

Summer's Here

...and that means lots of outdoor recreational activities, as well as a host of safety hazards that go along with them.

CONTACT:

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E.S.C.A.P.E., Inc. Offers Summer Safety Tips for West Michigan

With summer fast approaching, more and more people in the West Michigan area will be enjoying the outdoors. Unfortunately, sun, heat and fair-weather activities such as swimming, biking, picnicking and lawn mowing also present their share of hazards. To help ensure everyone in the community enjoys a safe summer, E.S.C.A.P.E. offers the following tips and suggest you post them where they are likely to be seen by the greatest number of people:

Heat

Overheating can cause muscle cramps, chills, nausea and dizziness, among other symptoms. At its worst, it can lead to heat stroke, a medical emergency. Don't do too much, too soon. After long periods of inactivity during the winter the body is not ready for strenuous exertion – especially in hot temperatures.

- Drink plenty of water before and during hard or strenuous work in the heat. You'll need to drink more water than your thirst indicates.
- Take frequent small drinks, which are more effective than gulping down large amounts at once.
- When possible, schedule heavy work for the cooler hours of the day, such as early morning or late evening.
- Take frequent rests, lower the workload as the heat increases.
- When possible, start with less strenuous work and gradually build up the intensity so you can acclimatize yourself to the heat.
- Never leave children alone in a car during the summer – even for a few minutes with the windows rolled down.

Most important of all, remember to call 911 in the event of an emergency.

Sun

Protect yourself from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. Overexposure can lead to eye problems, sunburn and even skin cancer.

- Use UV protective sunscreens with a protection factor of at least 15 whenever you are in the sun for long periods. Even on cloudy days UV rays can get through.
- Minimize your exposure when the sun's rays are the strongest, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Wear wide-brimmed hats in the sun; baseball caps don't cover enough of your face and neck.
- Choose sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UV light. Wraparound glasses are best.
- Babies under 6 months should be kept out of direct sunlight.

Swimming

The Centers for Disease Control reports that drowning is the second leading cause of injury-related death among children 1-14 years old.

- Always swim with a buddy, never alone, even if you are an experienced swimmer.
- Never leave kids alone while they are in or near a pool, even if they can swim.
- Know your limits. Don't get overly tired.
- Don't swim if you are chilled, overheated, immediately after eating or in storms.
- Alcohol and swimming don't mix.
- Do not chew gum or eat while swimming. You could easily choke.
- Obey "no diving" signs. It means the area is unsafe for headfirst entries.
- Always check the depth before entering the water. Check for submerged obstacles.
- Always dive with your hands in front of your head.
- Surround your pool on all sides with a sturdy 6' fence. Make sure young kids can't reach the gate latch.
- Keep rescue equipment (life preserver, long pole with a hook on the end) near your pool.
- Slips and trips are common on slippery surfaces. Discourage running in a pool area.
- Don't body surf in waves bigger than 3', on sloped beaches or near sandbars.

Fireworks

Every year, thousands of people – most of them children – are treated in emergency rooms for serious injuries related to fireworks. Fireworks (sparklers and firecrackers included) are not toys. We recommend they be used only by trained professionals. The only safe way to enjoy fireworks is at a distance. If you still plan on using fireworks and/or sparklers, despite these warnings:

- Do not allow children to play with them.
- Read and follow all instructions on the label and follow all State Laws regarding their use.
- Light fireworks outdoors away from houses and flammable materials. Be sure people are out of range.
- Keep a bucket of water handy.
- Don't try to re-light or handle malfunctioning fireworks. Soak them with water and throw them away.
- Never ignite fireworks in a container, especially one made of glass or metal.
- Store fireworks in a dry, cool place.

Biking

It's important to wear a protective helmet while bike riding. The American Medical Association reports 75% of cycling deaths are caused by head injuries.

- Wear a protective helmet when in-line skating and using scooters.
- Ride near the curb, single file, in the same direction as traffic.
- Keep to safer, less-traveled routes.
- Don't do stunts – they can lead to serious injury.
- Be alert to road hazards such as potholes, rocks and glass that can cause you to lose control.
- Make yourself visible. Wear bright clothing during the day, wear a reflective vest or use reflective tape on clothes at night.
- Never ride at dusk without a headlight and red taillight or large reflector in the back.
- Know traffic laws and signals.
- Make sure your bike is well maintained.

Play Grounds

Each year about 200,000 children are treated in emergency rooms for playground equipment-related injuries, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

- Make sure protective surfacing such as double-shredded bark mulch, wood or rubber chips, fine sand or fine gravel is 6-12" deep under and around all playground equipment.
- Make sure all equipment is carefully maintained and checked for loose hardware, projections, splinters, rust and chipped paint, moving parts that may crush or pinch, scattered debris and tree roots.
- Supervise and teach your child safe play.

Gasoline

Summertime also means gas-run tools from lawn mowers and trimmers to weed-eaters and saws.

- Use an approved safety container with a self-closing lid so vapors cannot escape – and never bring gas inside your living quarters.
- Don't smoke while handling gas.
- Don't use gas near sparks, flames, hot surfaces and sources of static electricity.
- Don't use gas to start a fire.
- Don't use gas to clean paintbrushes.

Severe Storms

In the event of an electrical storm—

- Get inside a house, large building or automobile.
- Don't stand near a single, tall tree or the tallest tree in a group.
- Get out of and away from water.

In the event of a tornado—

Buildings: Go the basement, interior room or hallway on the lowest floor

Car /mobile home: Go immediately go to a substantial structure or designated shelter.

Outdoors: Lie flat in the nearest ditch or depression, cover your head with your hands.

In the event of a flash flood—

- Leave the building you are in immediately if ordered to evacuate.
- Go to higher ground, do not try to walk through flowing water more than ankle deep.
- Do not drive through flooded areas even if it looks shallow enough to cross.

Picnics/Camping

- Carry an insect sting kit, if you have a known allergy. To decrease the risk of insect bites avoid wearing perfumes and clothes with floral patterns.
- To help prevent food poisoning, keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot. Don't store perishable foods in a hot car.
- Keep kids away from grills and lighter fluid.
- Keep grills away from anything that can burn.
- Be aware of tiny deer ticks that carry Lyme disease. When in a potentially infested area, apply insect repellent that contains DEET, wear light-colored, long sleeved-shirts, pants and socks, and know which symptoms to watch out for.
- Learn to identify poison ivy, poison oak and poison sumac. Wash the contact area with soap and water as soon as possible.
- Do not build a fire near tree trunks, fallen trees or overhanging branches.
- When extinguishing a campfire, let it die down, then break up the coals or logs, spread the pieces, soak them, and then cover the area with dirt or sand.

Lawn Mowing

- Before you mow, clear the yard of rocks, sticks and anything else the mower might fling.
- Wait for grass to dry before mowing. Wet grass might make you slip or clog the mower chute.
- Clear a clogged chute using a stick – never your hands – with the mower off.
- With a riding mower, mow up and down the slope so you're less likely to tip.
- Never leave a running mower unattended.
- Keep kids and pets away while you're mowing.
- Never refuel a hot mower.
- Never mow in bare feet or sandals. Wear heavy-duty shoes with non-slip soles.
- Avoid wearing loose clothing that could get caught in the machine.

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E.S.C.A.P.E., Inc. Offers Summer Safety Tips for New England



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Every year, thousands of people – most of them children – are treated in emergency rooms for serious injuries related to fireworks. As set forth in Chapter 149, Section 9, General Laws Board of Fire Prevention Regulations, Massachusetts Fire Code, 527 CMR 2.00, ALL fireworks in Massachusetts are strictly ILLEGAL. As such, the Merrimac Fire Department does not condone the use of fireworks in any shape, form or fashion!

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan asks the citizens of Massachusetts to set a good example for your children and leave the fireworks to the professionals. Enjoy the many displays of fireworks supervised by local fire departments and conducted by licensed professionals.

Not only do sparklers burn at 1800 degrees Fahrenheit, but they also encourage the use of matches and lighters by young children.

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