



June 2004

Minnesota Crime Prevention Association's Topics of the Month

Bike Helmets

Make sure your helmet has the correct fit and adjustments. Any bike store can help you adjust your helmet just right. A helmet should:

- Sit level on your head - not tilted forwards or backwards. (Do not wear a hat under the helmet.)
- Have strong, wide straps that fasten snugly under the chin.
- Be tight enough (with straps fastened) so that no sudden pulling or twisting can move the helmet around on your head.
- Always be fastened while riding.
- Be replaced every 5 years - and immediately if you have a hard fall and hit your head while wearing the helmet.
- Never be worn on a playground. It should only be worn during biking, in-line skating, or while using your scooter.
- What you wear is also very important while riding your bike - the right clothes can keep you safe.
- Fluorescent-colored clothes help people see you better. Stay away from dark clothes like black, brown, or navy, especially when biking if it's getting dark outside.
- Wear lightweight clothes to avoid becoming overheated, especially in the summer months. Be sure to bring plenty of water to drink!
- Make sure your pant legs aren't so loose that they get caught up in the chain.
- Riding gloves can protect your hands, especially if you do off-road biking, and can be purchased from any bike store.
- If you carry a backpack, make sure the straps are tied so they do not become tangled up in the spokes of your bike wheels. Better yet, tie your bag in a basket or strap it to a rack.
- Wear shoes that grip your bike's pedals. Never wear cleats, shoes with heels, or shoes that can easily slip off the pedals. Never ride barefoot!

The Rules of the Road

Here are some important things to know about keeping safe on the road, especially, when there's traffic on your neighborhood's busiest streets:

- Protect your head. Always wear your helmet.
- Always ride on the **RIGHT-HAND** side of the street in the same direction as cars do. **Never** ride against traffic.
- Use bike lanes or designated bike routes wherever you can - never ride on the sidewalk!
- Always stop and check for traffic in both directions when leaving your driveway, an alley, or a curb.
- Watch traffic closely for turning cars, or cars leaving driveways.
- Don't ride too close to parked cars - doors can open suddenly!
- Stop at all stop signs and obeys street (red) lights just as cars do. Be careful at intersections.
- Always walk your bike across busy intersections using the crosswalk and following traffic signals.
- It's fun to bike with your friends, but always ride single file on the street. Bike riding side by side in traffic or on the street is dangerous for both bikers and people in cars.
- When passing other bikers or people on the street, always pass to their left side, and call out "On your left!" so they know that you are coming.
- Never change directions, or change lanes, without first looking behind you, and using correct hand signals. That way everyone knows where you're going.
- Know your hand signals. Use your left arm for hand signals:
 - **Left turn**: look behind you, hold your arm straight out to the left, and ride forward slowly.
 - **Right turn**: look behind you, bend your elbow, holding your arm up in an "L" shape, and ride forward.
 - **Stop**: look behind you, bend your elbow, pointing your arm downward in an upside down "L" shape and come to a stop.
- Remember: If you ride your bike in the evening, or when it's getting dark, be sure to have **reflectors** on your bike and a battery-operated headlight.
- Only **one person** should be on your bike at a time - this means not having your best friend sitting on the back of your seat or on the handlebars. You could easily lose your balance and fall over with the bike, or suddenly swerve into the path of moving cars while riding.
- **NEVER** wear headphones while biking - you need to be able to hear everyone else on the road at all times!

Resources: www.safekids.com
www.nhtsa.dot.gov
www.ncpc.org

Personal Safety:

Remember, the key to staying safe is avoiding dangerous situations by staying alert to your surroundings and learning what situations can become potentially dangerous!

Three Basic Rules Of Personal Safety

- ☒ Stay alert and tuned into your surroundings, wherever you are. Don't be taken by surprise. Be aware and be prepared.
- ☒ Stand tall and walk confidently. Don't show fear. Don't LOOK like a victim.
- ☒ Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in a place or situation, leave right away and get help if necessary.

Safety At An ATM

- ☐ Plan ATM use during the day rather than at night.
- ☐ Avoid making withdrawals at ATMs in isolated areas.
- ☐ Pre-plan your transactions to reduce the amount of time at the machine.
- ☐ When making a withdrawal, quickly place the money in your purse or wallet. Do not count the money there.
- ☐ Watch out for suspicious people waiting around an ATM. If someone offers to let you go ahead of them, decline politely and leave.
- ☐ When visiting a drive through ATM, keep your doors locked and be prepared to drive away quickly. Watch in your mirrors for areas surrounding your car.
- ☐ If you are approached and have not finished your transaction, push the CANCEL button and drive away. If you do not have time to get your card, call the bank immediately.

Safety Tips When On Foot

- * Choose busy streets and avoid going through deserted areas. At night, walk in well-lit areas whenever possible.
- * Try not to jog or walk alone.
- * Carry your purse close to your person. Do not carry valuables with you.

Safety In Your Car

- ➔ Always lock your cars and take the keys, even if you'll be gone a short time.
- ➔ Keep your car in good running condition, and keep the tank at least a quarter full. Lock doors while driving.
- ➔ Replace standard lock buttons with tapered buttons. The replacements are very inexpensive and are much more difficult to open.
- ➔ If your car breaks down, raise the hood and place emergency flashers on. Wait in the car with the doors locked. When someone stops to help, don't get out. Ask them, through a slightly cracked window to phone the police for help.
- ➔ Always lock your doors even if you're driving down the street. You never know when your going to be stopped at a light and someone is going to attempt to get into your car.
- ➔ Carry as few valuables as possible, especially if you must leave our vehicle unattended for long periods of time.
- ➔ Lock packages in the trunk or put them under a seat out of sight before you reach your destination.
- ➔ Don't use your glove compartment as a traveling safe. It is the first place that thieves look.
- ➔ Park in a well lit area that will still be well lit when you return.
- ➔ When traveling and stopping overnight, bring everything into your hotel/motel room. Use the hotel safe for valuable jewelry, cameras, etc. - out-of-state license plates attract thieves. Be careful to lock up your valuables at beaches, restaurants and other tourist attractions. Items such as cellular telephones, CB radios, and tape or CD players should be locked in the trunk when not in use.
- ➔ Leave only your ignition key when parking in an attended lot. Never leave your house key or any other key on the ring.
- ➔ Never pick up a hitchhiker!!! Never hitch rides yourself!!!

Resource: www.ncpc.org

Run, Yell and Tell

- If someone tries to hurt you, you have the right to: **Say "NO, get away!" Run, Tell** someone you trust!
- It's not okay for anyone to ask me to touch the private parts of their body.
- It's not okay for anyone to touch the private parts of my body.
- I should never wander away from my parents/guardian in a public place.
- Nobody has the right to hurt me physically or sexually.
- If anything like that happens to me it is not my fault.
- I should never keep abuse a secret.
- I should never yell for help when I don't really need help.

Resource: Jacob Wetterling Foundation at www.jwf.org

Fireworks Safety

Firework injuries have been on the increase in recent years, accounting for 9,500 emergency room visits in 2001. According to the National Fire Protection Association, fireworks caused about 24,200 fires in 1999 (latest figures available).

- ☛ Children ages 14 and under are the most vulnerable. The misuse of fireworks, frequently by unsupervised children, accounts for the majority of fireworks injuries.
- ☛ Children account for approximately 47% of those who receive emergency room treatment of fireworks-related injuries.
- ☛ Burns are the most common type of fireworks-related injury. The hands, head, or eyes are involved in nearly 75% of these injuries.
- ☛ One third of all eye injuries result in permanent blindness.
- ☛ Injuries most often happen when a firecracker either explodes in someone's hand, is dropped on a foot or explodes in a pocket.
- ☛ Sparklers reach temperatures greater than 1000 degrees Fahrenheit at the tip and can cause serious burns by igniting clothing.
- ☛ It is estimated that half of all consumer fireworks-related injuries happen to children under age 15.
- ☛ Some states and some communities within states restrict or ban common fireworks. Know your local ordinances.
- ☛ Statistics from the Consumer Product Safety Commission show that about 2/3 of fireworks-related injuries involve small firecrackers and common household fireworks.

For a safe holiday, the Minnesota Safety Council recommends that you:

Attend only community-sanctioned events. Many communities hold fireworks displays sponsored by the fire department or other safety agency. Establish a safe viewing area. The safest place to sit is at least 500 feet away from the staging area. The Fourth of July is a time to celebrate and have fun. To make your holiday 'sparkle,' take safety precautions to protect you and your loved ones.

Acknowledgments: National Fire Protection Association
 National SAFE KIDS Campaign
 Consumer Product Safety Commission

Consumer Fireworks Information

The sale, possession and use of certain non-explosive and non-aerial consumer fireworks are now permitted in Minnesota. Examples of legal fireworks include items such as sparklers, cones and tubes that emit sparks, and novelty items like snakes, and party poppers. A more detailed list is available at <http://www.dps.state.mn.us/fmarshal>.

Consumer fireworks may not be used on public property (i.e. parks, roads, alleys, schools, government property, etc.). Purchasers of consumer fireworks must be at least 18 years old and retailers are required to check photo identification of purchasers before selling these products.

Explosive and aerial fireworks are prohibited for public sale, possession and use. Prohibited fireworks include firecrackers, bottle rockets, missiles, roman candles, mortars and shells.

BBQ Grill Safety

The return of summer brings a return of backyard cookouts, camping, campfires, and for the Fire Department more calls related to recreation fires and BBQ grill fires on the deck. To eliminate some of these calls, the Minnesota Crime Prevention Association has the following safety information for you:

Apartment Residents

- ⊙ Charcoal and LP gas grills are prohibited to be on the decks or balconies of residential apartment buildings above the ground floor. Electric or natural gas fueled grills, permanently plumbed or wired into the buildings gas or electrical systems are allowed.
- ⊙ Charcoal and LP gas grills used on the ground floor must be located at least 15 feet from residential apartment buildings. This is due to a long history of charcoal grills igniting combustible siding, decking, etc., and endangering residents of entire apartment complexes. Also, LP gas tanks on gas grills are subject to venting the gas due to expansion overfilling or temperature change and must NOT be stored in dwelling units.

Homeowners

- ⊙ DO NOT use charcoal grills on wood decks, or within 15 feet of residence or combustible fences or structures.
- ⊙ Keep small children away when lighting charcoal or burners and during the starting process.
- ⊙ DO NOT leave matches, lighters, or butane fuel starters where children can get them.
- ⊙ Electric charcoal starting devices must be unplugged when not in use and must be allowed to cool down before storage.
- ⊙ Dispose of charcoal ashes safely in metal container and/or cool them down with water.
- ⊙ NEVER pour starting fluid directly on hot coals or open flames.