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 minimum drinking age of 21. 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 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 Playing It Safe 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 prevent injuries. 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 69 rubber playground projects around 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 having swallowed the toys. Three children in the UK have died 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 says 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 innovator in Community Safety Port 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 Sundstrom, 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 Bowers, 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 1999, 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 412457, e-mail: rosiermerc@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 fêtes, and agricultural and country shows being distributed this summer at annual town fêtes, 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 412457, e-mail: rosiermerc@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. Prevention Accident Children in Agriculture can be obtained (price
Transport Research Laboratory reveal that passengers. Current estimates from the ventable deaths of around 40 front seat each year, but they also cause tragic and pre-
arresting 120 unbelted back seat passengers killed in 2018. Safety Minister, said at the launch, “Not only are 54% of those who drive now aware of the importance of a seat belt in the front seat of the car has increased (54%, up from 48% before the campaign) as a result of a £5.00 television advert by the Transport and Communication Committee. The committee has recommended that all seat belts in cars should be compulsory, and that drivers should be fined if they fail to fit them. The report also highlighted the importance of education and awareness campaigns in promoting seat belt use. The committee has recommended that local authorities should be encouraged to run their own campaigns, and that the government should provide funding to support these efforts.”

Zimbabwe roads

The 1997 road traffic accident statistics have been released by the Zimbabwe Republic Police. A total of 43,537 accidents were reported during the year, resulting in 5,351 fatalities and 18,095 injured. During this year, 48.4% of all accidents involved alcohol, and 26.2% involved speeding. The accident rate is highest in the city of Harare, where 7.8% of all accidents involved alcohol and 5.4% involved speeding. The police said that alcohol and speeding are the main causes of accidents, and that the situation is not improving. They are calling on drivers to be more responsible and to drive safely. The government has announced plans to introduce stiffer penalties for drivers found guilty of drunk driving, and to increase the number of speed cameras. They are also proposing to introduce a system of roadside alcohol testing for drivers suspected of being under the influence of alcohol. The police said that these measures are necessary to improve road safety in Zimbabwe.

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 encourage 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 (84%), up from 48% before the campaign, since the law came into force in 1991. Wearing 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 7,000 serious injuries annually. Lord Blackett, 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 belted 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 European Parliament’s Petitions Committee, the commission organised a brainstorming meeting on the issue in April. The meeting agreed to include a hazard antidote test, a crush 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 EN 1384.

CAPT’s Safe Kids campaign launched

The CAPT, with funding from Johnson & Johnson, has rolled out its Safe Kids campaign, mentioned 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 promotion of safety equipment for leisure cycling, skating, and skateboarding. Thirteen coalitions give the campaign a UK-wide dimension. Most of the coalitions are well established established child accident prevention groups but new groups have been brought together in Glasgow, Belfast, and Lewisham. Public health minister, Tessa Jowell, launched the national campaign at a press conference in London in May, with separate launches being staged in each coalition locality. The long-term commitment of Johnson & Johnson and their provision of public relations support will help us to make this campaign successful”, commented CAPT Director Carol Sherriff at the launch. “It has been encouraging to see the enthusiasm with which the coalitions have embraced and a separate mechanism that pre-

Congressional support for US poison control centers

At a meeting during National Poison Prevention Week, US congressional leaders proposed legislation to provide $27 million to fund poison control centers and to create a central toll free number for poison centers. National Poison Prevention Week was from 21–27 March 1999 with local poison control centers, pharmacies, health departments, and others distributing literature and Congres- selling kits, and others distributing literature and conducting poison prevention programs in their communities.

Dr Jess Benson, President of the American Association of Poison Control Centers, emphasized the life saving advice provided by the nation’s poison control centers. “Poison control centers save lives and care costs. Every dollar spent on a poison control center saves about $7 in medical expenses. Without poison centers, victims would have to go to emergency rooms. Without immediate intervention, some victims might die”.

Car trunk panel

The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has created a panel to study solutions to the problem of children locking themselves in car trunks after 11 children died in the summer heat in this fashion in 1998. The Expert Panel on Trunk Entrapment, composed of industry, medical, and consumer group representatives released a report calling for new cars to have safety handles or release mechanisms inside the trunk. General Motors has already made a trunk release kit available through their auto dealerships that can be installed as optional equipment. It has a yellow handle that is illu-
matted and a separate mechanism that pre-
vents the trunks from shutting unless it is manually reset. Ford Motor Company is including a glowing handle as a standard fea-
ture inside the trunks of their 2000 models. The panel also recommended banning the sale of vehicles, trunk safety information in own-
er’s manuals, and educational outreach to parents so children understand trunks are not safe places to play. An informational booklet, Trunks are for elephants, will be produced by the National Safe Kids Cam-
paign and General Motors (available through www.safekids.org).

Lifestyles of 11–14 year olds to be studied

The CAPT 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 Huddersfield 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 manu-
facturers, 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 reissuied 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 par- ents to eliminate the loop in two cored hori- zontal 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 cord 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 revised

At a meeting in February, organised by the European Commission’s Industry Directo- rate General (DG 3), Germany, France, Spain, and Italy joined Denmark, Sweden, Austria, and Greece in pressing the commis- sion to propose a European Union prohibi- tion on all 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 departments 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, Den- mark, 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 cam- paign, 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 1998. 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 study, of bikers who now report wearing a helmet, 98% said they wore a helmet for safety reasons, 70% said they wore a helmet because a parent or spouse insisted on it, and 44% said they did so because a law required it.

In 1991, the CPSC conducted the first national survey of bike helmet usage. At that time, there were an estimated 66.9 million riders. Today, there are an estimated 80.6 million riders, 43% of whom never wear helmets and 7% of whom wear helmets less than half the time.

The survey reported 69% of children under 16 wear a helmet on a regular basis while riding a bike, according to parents. The survey also found 38% of adult bike riders regularly wear their helmets. To reach more riders, particularly parents and their children who still are not wearing bike helmets, the CPSC and McDonald’s launched a national bike helmet safety campaign, Get the Helmet Habit. Educating people on the risks associ- ated with riding bikes, getting all bikers to wear a helmet every time they ride, and edu- cating them on the correct way to wear a hel- met are the campaign’s goals. As part of the campaign, a bike helmet safety website was launched at www.bikelmet.com, teach- ers of grades K through 3 received an in-school education program on bike helmet safety, and posters were sent to 35,000 pedia- tricians 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 horses 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 to advise parents about purchasing and installing car seats correctly. 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 Trans- portation 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 per- cent 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 installing permanent fit- ting stations in its dealerships. Since 1996, General Motors has worked with the Na- tional 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 viola- tion of child labor laws in 44 stores. A US Department of Labor investigation found that teenagers were operating freight eleva- tors, forklifts, and other hazardous equip- ment 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 em- ployees 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 posi- tions 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. 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 permanently anchored in place.” The new standard makes soccer goals stable and, therefore, less likely to tip over on children. The “Provisional Safety Standard and Per- formance 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; a CE mark must be attached to the goal, such as: “Warn- ing: 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 over. All goals, whether homemade or manufactured, should be properly secured to the ground to avoid injuries or deaths associ- ated with tip-over. There are several different ways to properly anchor soccer goals. The number and type of anchors depend on factors such as soil type and goal weight. Anchor types include auger-style anchors that are screwed into the ground; semiperman- ent 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 facili- ties. The CPSC developed safety guidelines for soccer organizations, schools, and recrea- tion 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, Washing- ton, DC 20207, USA.

Contributors to these News and Notes include: Anara Guard, Rosie Mercer, Barry Pless, Jan Shield, and Kathy Weber. Contributions have been edited by Michael Hayes. Items for the March 2000 issue should be sent to Michael Hayes at the Child Acci- dent Prevention Trust, 18–20 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 4HA, UK (fax +44 20 7668 3674, e-mail mhh@cpst.demon.co.uk) by 1 December 1999.