

# 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**

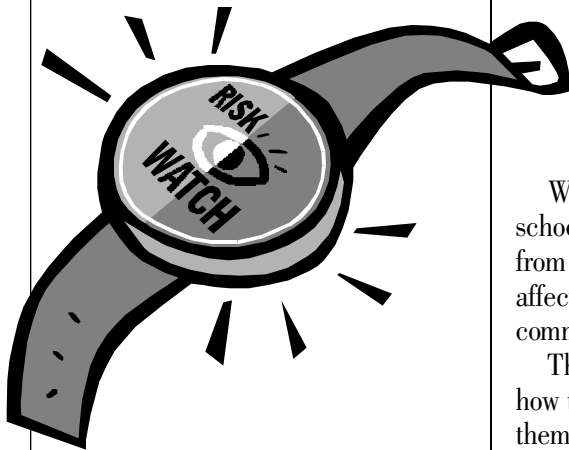
**Poisoning prevention**

**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 Pre-K and K



*Special Note to Parents or Caregivers: Have you ever noticed that things always seem to go wrong the second your back is turned? Please remember that as hard as it is to watch your kids all the time, constant supervision is the key to keeping young children safe.*

## Motor Vehicle Safety



### 1. Always ride buckled up in the back seat in a child safety or booster seat.

A child between 40 and 60 pounds (usually between the ages of 4 and 8) should use a booster seat following manufacturer's instructions. (New booster seats are being manufactured to accommodate children up to 80 pounds. Contact your local SAFE KIDS Coalition® or AAA office to make sure your children are properly restrained in age- and size-appropriate child safety seats.) 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 ages 12 and under 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, and roll — 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 cool water and call a doctor for further instructions.

### 2. Know what to do when the smoke detector/alarm sounds.

Make sure your family has:

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

**Remember:** Once out, stay out! Never go back inside a burning building.

Finally, remember to test your detectors once a month and to replace the batteries once a year.



### 3. Tell a grown-up if you find matches or lighters.

In the hands of a young child, matches and lighters can be as dangerous as loaded weapons. Use disposable lighters with child-resistant features, but understand that even these are *not child-proof* and need to be locked away at all times. Install anti-scald devices in your bathtub and shower fixtures.



### Choking, Suffocation, and Strangulation Prevention

#### 1. Eat only small bites of food, and eat only while sitting down.

2. Never play with plastic bags or inside small places where there's not enough air to breathe (refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, toy boxes, trunks, etc.).

#### 3. Don't allow children to wear drawstrings, necklaces, or other things around the neck that could get caught when they play.

In addition, prevent against strangulation by cutting window blind cords and tying them up out of the reach of children.

### Poisoning Prevention

#### 1. Take medicine only from a grown-up you trust.

Household cleaners, medications, and vitamins should be stored where young kids can't see or reach them.

#### 2. Ask a grown-up before eating or drinking anything.

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

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

Consider installing laboratory-listed carbon monoxide detectors to warn of this colorless, odorless, poisonous gas. Follow your pediatrician's recommendations for regular testing for lead poisoning in your children.





## Falls Prevention

### 1. Stay away from open windows.

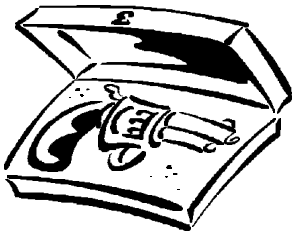
Install window guards (these release quickly from the inside in case of fire) and stairway safety gates to prevent falls.

### 2. Avoid playing on stairs and escalators.

Teach children to hold the hand railing and a grown-up's hand on stairs and escalators and not to run or push.

### 3. Play on playgrounds with soft play surfaces and follow safety rules.

Make sure playground equipment is in good working order and has at least 12 inches (30 centimeters) of cushioned surface, such as mulch or pea gravel, underneath. Avoid asphalt, concrete, grass, and soil playground surfaces.



## Firearms Injury Prevention

### 1. Tell a grown-up if you find or see 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. Cross the street with a grown-up.

Children need your supervision when crossing the street until they are at least age 10.

### 2. Learn how to stop and look left, right, and left again (or “this way, that way, and this way”) before crossing the street, and always cross with a grown-up.

Supervise your children as they practice this technique — they’ll need to do it hundreds of times before being allowed to cross the street alone when they’re older.

### 3. Always watch children while they play in safe places such as the yard or sidewalk — never in the street or driveway.

### 4. Wear a 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.





### Water Safety

**1. Always swim with a grown-up.**

Children's drownings often occur during a momentary lapse in supervision. Teach children over age three to swim, and never leave children alone near water — not even for a second.

**2. Wait until a grown-up says it's OK to go into the water, then wade in — never jump — the first time.**

**3. Wear personal flotation devices (PFD) when in or around water.**

When on a boat make sure everyone has a seat and wears a U.S. or Canadian Coast Guard-approved PFD (life jacket) 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.

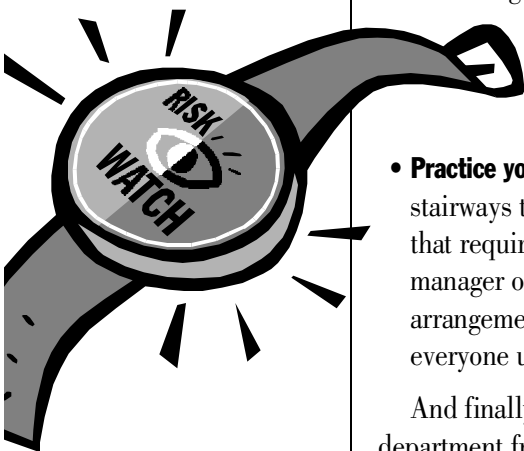
Each year, fire kills more than 4,500 people and injures tens of thousands more in the United States. Canada experiences a similar rate of fire death and injury, relative to its population. Where are people most at risk to fire? The very place they often feel the safest — at home.

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 rates.

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.

Notes:

