

# Dear Parent or Caregiver:



Our class is learning about injury prevention through an exciting new program called *Risk Watch*<sup>™</sup>. Developed by the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), *Risk Watch* is a comprehensive curriculum designed to give children in preschool through grade eight the information and support they need to make positive choices about their personal safety and well-being. The program targets the top eight risk areas for this age group:

**Motor vehicle safety**

**Fire and burn prevention**

**Choking, suffocation, and strangulation prevention**

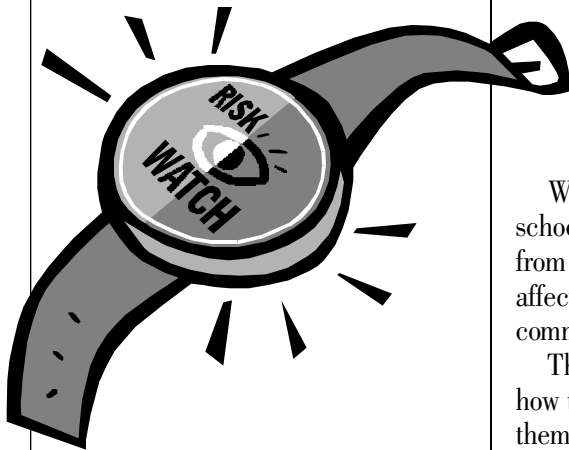
**Poisoning prevention**

**Falls prevention**

**Firearms injury prevention**

**Bike and pedestrian safety**

**Water safety**



Why is it so important to teach kids about safety? Because each year, more school-age children are disabled and die from unintentional injuries than from kidnapping, drugs, and disease combined. These are tragedies that affect not just the child and family, but his or her classmates, friends, and the community as a whole.

The good news is there's something we can all do. By teaching children how to recognize and avoid the things that put them most at risk, we can help them lead fuller and more productive lives. And as your child's primary caregiver, you can support this effort by setting a good example at home.

The following are a few simple steps you can take to help protect your family from unintentional injuries. They are organized by risk area to reinforce the *Risk Watch* classroom lessons. Your son or daughter can help you with some of these; others should only be performed by a mature adult. But each action you take will reduce the chance that someone you love will be hurt.

As a teacher, I'm committed to helping my students live up to their full potential. Keeping them safe is an important first step. I hope you'll help make safety a habit in your family by becoming "Risk Watchers" at home.

Sincerely,

# Risk Watch™ Action Steps

Grades 3-4



*Note to Parent or Caregiver: While some risk-taking is a normal and appropriate part of growing up, it's important for kids to know how to evaluate the danger and consequences of their decisions. You can help by creating the safest possible environment at home and reinforcing the idea that with independence comes responsibility. Remind older kids that they set an important example for younger ones.*

## Motor Vehicle Safety



### 1. Buckle up on every car ride.

A child between 40 and 60 pounds (usually between the ages of four and eight) should use a booster seat following manufacturer's instructions. (New booster seats are being manufactured to accommodate children up to 80 pounds.) Usually, a child weighing more than 80 pounds is big enough to wear a lap-shoulder belt. The shoulder strap needs to fit snugly. Never place a shoulder strap under a child's arm or behind the back. If the strap crosses the child's face or throat, use a booster seat instead. Children under age 12 should ride, properly restrained, in the back seat of the vehicle.

### 2. Learn and practice school bus safety rules.

The greatest risk is not riding the bus, but approaching and leaving it. Make sure your child gets to the bus stop at least 5 minutes early, stands at least 10 feet (3 meters) away until the bus stops, and waits until the driver says it's OK before stepping on to the bus. Use the handrails to avoid falls, and when exiting the bus, be careful that clothing and book bags with straps don't get caught in the handrails or doors. After getting off the bus, move to the sidewalk or the shoulder of the road. Never walk next to or behind the bus.

## Fire and Burn Prevention



### 1. If your clothes catch fire, stop, drop, roll — then cool and call.

Stop immediately where you are. Drop to the ground. Roll over and over or back and forth, covering your face with your hands if possible. Do this for a long time to extinguish the flames. Then cool the burned area with cold water and call a doctor for further instructions.

### 2. Practice home fire escape drills at least twice a year. Test your smoke detectors and smoke alarms once a month, and replace the batteries once a year.

In developing your plan, make sure to have the following:

- One or more working smoke detectors on every level of your home and in or near every sleeping area
- Two clear exits out of every room (the door and perhaps a window)
- A meeting place outside where everyone will go

Call the fire department from outside, and remember, **ONCE OUT, STAY OUT.**

Never go back inside a burning building!



### 3. Hunt for fire and burn hazards with a grown-up.

Store matches and lighters in a locked cabinet out of the sight and reach of children, make sure all space and portable heaters are placed at least 3 feet (1 meter) from anything that can burn, replace appliances with loose or frayed electrical cords, correct overloaded outlets, set the temperature of water heaters to 120°F (48°C), turn pot handles inward toward the back of the stove, and check in and around upholstered cushions for stray cigarette butts and douse them with water before discarding.



### Choking, Suffocation, and Strangulation Prevention

#### 1. To prevent the risk of choking, eat small amounts of food while sitting down.

Know how to respond in an emergency. Adults should take first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) courses.

#### 2. Avoid wearing drawstrings, necklaces, or other items around your neck that could get caught when playing or riding the school bus.

The typical entanglement situation occurs because something a child is wearing gets caught on playground equipment.

### Poisoning Prevention

#### 1. Use medication only from a grown-up you trust.

#### 2. Tell a grown-up if someone finds poison.

#### 3. Post the number of the local Poison Control Center and physician near every telephone.

Teach your child to stay calm and get help from a grown-up if he or she thinks someone has eaten poison. If no grown-up is available, explain how to call the Poison Control Center, 9-1-1, or the operator in an emergency.



#### 4. Hunt for poison hazards in your home.

Store household cleaners, medications, and vitamins where young children can't see or reach them. Store gasoline, kerosene, and other flammable poisons in small quantities outside the home in the original containers or in laboratory-listed safety containers. Have furnaces, water heaters, and other fuel-burning appliances inspected yearly by a qualified professional. Consider installing laboratory-listed carbon monoxide (CO) detectors to warn of this colorless, odorless poisonous gas. Because children can be poisoned by ingesting dust from lead-based paint, follow the recommendations of your pediatrician for regular testing for lead poisoning.



## Falls Prevention

### 1. Stay away from open windows.

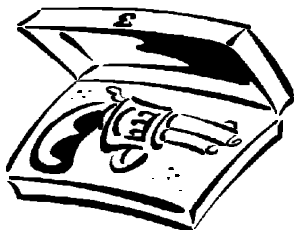
Windows opened as little as 5 inches (12.7 centimeters) pose a danger to children under age 10. Install window guards equipped with a quick-release mechanism that can be opened easily from the inside in case of fire, or install them only on windows that are not fire emergency exits.

### 2. Don't fool around on stairs and escalators.

Teach kids to hold hand railings and avoid pushing or shoving, to keep stairs clear of toys and other items, and to keep shoelaces tied.

### 3. Learn and practice safe playground rules.

Make sure playground equipment is in good working order and has cushioned surfaces underneath, such as mulch or pea gravel [at least 12 inches (30 centimeters) deep]. Teach children to avoid asphalt, concrete, grass, and soil playground surfaces. Make sure kids follow safety rules, taking turns and using equipment properly.



## Firearms Injury Prevention

### 1. Stay away from guns and bullets.

### 2. Tell a grown-up if you find a gun.

Nearly all childhood unintentional shooting deaths occur in or around the home. If you have a gun in your home, make sure it is kept unloaded and locked away at all times. Lock up and store bullets in a separate location.

## Bike and Pedestrian Safety

### 1. Learn and practice street crossing rules.

Children under age 10 should never cross streets alone. Holding your child's hand, make sure your child knows these rules: stop at the curb or edge of road if there is no curb. Look left, then right, then left again for moving cars before stepping into the street. If there is a car, wait until it goes by before crossing the street.

### 2. Wear a bike helmet every time you ride.

Make sure your helmet bears the label of an independent testing laboratory and fits comfortably but securely in a level position on top of the head. It should not rock back and forth or from side to side. Always fasten the safety strap.





### **3. Learn and practice bike safety rules.**

Make sure your child understands to ride on sidewalks or safe areas under the constant supervision of a grown-up. When entering a sidewalk, path, or driveway, teach him or her to make a complete stop; look left, right, and left again, and then be careful not to run into people who are walking there. Enforce the rule that when crossing the street with a grown-up, walk, don't ride your bicycle.

### **4. See and be seen.**

At this age, children should be supervised at all times and wear retroreflective clothing or trim clothes with retroreflective tape. They should avoid walking at dusk or at night, but if they do, they should walk with an adult on the sidewalk. If there isn't a sidewalk, teach them to keep to the left of the road and to walk facing traffic.

## **Water Safety**

### **1. Swim with a grown-up.**

Childhood drownings and near-drownings can happen in a matter of seconds and typically occur when a child is left unattended or during a brief lapse in supervision. Teach children over age three to swim and never leave children alone near water — not even for a second.

### **2. Learn how to swim and practice water safety rules.**

Take swimming lessons and swim with a buddy in supervised areas. It's dangerous to swim alone. Follow posted rules.

### **3. Test the water before entering pools, rivers, lakes, or oceans.**

When you go swimming in a new place, check with a lifeguard or adult to see how deep it is. Enter the water "feetfirst" the first time — never jump or dive. Make sure you dive only in approved areas, not off rocks or piers. Always raise your hands over your head when diving, and don't let your friends dare you into diving dangerously.

### **4. Wear personal flotation devices (PFDs) when in or around water.**

When riding in a boat, make sure everyone has a seat and wears a U.S. or Canadian Coast Guard-approved PFD at all times. Air-filled swimming aids are not substitutes for PFDs.



# Risk Watch™ Family Survival Plan



## Dear Parent or Caregiver:

Our class is learning about injury prevention through a new program called *Risk Watch™*. In our classroom activities, we're learning about eight major risk areas for school-age children under age 14, one of which is fire.

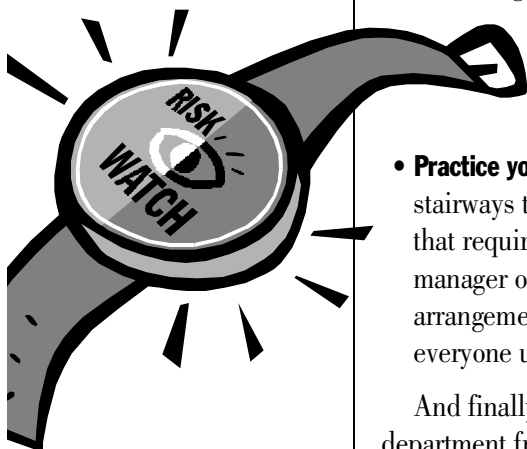
Each year, fire kills more than 4,500 people and injures tens of thousands more in the United States. Canada experiences a similar rate of fire death and injury, relative to its population. Where are people most at risk to fire? The very place they often feel the safest — at home.

The best way to survive a fire in your home is to plan in advance exactly what you and every member of your family should do to get out safely.

- Get your family together and **draw a floor plan of your home**. Mark all windows and doors. Use the reverse side of this letter to draw your plan.
- **Plan two ways out of each sleeping area**. The first way out should be the door, and the second way out could be a window. Know *two* ways out of each room in case your main route is blocked by smoke or flames. If you must escape through smoke, crawl on your hands and knees to the nearest exit.
- **Make sure windows can be opened easily**. Windows or doors with security bars need to be equipped with quick-release devices that everyone is able to operate. If you must use an escape ladder, be sure everyone understands how it works. (Children should not be asked to practice going down the ladder because of the risk of falling.)
- **Agree on an outside meeting place** where every member of the household will wait for the fire department. This allows you to count heads and inform fire fighters if anyone is missing. Mark your meeting place on the floor plan.
- **Install smoke detectors/alarms** in or near every sleeping area and on each level of your home. Test the detectors once a month. Consider installing a home fire sprinkler system.
- **Practice your plan at least twice a year**. If you live in an apartment building, use stairways to escape, not the elevator. Some high-rise buildings have evacuation plans that require you to stay where you are and wait for help — ask your building manager or call your local fire department for information. Make special arrangements for children, older adults, and people with disabilities and make sure everyone understands the planned escape routes.

And finally: **Once out, stay out!** Once you are out of your home, call the fire department from the nearest phone and don't go back inside for any reason. If people are trapped inside, fire fighters have the best chance of rescuing them.

Take a moment to plan and practice your home fire survival plan. It could be a lifesaving family project!





# Holiday Risk Watch™



## Dear Parent or Caregiver:

For many of us, this festive season is a time of food, fun, and fellowship. But the holidays also present some special hazards that put you and your family at risk for injuries. This year, check your *Risk Watch!* Take these few simple steps to make sure your family enjoys a safe and happy holiday.

### Motor Vehicle Safety

Buckle up on every car ride and use extra caution when driving during the holiday rush.

### Fire and Burn Prevention

Test your smoke detectors/alarms to make sure they're working, and explain your home fire escape plan to all overnight guests. Pay close attention to food on the stove — never leave it unattended. Water your Christmas tree daily and be sure it is placed away from exits and heat sources. Blow out candles and unplug Christmas tree lights before leaving home or going to bed. Check in and around upholstered furniture for discarded cigarette butts — douse them with water before throwing them in the trash.

### Choking, Suffocation, and Strangulation Prevention

Enjoy holiday food and treats by eating them slowly and while sitting down. Select age-appropriate toys for young children, and take care to remove all drawstrings from children's clothing. Keep plastic bags out of reach.

### Poisoning Prevention

Make sure all household cleaners, medicines, and vitamins are stored out of sight and reach of children. Post the number of your local Poison Control Center near telephones. Consider installing a laboratory-listed carbon monoxide detector.

### Falls Prevention

Install quick-release window guards (these release quickly from the inside in case of fire) and stairway safety gates. Avoid walking on wet or icy surfaces.

### Firearms Injury Prevention

If there is a gun in your home, make sure it is kept unloaded and locked away at all times. Store bullets in a separate, locked location. If you are visiting someone else's home, make sure firearms are locked out of the sight and reach of children.

### Bike and Pedestrian Safety

Avoid walking at dusk or at night. Wear retroreflective clothing or trim clothes with retroreflective tape. Walk on sidewalks whenever possible, and keep to the left of the road and walk facing traffic if no sidewalks are available. Make sure young children are closely supervised and that kids under age 10 never cross streets alone.

### Water Safety

Consult with local authorities before allowing children to walk or skate on frozen ponds and lakes, and supervise them carefully.

**Happy holidays!**

# Spring and Summer Risk Watch™



## Dear Parent or Caregiver:

After being cooped up all winter, most kids can't wait to get outside. Here are a few things to remember to help keep them safe from injury during the warmer months.

### Motor Vehicle Safety

Check to make sure young children haven't outgrown their child-safety or booster seat, and be sure everyone buckles up every time you're in a car or van.

### Fire and Burn Prevention

It's time to practice your home fire escape again! (This time, pretend your primary exit route is blocked by heavy smoke and practice your second way out.) Make sure gasoline is used only to fuel a motor. Store it outside your home in an approved safety container, tightly sealed, and out of the sight and reach of kids. Lower the temperature of your water heater to 120°F (48°C) or just below the medium setting.

### Choking, Suffocation, and Strangulation Prevention

At family barbecues, remember that hot dogs, steak, and marshmallows can be choking hazards. Cut food for young children into small bites, and even in informal outdoor settings, eat only while seated.

### Poisoning Prevention

Certain plants, berries, and mushrooms can be poisonous. Remind children never to eat anything without checking first with a trusted adult. Store household cleaners, medications, and vitamins out of the sight and reach of young children.

### Falls Prevention

Make sure playground equipment is in good working order and has a cushioned surface, such as mulch or pea gravel, underneath [at least 12 inches (30 centimeters) deep]. Avoid asphalt, concrete, grass, and soil playground surfaces, and make sure your kids know the safety rules. Since a child can fall out of a window that is opened only 5 inches (13 centimeters) wide, install window guards that release quickly from the inside in case of fire.

### Firearms Injury Prevention

If there is a gun in your home, make sure it is kept unloaded and locked away at all times. Lock up and store bullets in a separate, locked location.

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

Make sure children always wear a bike helmet that bears the label of an independent testing laboratory and that fits comfortably but securely in a level position on top of the head. Keep the safety strap fastened. Review the rules of the road with your kids.

### Water Safety

Teach kids to swim with a buddy and in supervised areas only. Enter the water feet-first the first time — never jump or dive in. Follow posted rules. When riding in a boat, make sure everyone has a seat and wears a U.S. or Canadian Coast Guard-approved personal flotation device (PFD) at all times.

