Managing Personal Watercraft—A Guide for Local and Harbour Authorities

The use of personal watercraft is now an established form of water sport in the UK with a growing band of enthusiastic participants who enjoy the sport. But personal watercraft are noisy and can cause significant nuisance to others. Collisions involving them have caused serious injury and fatalities. This guide is designed to help meet the challenge of providing opportunities for users to enjoy themselves without risking the safety of others. It has been written for those responsible for the management of busy beaches and harbours. The issues covered include noise, safety, and disturbance to wildlife species and habitats. It goes into detail on how to choose a management strategy suited to the needs of different localities with ideas about zoning, signage, rules, and speed limitations. Three case studies cover varying local authority needs—harbours, small craft, and children are restricted in the size and power of boats they can drive. The new regulations took effect on 1 April 1998 and will be phased in over 10 years. Until now, the only restriction on children operating boats was the wisdom of their parents. Under the new rules, children under 12 can drive boats with motors up to 10 horsepower (hp), children 12–16 years can drive boats up to 40 hp. No one under 16 can operate a personal watercraft training and the Datatag marking system for registration of watercraft. It is a very comprehensive book available from Royal Yachting Association, RYA House, Romsey Road, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO50 9YA, UK (fax: +44 1703 629924, e-mail: admin@rya.org.uk).

New boating rules in Canada

For the first time, recreational boaters in Canada are required to be trained to operate small craft, and children are restricted in the size and power of boats they can drive. The new regulations took effect on 1 April 1998 and will be phased in over 10 years. Until now, the only restriction on children operating boats was the wisdom of their parents. Under the new rules, children under 12 can drive boats with motors up to 10 horsepower (hp), children 12–16 years can drive boats up to 40 hp. No one under 16 can operate a personal watercraft. The new regulations also define a new “careless operation” offence that will allow enforcement agencies to issue tickets to reckless boaters. Details are available on the web site of the Canadian Coast Guard, www.ccgsc.gc.ca.

Psychological trauma in road crashes

Increasing interest is being shown in the UK in the psychological effects of trauma on children. The Child Accident Prevention Trust has produced a set of guidelines on the problem (see News and Notes in September 1998, p 173) but a 12 month prospective study from the UK city of Bath has demonstrated how important this can be (BMJ 1998;317:1619–23). Using precise criteria for diagnosis, Paul Stollard and his colleagues found that in 119 children aged 5–18 years involved in road crashes, 34.5% developed post-traumatic stress disorder, compared with only 3% of children who had sports injuries. There was no significant difference between the children involved as pedestrians, car occupants, cyclists, or motorcyclists. Girls were significantly more likely to develop the disorder than boys, as were those who had had previous experience of trauma. The nature and severity of the injuries was not related.

The assessment was done six weeks after the accident, and the authors admit that it would be impractical to know the longer term sequelae. None of the children had received any professional help and the authors feel that the psychological needs of children after such accidents remains largely unrecognised.

Kids in Danger media coverage

A US organization founded by grieving parents to focus attention on the problem of previously recalled portable cribs and playpens, which are still in use and have caused 13 known deaths of infants and toddlers, has been very active in the year it has been in existence. Kids in Danger (www.kidsindanger.com) has been featured in articles in Chicago Magazine, Child Magazine, Mother Jones, on a number of US television shows, and was the recipient of a Allstate Insurance Safety Leadership Award.

New injury position in New South Wales

On 1 January 1999, Robyn Norton took up a new position as Ramsay Health Care Professor of Injury Prevention in the Department of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of Sydney, and Director of the Institute for International Health Research and Development, based at the Royal North Shore Hospital, Sydney. Professor Norton was formerly the Director of the Injury Prevention Research Centre at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. The appointment of a new Director for the Auckland Centre is pending.

Santas presented choking hazard

A major British do-it-yourself store recalled over 2000 Santas in November when safety watchdogs warned that loose fur fabric on the collar and cuffs was dangerous to children.

Cost of injuries in Canada

Unintentional cost Canadians C$8.7 billion each year, or C$300 for every citizen, estimates a major national study. A failure to invest in injury prevention wastes lives and money and prolongs this “silent epidemic”, the study concludes. The project assessed the direct and indirect costs of the more than 2 million injuries to Canadians of all ages in 1995. Social losses and costs from suicide, homicide, and violence were not included. On average, each injury generated $4000 in direct and indirect costs. Direct costs are spending on medical treatment by physicians and hospitals. Although 94% of injuries did not require hospital treatment, their care cost an estimated $3.3 billion. Indirect costs are losses to society of productive lifetime earnings caused by disability or death. Unintentional injury killed more than 7700 Canadians in 1995, and left another 47 000 permanently disabled.

This study should prove a valuable resource for people working in a wide range of injury fields. It breaks down costs by injury cause and provides examples of the cost savings of preventive programs. Falls accounted for more than 40% of the total (or $3.6 billion), with injuries from childhood falls costing $630 million. Implementing known fall prevention strategies (such as improving playground structures and falls downstairs in the home) could bring net savings of $126 million per year, the study estimates. Motor vehicle crashes cost another 20% of the total (almost $1.7 billion). The study calculates that successful use of prevention efforts in this area could save $500 million annually. The Economic Burden of Unintentional Injury in Canada was a project of Smartrisk Foundation, in partnership with Health Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Health. Copies are available from Smartrisk, 658 Danforth Ave, Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario M4J 5B9, Canada (tel: +1 416 463 9878, e-mail: choose@sarmorisk.ca, web site: www.sarmorisk.ca).

New child car seat rules in US

All child safety seats would be anchored by the same, simple system in new cars under a federal rule, FMVSS 225 Tether Anchorage and Child Restraint Anchorages. The rule has passed its final hurdle and awaits only the formal announcement. Canada will also require the system, and Transport Canada is coordinating its announcement with the US one.

The rule would require car companies to fit new cars with a single type of anchorage system to hold child seats so parents can avoid the struggle to fix the seat with a seat belt. The car companies will be given lead time to install the anchors in rear seats. It will take years for all child seats and cars to have the system, since it will be required only on new products. The rule, which is a response to the fact that about 80% of child car seats are not properly installed, links with the worldwide ISOFIX discussions that have been in train for several years. If all children using child seats were restrained properly, 68 more lives would be saved annually, according to an estimate from the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

It is likely that the NHTSA will make auto makers install rigid metal bars behind the rear seats of new cars to serve as a universal anchor for child seats. Child seat manufacturer will be allowed flexibility in designing attachments on the child seat that would hook on to the anchoring system. A tether strap would secure the top of a forward-facing child seat near the child’s head and another pin on the vehicle’s rear package shelf to prevent head and neck injuries by keeping a child’s head from moving too far forward in a crash.

... and Ford and General Motors announce child safety developments

From the autumn, Ford will be installing in some models of vehicle a new child safety seat latching mechanism aimed at preventing the improper installation of child seats. The mechanism incorporates a twist metal “secure point”, a latch that connects directly to
the rear seat of the vehicle and a strap that connects the back of the safety seat to the vehicle’s back seat to keep the safety seat from tipping forward. It will be five years before it will be incorporated into Ford’s entire product line.

General Motors have announced that it will introduce a “smart” airbag system next year that will use electronic sensors to detect whether the occupant of the front passenger seat is a small adult or a child. The system will use electronic sensors to detect whether the occupant in the front passenger seat is a small adult or child in a safety seat. If the sensor detects a child in the a safety seat, the airbag won’t deploy. If the sensor detects a small adult, the weight of the person will determine whether it deploys.

CAPT launches Safe Kids campaign in UK

Funding from Johnson & Johnson has enabled the Child Accident Prevention Trust to launch a Safe Kids campaign across the UK. The trust is working closely with ChildSafe Wales, Child Safe Scotland, University Hospital Lewisham, and public relations company, The Red Consultancy, to roll out a programme focusing on safety on wheels—skateboards, in-line skates, roller skates, and bikes. Twelve of the UK’s numerous multidisciplinary accident prevention groups have been signed up as Safe Kids coalitions. More details will be given in the September issue of Injury Prevention.

Insurer rewards Saab and Volvo safety seat buyers

Canadian insurance company, Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC), is encouraging motorists to reduce whiplash injuries by offering a $100 cash incentive to buyers of certain new models of Volvo and Saab cars equipped with state-of-the-art seats designed to help prevent whiplash. ICBC report that in British Columbia alone, with just 2.5 million vehicles, the cost of whiplash injuries is hundreds of millions of dollars.

CEN risk assessment report

The report prepared by the European standards body, CEN, has been published by the Swedish standards organisation. The report Child safety—risk assessment and design solutions deals with hazards commonly found in child use and care articles. It was written to harmonise the approach to risk assessment and prevention across child care articles, toys, playground equipment, and children’s furniture. Details of cost and availability: SIS förlag, Box 645, 113 82 Stockholm, Sweden (fax: +46 8 30 18 50, e-mail: sis.sales@sis.se).

Playground safety training

The Canadian Playground Safety Institute is running a travelling two day course providing professional training in the Canadian Standards Association guidelines on play spaces and equipment, identification of playground hazards, protective surfacing, and risk management. In its first year, hundreds of people have taken the course, which is organized by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association. Further information: Glenn McLean, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association in Ottawa (tel: +1 613 748 5651, fax: +1 613 748 5854, e-mail: cpra@activeliving.ca, web site: www.activeliving.ca/activeliving/cpra). National Standard of Canada: Children’s Playspaces and Equipment (CANS/CSA-Z614-98) is approved by CAN/CSA (Canadian Standards Association, 178 Rexdale Blvd, Etobicoke, Ontario, Canada M9W 1R3.

ATV safety programme

The US Consumer Product Safety Commission announced in December 1998 that five all-terrain vehicle (ATV) manufacturers are to promote ATV safety with a multimillion dollar, multiyear campaign to emphasise the risks of children younger than 16 riding or operating adult size ATVs; undercover inspections to assure that dealers comply with minimum age requirements in the sale of ATVs; and promoting ATV training through cash incentives to first time purchasers.

Recreational water injuries

The topic featured in the December 1998 issue of Injury Bulletin, the newsletter of the Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit, reflected the fact that the Australian state has a hot climate and an extensive coastline. Swimming injuries, as opposed to those associated with fishing, boating, skiing and surfing, make up the largest group (for all ages). However, drowning and near drowning represent only 7% of these, the majority being due to impacts and collisions, falls, and lacerations. Only 11% of the swimming injuries happened on the beach.

Infant and toddler hats warning

A US clothing manufacturer has warned the public that 180,000 of its infant and toddler hats with a one piece chin strap can lead to strangulation if they get caught on playground equipment, riding toys, or other catch points. Consumers were advised to cut the drawstrings should be removed from the hoods and necks of children’s clothing and the public should look for children’s outerwear that has alternative closures, such as snaps, buttons, Velcro, or elastic.

Moving Forward—Northern Ireland policy statement

“Transport in Northern Ireland is predominantly based on cars, buses and lorries using the road system. This approach will continue to provide for transport needs for many years but with greater emphasis given to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and public transport—both bus and rail”. The opening statement in the recently published transport policy highlights the “car culture” of Northern Ireland with the view that this is unlikely to change radically. Some of the encouraging elements of the policy include improvements in pedestrian and cycle access and safety, and the adoption of traffic management measures, including the protection of residential areas from the adverse effects of inappropriate traffic.

The tragic toll on Ulster’s roads rose to 160 in 1998, a 10% increase on the previous year and the worst year for fatalities in seven years. Giving greatest concern is the doubling of child pedestrian deaths, 12 in 1998. As part of the integrated transport policy of the Department of the Environment will be preparing a regional transport plan, including walking and cycling strategies. New targets for road casualty reduction will be incorporated into the seven road safety plan operative from April 1999. The range of measures that will hopefully impact on the child road casualty figures include increasing use of 20 mph zones, introducing a pilot “home zones” project, promoting the concept of “safer routes to school” by setting up pilot projects and encouraging a vibrant voluntary road safety movement.

Copies of the policy statement are available from Rosie Mercer, Child Accident Prevention Trust, Hill Building, St Luke’s Hospital, Armagh BT61 7NQ, UK (fax: +44 1861 412547, e-mail: rosimercer@aol.com).

Buckle up kids—or go to school

People in Hawaii who don’t buckle up their under 3 year olds have to attend a four hour class on the proper use of safety seats. This is the consequence of a bill that came into force in May 1998. The $100 fine still has to be paid by first time offenders, plus an additional school fee of $57; offend again and it gets even more expensive. There is plenty of room for improvement: in February 1998, the child seat use rate was only 37% among 1–3 year olds on Oahu.

Safety for Home Based Child Care—Guidelines for Childminders

A book aimed at improving the safety of children in home based child care has been introduced by Rosie Mercer, the Child Accident Prevention Trust’s Northern Ireland Development Officer. It is the direct result of a small grant from the Moyola Valley Development Partnership and collaboration with health promotion and social services staff from the Home First Community Health and Social Services Trust and the Northern Ireland Childminding Association. The book contains information on nursery and safety equipment conforming to British and European Standards. It offers detailed advice on looking after babies, both in the home and when travelling in cars. Information on a range of common problems such as safety in the sun, preventing poisonings, and the safe use of toys and play equipment is provided. Road safety is outlined in terms of the current law, best practice, and issues specific to the safety of older children in the road setting.

Although the guidelines were prepared specifically for childminders living and working in this area of Northern Ireland, the trust aims to seek further funding to enable further publication and a more widespread distribution. If you would like a copy (cost £6 in UK, £6 overseas), contact Rosie Mercer, Child Accident Prevention Trust, Hill Building, St Luke’s Hospital, Armagh BT61 7NQ, UK (fax: +44 1861 412547, e-mail: rosimercer@aol.com).
Cigarette lighters in the news again

Over 400,000 butane, multipurpose lighters from China were recalled by the Consumer Product Safety Commission in February. The lighters could leak excess butane in use, causing an unexpected flashback or sudden burst of flame. The lighters retailed at between $2 and $3.

Meanwhile, CEN, the European standards organisation, has set up a task force to develop a standard to improve cigarette lighter safety. The task force is likely to focus on the development of a standard for child resistance, a requirement absent from the current ISO lighter standard.

New CPSC web site for kids

In February, the US Consumer Product Safety Commission unveiled a new and improved “Kidd Safety” web site. The web site is designed to educate children about safety issues that they encounter every day, from hazards around the home to preventing injuries while playing sports. The web site, www.cpsc.gov/kids/kidsafety/index.html, is designed for children ages 8–12 using educational, interactive, and fun activities. The site combines a fun-loving character named Kidd Safety with animation and sound to convey its messages to children. The site includes a memory game, which is disguised as a virtual home full of safety tips; a hangman game, which provides clues to safety terms; an interactive safety game challenging the player to catch the safety items, but dodge unsafe items; and a puzzle to test a child’s overall safety knowledge.

UK Child Safety Week is 21–27 June

The Child Accident Prevention Trust has announced that 21–27 June 1999 will be Child Safety Week. Further details: Pushpa Dougall, Child Accident Prevention Trust, 18–20 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3HA, UK (tel: +44 171 608 3828, fax: +44 171 608 3674, e-mail: cs@capt.demon.co.uk).

Penny danger

An article published in Science News (5 December 1998) pointed out a special risk associated with some US pennies minted after 1981 when ingested by children. Although many physicians have advised leaving the coins to the passage of nature, these pennies have a very thin coating of copper, which evidently can dissolve from stomach acid, leaving a razor sharp zinc edge that has been known to create ulcers and cause bleeding.

New tether manual

A tether manual from Safe Ride News, prepared with support from Ford Motor Co, has been published. It covers why and how to install a tether (with or without a designated, predrilled hole), child restraint models that are tether compatible or tether ready, and information from most vehicle manufacturers regarding part numbers for tether kits for specific vehicle models. For information on ordering (at single copy and bulk rates), contact Deborah Stewart, Safe Ride News, 5223 NE 187th St, Lake Forest Park, WA 98155, USA (tel: +1 206 364 5696, fax: +1 206 364 5992, e-mail: dstewart@twbc.com, web site: www.saferidenews.com).

Bike helmet playground death

A 3 year old boy died in Pennsylvania in February when his bike helmet became trapped in playground equipment. Consumer Product Safety Commission officials report that they are aware of five other cases in which helmets caused injury or put children in serious danger.

Fire fighters to improve children’s safety in cars

Child car seats are effective safety devices, however, both a literature review and a local study revealed 80% of seats to be improperly fitted. Within Gloucestershire, England, checks have been carried out on child seats to correct faults and so improve the safety of child passengers. Problems identified include 19% of seats exhibiting dangerous “buckle crunching” (where part of the buckle comes into direct contact with the frame of the seat and may snap open in a crash); 6% of seats fitted incorrectly in an extremely dangerous manner; 10% of seats were incompatible with the car and could not be fitted satisfactorily. The Gloucestershire Accident Action Group sought an answer to these problems from the Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service. This led to the development of an innovative new service. Fire fighters are professionals who have the respect of the community. Because they are often first on the scene after a crash, fire fighters are keen to ensure that all children are restrained as safely as possible in all cars and they volunteered for training in their own time. Fire fighters attended a comprehensive training course on in-car safety in October 1998, where they learned how to fit, check, and adjust seats and give advice. Parents and carers are now able to make appointments for this free service. Health visitors, who have received training to enable them to advise parents on in-car safety, are encouraging their clients to make use of this service. In the short time since the scheme started the public response has been enthusiastic. Further information: Philip Bennett or Jane Young, Health Promotion Gloucestershire, Gloucestershire Royal Hospital, Great Western Road, Gloucester GL1 3NN, UK (tel: +44 1452 394596).

Contributors to these News and Notes include Les Fisher, Anara Guard, Hugh Jackson, Rosie Mercer, Jan Scott, and Kathy Weber, and Amy Zasler. Contributions have been edited by Michael Hayes. Items for the December 1999 issue should be sent to Michael Hayes at the Child Accident Prevention Trust, 18–20 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3HA, UK (fax: +44 171 608 3674; e-mail: mh@capt.demon.co.uk) by 1 September 1999.