.

As a parent or grandparent, your first step is to simply never leave your child or baby in a car. For toddlers and older children, the car may be a tempting place to play or hide and may accidentally lock themselves inside. Make sure you lock your vehicle, including the doors and trunk when you are not using it. Keep the keys and the remote entry devices away from children, as well. Make sure your kids and/or grandkids know that the trunk of a car is for transporting cargo and is never a place for them to play. Following the old saying "It takes a village to raise a child", call 911 if you see a child alone in a car. The emergency personnel are trained to respond to these situations and your call could save a life.

## **Outdoor Safety**

As we near the end of another season of Walk Kansas, be encouraged to continue your efforts in health and wellness throughout the months to come. The benefits are abundant, but you also should be aware of the steps you can take to improve your safety as a pedestrian. We don't take enough stock of the level of vulnerability when walking in our community, crossing busy streets, and negotiating traffic. Drivers are often distracted by the other traffic and we might be distracted by visiting with the person we

are walking with or by the phone call we received during our trek.

Cell phone distraction has taken a big jump in recent years—so much that the National Safety Council began including statistics on cell phone distracted walking in their Injury Facts 2015 report. According to this report, distracted walking incidents involving cell phone accounted for more than 11,100 injuries between 2000 and 2011. It also reports that:

- 52% of cell phone distracted walking injuries happen at home
- 68% of those injured are women
- 54% are age 40 or younger
- Nearly 80% of the injuries were due to a fall

A simple rule of thumb to go by to increase your safety while out walking is to make sure you keep your head up and your phone down. Walking is a great way to stay fit and improve your health, but only if you do so with safety in mind!

For more information about home and family safety, contact me at the Geary County K-State Research & Extension Office at 785-238-4161. Until next week, keep living resourcefully!