

Summertime: More Sun, More Fun, More Injuries

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign's report, *Summer Trauma Season: A National Study of the Seasonality of Unintentional Childhood Injury*, confirms what many organizations have discovered. Because of increased outdoor activities, children are at greater risk for injuries in the summer. Here are some tips to make your summer season safer:

- Hire additional staff, if possible. Be sure to conduct background checks on all staff, including part-timers and volunteers.
- Keep children out of the sun during peak heat times, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Apply a sunscreen of SPF 15 or greater, and reapply it every two hours or after swimming or sweating.
- Keep children hydrated. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children take water breaks every 15 to 20 minutes. The Academy recommends 5 ounces of cold tap water or sports drink for a child weighing 88 pounds. One ounce is about two kid-sized gulps.

More drownings occur in July than any other month. If your facility has its own pool, you can better manage staff-to-child ratios for proper supervision. If you use another facility's pool, their management may try to restrict the number of your staff members allowed access to the pool. Advise the pool management that you are required to provide additional staff to monitor children's safety. If management is not flexible, stop using that pool or limit your attendance so you are in compliance with proper supervision ratios.

The National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Caring for Our Children, recommends a 1:1 ratio for infants, a 1:1 ratio for toddlers, a 4:1 ratio for preschoolers, and a 6:1 ratio for school-age children. An adult must remain in direct contact with infants in the water. If lifeguards are responsible for watching other pool patrons, do not count them as part of your supervisory staff.

Motor vehicle-related injuries hit their peak during July. You can reduce injuries by driving at posted speed limits, checking tire pressure, and properly maintaining your vehicle. You can keep passengers safe by requiring them to wear safety belts, ensuring the proper use of child safety seats, and adding staff to supervise children in vans and buses. If you use 15-passenger vans, transport no more than 10 passengers, and make sure no one sits behind the rear axle to prevent rollovers. Make sure staff are accountable for their safe driving behavior.

Older children face increased risk of unintentional injury-related death in summer. The study found that children ages 10 to 14 tend to engage in more risky behavior and are presumably given more freedom by their parents. While in your care, children in this age group require special attention. Briefing children on safe play rules, and the disciplinary actions that will occur if these rules are not followed, is one strategy to support your supervision efforts.

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Children ages 5 to 9 are at high risk for injuries. Kids in this age group lack the skills to make clear judgments necessary to bike, walk, swim, and play safely without adult supervision. Staff briefings should highlight maintaining effective child-to-staff ratios, and discussing playground safety with kids. The Consumer Product Safety Commission has a guide for talking about playground safety with children called *Little Big Kids*. You can download this publication at www.cpsc.gov.

No matter what age children they supervise, it's important for your staff to understand that playground supervision is not the time for caregivers to socialize. Make sure that supervisors are strategically positioned throughout the playground to respond quickly to potentially dangerous situations. Consider establishing stations throughout the play area. For example, station one supervisor beside the slide and another beside the climbing equipment. Some facilities give supervisors walkie-talkies so that they can communicate hazards they observe.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.