NEWS AND NOTES

European Union injury prevention framework

The European Union has announced that it will be putting in place a public health programme aimed at reducing home and leisure injuries. There will be two strands: improving the European Home and Leisure Accident Surveillance System (EHLASS), and exchanging information on the use of data to enable the definition of priorities and better prevention strategies. The formal announcement and the detail are in the Official Journal of the European Communities, 20 February 1999. The programme runs until the end of 2003 will be managed by the public health directorate general, DG 5. It has been allocated EUR 14 million (about $13.5 million). One remarkable aspect of this announcement is the major change in the programme that appeared to happen at the last minute. It had been expected that the programme would support exchange of information and improve networking within Europe.

MADD seeks applicants for national youth summit 2000

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) is seeking high school student leaders from across the US to represent their communities in Washington DC at the MADD National Youth Summit to Prevent Underage Drinking 2000. One high school student from each of the 435 US congressional districts will be selected to attend the historic MADD summit to address youth alcohol use—the number 1 drug among young people (visit www.madd.org for further information).

Underage drinking is one of America’s most pervasive problems, causing death and injury to far too many young people every year. According to one national survey, 9.5 million drinkers are under the legal drinking age. MADD believes that young people must be an integral part of the solution to this serious problem. The National Youth Summit is a part of a continuing focus MADD has placed on underage drinking and drunk driving.

Twelve policy level recommendations were created by the youth delegates at the 1997 MADD National Youth Summit, including automatic loss of license for those under 21 on their first alcohol related offense; strong enforcement and sanctions for zero tolerance laws for those under 21, which is now the minimum age in all states; and requiring alcohol advertisers to pay for public service announcements, one to counter each alcohol advertisement shown during prime time.

Waste board grants help playground safety

Twenty four local government and school district projects received funding today from the California Integrated Waste Management District projects received funding today from the California Waste Board in the form of grants totaling $534 000 for playground surfacing and running tracks made from recycled tires. The awarding of these grants coincided with the concerns and goals expressed by Governor Davis in his proclamation, which declared 29 April 1999 as “Playground Safety Day” in California (some 20 other states have also joined in this national day of observance). According to National Playground Safety Day statistics, approximately 200 000 children require emergency room treatment every year as a result of injuries that occur on public playgrounds. In California, this equates to between 20 000 and 25 000 injuries each year. Falls to the surface constitute the number one cause of such injuries. Additionally, the 1998 PlaySafe Community Report which surveys the safety of America’s playgrounds determined that 85% of the playground facilities surveyed in California lacked the proper protective surfacing necessary to absorb the impact of those accidents. The California Waste Board’s Tire Program is funded from a 25 cent surcharge on the sale of each new tire in California. Over the past three years, the Waste Board has funded a total of 60 rubber playground surfacing projects in the state. Including the April grants, the agency has allocated nearly $1.5 million in safety playground grants to cities, counties, schools, and jurisdictions since 1996.

Inedibles in food

The UK Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) has given chocolate eggs containing toys the all-clear, after a study on how many children have been killed or injured after swallowing the toys. Three children in the UK have died from choking on the plastic parts of these toys. The dangers of these small toys that are imbedded in food continue to be reported in the press. An article was published in the London newspaper, The Express, on 8 April 1999 saying that the parents of the three children who died have now petitioned the European Parliament to introduce mandatory safeguards throughout Europe.

CPSC announces product recalls

In April, Californian manufacturer, Bell Sports Inc, voluntarily recalled about 5800 bicycle helmets used for BMX and downhill mountain biking and racing. A defect with the helmets’ chin strap rivets can result in the helmet coming off the rider’s head in the event of a fall or crash. Bell Sports is aware of one incident where the chin strap assembly became detached from a helmet during a crash. No injury was reported.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) also announced that it was working with Walgreen Co in recalling about 40 000 Kid’s Sipper Bottles. The caps of the bottles can be pulled off, creating a potential choking hazard. The CPSC and Walgreen are not aware of any injuries or incidents involving these bottles.

WHO recognition for Melbourne’s Safety Centre

The Royal Children’s Hospital Safety Centre in Melbourne, Australia, has become the fourth Innovation in Safe Communities Support Centre affiliated with the World Health Organization’s Collaborating Centre for Community Safety Promotion at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden. Professor Leif Svanström of the Karolinska, accompanied by the coordinator, Mrs Moa Sundström, presented the accreditation certificate at a ceremony held at the Royal Children’s Hospital on 19 April 1999. The Safety Centre joins a worldwide network of safe communities stretching from Sweden to New Zealand, and Alaska to Thailand. Speaking at the ceremony, the hospital’s acting executive officer, Professor Glenn Bows, said that an important element in the Safety Centre’s achievement of this honour was the success of its long term community outreach program, the Safe Accident-Free Environment (SAFE) program, in working with low income families and groups from non-English speaking backgrounds who have reduced capacity to access safety information and services. The peer education model used by the SAFE program employs peer educators to work with communities from non-English speaking backgrounds in their own first languages to achieve environmental and behavioural changes in their local environments.

More on seat belts

Almost half of all passengers killed in car accidents in Northern Ireland last year were not wearing seat belts. And more than a third of all drivers killed were also not strapped in.

The startling statistics released by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) shows that, of the 160 people who lost their lives on the province’s roads in 1998, 31% of drivers and 46% of passengers were not wearing seat belts. The RUC said that it was disappointing that despite all the publicity about seat belts, the message is still not being heeded. They have warned that patrols will be enforcing the regulations and that those not wearing a seat belt will face severe penalties. Copies of Northern Ireland, Road Traffic Accident Statistics Annual Report 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).

How safe is your farm?

A grant from Lloyds/TSB Foundation for Northern Ireland has enabled the Child Accident Prevention Trust (CAPT) to produce a new checklist for child safety on farms. Aimed at parents, it itemises 30 free or low cost ways to keep children safe on farms. It is being distributed this summer at annual town fete, fetes, and agricultural and country shows throughout Northern Ireland. Copies available from Rosie Mercer, CAPT, Hill Building, St Luke’s Hospital, Armagh BT61 7NQ, UK, fax: +44 1861 412547, e-mail: rosimercer@aol.com).

Between 1976 and 1998 over 220 children were killed in Britain as a result of accidents in agriculture. In addition to specific legislation such as the Prevention of Accidents to Children in Agriculture Regulations 1998, the Health and Safety Commission has recently updated and approved a code of practice giving practical guidance to those who have duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. Preventing Accidents to Children in Agriculture can be obtained (price...
Transport Research Laboratory reveal that ventable deaths of around 40 front seat each year, but they also cause tragic and pre-Safety Minister, said at the launch, “Not only (54%, up from 48% before the campaign) highest rate of adult rear seat belt wearing (Easter 1999, costing £300 000 and featuring (requiring gun owners to use the safety expected to be passed by Congress, would in arms badly out of step with public opinion. It w-constitutional right to bear goods vehicles. They are now lobbying to (is to blame such as no road signs indicat-London in May, with separate launches being (coalitions give the campaign a UK-wide (mention in the previous issue of Injury Prevention. The trust is working in association with Child Safe Wales; Child Safe (Scotland, and University Hospital Lewisham to run the campaign. The theme for the first Year is Safe Kids on Wheels, focusing on the (UK-wide dimension. Most of the coalitions are well established child accident prevention groups but new groups have been brought together in (in April. The meeting agreed on a hazard antiv test, a crash test, and lateral protection into the revision of the standard. The different levels of safety and protection for various makes and models further emphasised the need to improve EN1384.

CPT’s Safe Kids campaign launched

The CPT, with funding from Johnson & (roarious improvements to the European (standard EN 1384, as requested by the Euro-phere in September 1999; 2(1) Jan/Feb).

Senate Republicans vote for child safety locks on guns

Republican senators have passed a measure requiring all handguns to be sold with child safety locks in a sign that they are fearful of a public backlash after recent school massacres. The 78 to 20 vote represents the latest in a series of reversals by Republican members of Congress, who have found their traditional support for the constitutional right to bear arms badly out of step with public opinion. It is not clear how the safety devices on guns would be installed. The measure, which is expected to be passed by Congress, would in any case do little more than to ensure that young children could not accidentally discharge weapons. There is no provision requiring gun owners to use the safety devices.

“Belt up in the back for everyone’s sake”

A campaign launched in England before Easter 1999, costing £300 000 and featuring TV, radio and poster advertisements, hopes to achieve the successful “Belt-up for every-one’s sake” campaign of 1998. Following the 1998 campaign, the Transport Research Laboratory’s six monthly survey reported the highest rate of adult rear seat belt wearing (54%, up from 48% before the campaign) since the law came into force in 1991. Wear-ing a seat belt in the front seat of the car has been a legal requirement in Great Britain since 1983, saving at least 370 lives and 7000 serious injuries annually. Lord Whitty, Road Safety Minister, said at the launch, “Not only are 120 unbelted back seat passengers killed each year, but they also cause tragic and preventable deaths of around 40 front seat passengers. Current estimates from the Transport Research Laboratory reveal that rear seat belts save at least 140 lives each year and that’s with the current rate of just over half of adults wearing their belts. If everyone belt up in the back, we could more than double that”.

Brainstorm on European standard on helmets for horse riders

As the CEN Technical Committee 158 with responsibility for the horse riders helmet standard seems to be unwilling to make the “urgent” improvements to the European standard EN 1384, as requested by the Euro-pen Parliament’s Petitions Committee, the commission organised a brainstorming meet-ing on the issue in April. The meeting agreed to include a hazard antiv test, a crash test, and lateral protection into the revision of the standard. The different levels of safety and protection for various makes and models further emphasised the need to improve EN1384.

Lifestyles of 11–14 year olds to be studied

The CPT has been awarded a £140 000 grant by the UK’s National Lottery Charities Board to study the lifestyles of young people. The study will concentrate on what they regard as safe and dangerous and will collect data from the youngsters using disposable cameras, interviews, and questionnaires. The researchers expect to examine in depth the differences between social classes. The project, which will start in November 1999, will be carried out by Dr Liz Towner at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and Mr Geoff Sparks at the University of Hudders-field who collaborated in developing the project.

Strangulation risks from window covering cords

The US CPSC and the Window Covering Safety Council have joined with major manufac-turers, importers, and retailers to warn parents and caregivers that young children can become entangled and strangle in pull cords for window coverings. The CPSC is aware of at least 194 deaths since 1981. With the continuing number of strangulation deaths, the CPSC has reissued this 1985 warning.

Window covering cords are one of the products most frequently associated with...
strangulation of children under 5 years. The younger victims, usually between 10 to 15 months of age, typically are in cribs that have been placed near window covering pull cords. Although a few older children, usually from 2 to 4 years old, find cords hanging near the floor, most of these victims become entangled in cords while climbing on furniture to look out the window. Entanglement and strangulation can occur when a child is alone in a room for only a short time. The CPSC and the Window Covering Safety Council urged parents to eliminate the loop in two corded horizontal blinds, and pleated and cellular shades.

The general advice from the CPSC is keep all window covering cords out of the reach of children. Unless the cords can be completely removed from a child’s reach, including when a child climbs on furniture, the commission recommends against knotting or tying the commission together which creates a new loop for a child to become entangled. The CPSC also recommends that when you install window coverings, adjust the cords to their shortest length possible. When you order new custom window coverings, specify that you want a short cord.

Plan for European Union emergency ban on PVC in toys and child care articles revived

At a meeting in February, organised by the European Commission’s Industry Directorate-General, France, Spain, and Italy joined Denmark, Sweden, Austria, and Greece in pressing the commission to propose a European Union prohibition on four phthalates in child care articles. The national experts opposed DG3’s plans to propose a ban on five phthalates and to allow the use of DINP. DG 24 (consumer policy) is seeking the go-ahead from the commission to make proposals to propose an emergency three month ban on the sale of PVC products for children, containing any of the six main types of phthalates. Phthalate-containing products already on the market would have to be withdrawn. Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and Greece have already introduced or announced plans for various national restrictions or bans on phthalate containing goods for small children.

Helmet use rising

As part of a national bike helmet safety campaign, the US CPSC, in partnership with the McDonald’s Corporation, released survey results in April showing an increase in bike helmet usage from 10% in 1991 to 50% in 1995. The survey also shows that half of all bicyclists never or infrequently wear helmets when they ride, putting them at increased risk of serious head injuries. According to the new report, bike helmet safety campaigns, Get the Helmet Habit. Educating people on the risks associated with riding bikes, getting all bikers to wear a helmet every time they ride, and educating them on the correct way to wear a helmet are the campaigns’ main goals. As part of the campaign, a bike helmet safety website was launched at www.bikehelmet.org, teacher grades of K through 3 received an in-school education program on bike helmet safety, and posters were sent to 35,000 pediatricians for display in their waiting rooms.

Latest Dutch child accident statistics published

The Dutch Consumer Safety Institute has published a series of reports with up-to-date information about injuries caused by hobbies and leisure accidents among children aged 14 and under in the Netherlands. The survey shows that the number of accidents has slightly dropped over the past 10 years while hospital admissions rose by 19% between 1991 and 1995.

DaimlerChrysler announce child restraint fitting stations

DaimlerChrysler AG announced in June that it is establishing a permanent service at about 1000 dealerships around the country to advise parents about purchasing and installing car seats correctly in their cars. The company will spend more than $10 million annually on the service, which will be offered at about a quarter of their dealerships. The move follows a January recommendation by the US National Transportation Safety Board that a nationwide network of fitting stations for child seats be established to prevent the deaths of children in automobile accidents as more than 80 percent of child seats are improperly installed. Child seat manufacturer Fisher-Price and the National Safety Council are also involved in the initiative. General Motors Corporation is also considering establishing permanent fitting stations in its dealerships. Since 1996, General Motors has worked with the National Safe Kids Campaign to host weekend or one day child safety seat checks at their dealerships. More than 27,000 car seats have been checked during the multimillion dollar campaign at about 1000 General Motors dealerships.

Labor laws violation

US retailer Sears Roebuck & Company has agreed to pay a $325 000 fine for alleged violation of child labor laws in 44 stores. A US Department of Labor investigation found that teenagers were operating freight elevators, forklifts and other dangerous equipment and loading power driven paper balers in violation of federal laws. Children 15 years old were also working more hours than permitted. Sears did not admit liability. Sears did agree to institute self audits in all 845 stores, improve training for store managers, and provide information to parents of employees under age 18.

Value of CE mark questioned

The European Commission’s Working Party on Consumer Safety has discussed the safety marking of products. Several different positions emerged on the CE marking and its meaning. According to some participants, the CE mark is misleading and useless for consumers whereas some national markings can become a kind of protectionism. ANEC pointed that the CE mark has no value added and that by contrast a mark should give information on safety performance of the environment. The commission is to raise the issue again in the future.

New US standard for soccer goals

The US CPSC and the soccer goal industry helped develop a new safety standard to reduce the risk of soccer goal tip-over. Since 1979, the CPSC has learned of 23 deaths and 38 serious injuries from soccer goals tipping over and crushing children who climb on them or hang from the crossbar. CPSC Chairman Ann Brown said, “We want kids to have fun, be active, and play soccer with goals that are safely anchored into the ground. The new standard makes soccer goals stable and, therefore, less likely to tip over on children”. The “Provisional Safety Standard and Performance Specification for Soccer Goals” (ASTM-PS-75-99) was approved on 2 March 1999. The standard requires that movable soccer goals, except very lightweight goals, not tip over when the goal is weighted in a downward or horizontal direction. The standard also specifies warning labels must be attached to the goal, such as: “Warning: Always anchor goal. Unsecured goal can fall over causing serious injury or death”. Most of the deaths and injuries occurred with unanchored homemade goals including those assembled by high school shop classes and community businesses. People were killed when they climbed on the soccer goal or while attempting to do chin-ups, pulling the goal down. All goals, whether homemade or manufactured, should be properly secured to the ground to avoid injuries or deaths associated with tip-over. There are several different ways to properly anchor soccer goals. The number and type of anchors depends on factors such as soil type and goal weight. Anchor types include auger-style anchors that are screwed into the ground; semipermanent anchors, which require a permanently secured base that is buried underground combined with the use of tethers or bolts to secure the goal; peg, stake or j-hook style anchors that are driven into the ground; and sandbags or counterweights for indoor facilities. The CPSC developed safety guidelines for soccer organizations, schools, and recreation departments to use to help prevent tip-over of soccer goals. For a free copy of the CPSC Guidelines for Movable Soccer Goal Safety, send a postcard to CPSC, Washington, DC 20207, USA.

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