

## Injury and Its Prevention

How Idahoans Can Protect
Themselves and Their Families
from Injury



#### Introduction

Injuries present a serious public health problem in Idaho; especially for our children. During 2010, (the most current year in which injury data for Idaho are available), injuries were the leading cause of death among Idahoans ages 1 to 44. After the first year of life, more children die from

Injury is the leading cause of death among Idahoans age 1 to 44

injuries than all other causes of death combined. Also during 2010, 109 children and young adults, age 1-24, died as the result of unintentional injuries; another 42 children and young adults of this age group died as the result of intentional self-harm (suicide) or homicide. On average, 2 Idahoans die every day due to unintentional injuries and thousands of Idahoans are treated each year for injuries in emergency rooms and medical clinics.

Injuries are predictable and preventable

One of the greatest obstacles in reducing the burden of injury in Idaho is the mindset that "accidents just happen;" that they are "inevitable." We now know that the causes of injury are both predictable and preventable. By working together with community coalitions, policy makers, public health educators, physicians, nurses, and other medical professionals, we

can reduce the burden of injury and violence in Idaho.

## The Burden of Injury in Idaho

The age-adjusted rate of death (deaths per 100,000 population) for injury in Idaho during 2007 was 43.1. This was 6.9% higher than the national average for all causes of unintentional injury. (Note that 2007 is the most recent year national injury statistics are available for comparison purposes.) Table 1 on the following page shows the age-adjusted injury rates of Idaho compared to surrounding western states and the nation.

Table 1. Idaho unintentional injury deaths and death rates compared to select western states and the U.S., 2007 (Rates are expressed as injury deaths per 100,000 population.)

	ID	МТ	UT	NV	OR	WA	US	ID v US Rate
All Unintentional Injury								
Number of deaths Rate	641 43.2	614 60.0	811 34.5	1,212 48.6	1,646 41.6	2,637 40.0	123,706 40.4	+6.9%
Motor Vehicle Crashes								
Number of deaths Rate	273 18.4	268 27.3	320 12.4	407 16.0	490 13.0	649 9.9	43,945 14.39	+28.1%
Falls (Age 65+)								
Number of deaths Rate	107 61.0	82 60.9	103 43.9	107 37.5	339 69.2	612 80.7	18,334 48.4	+26.0%
Poisonings								
Number of deaths	99	87	154	417	373	810	29,846	
Rate	6.6	9.1	5.8	16.2	10.0	12.5	9.9	-66.6%
Drownings								
Number of deaths	23	17	18	38	61	72	3,443	
Rate	1.5	1.8	0.7	1.5	1.6	1.1	1.1	+36.4%
Suicides								
Number of deaths	223	196	378	471	594	865	34,598	
Rate	14.9	20.5	14.2	18.3	15.9	13.4	11.5	+29.6%

## Idaho Injury Facts

In 2010 (the most recent year Idaho injury data are available), a total of 1,040 Idahoans died as the result of unintentional and intentional injuries. Among them:

- 290 died from suicide
- 227 died from motor vehicle and transport crashes (does not include deaths due to bicycle and pedestrian crashes)
- 154 died from falls
- 130 died from poisoning
- 23 died from homicide
- 20 died from drowning/submersion
- 20 died from exposure to smoke, fire and flames
- 15 died from complications of medical and surgical care
- 14 died in bicycling and pedestrian crashes
- 3 died from unintended discharge of firearms
- 144 died from all other causes combined

## How Can Idahoans Prevent Injury?

The number of deaths shown in the previous section demonstrate that injury is a serious public health problem in Idaho. It is important for us to keep in mind that these numbers represent loved ones lost—someone's child, mother, father, spouse, sibling, or friend. The purpose of this document is to share information with all Idahoans on how they can protect themselves and their families from injury. In the sections that follow, proven interventions to prevent the leading causes of injury and tips for keeping families safe are examined.

#### **Suicide Prevention**

As noted in the 2011 *Idaho Suicide Prevention Plan: An Action Guide* (available through the 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine), "Suicide is a major public health issue and has a devastating effect on Idaho's families, schools, faith-based organizations, businesses and communities." In 2010, the number of suicide deaths in Idaho (290) again exceeded motor vehicle and transport-related crashes (241) as the leading cause of unintentional/intentional injury deaths. Idaho is among several states in the Intermountain West with rates much higher than the rest of the country. While the ranking of state suicide rates varies from year to year, Idaho typically ranks in the top 10 in the nation.

If you are in crisis, or have concerns about a loved one, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

There is hope. There is help.

#### Taking Action To Prevent Suicide Is Important Because:

- Most people who complete suicide tell someone about their suicidal thoughts or show behaviors that indicate their plans before they take their lives.
- Many people who complete suicide see their doctor or mental health professional within one month before their death.
- Most people who attempt suicide are glad to have survived.
- Most people who are suicidal don't want to die—they want the pain to stop.

#### Know The Warning Signs For Suicide:

- Threatening to, or talking about wanting to hurt or kill oneself
- Previous suicide attempt
- Seeking access to methods of killing oneself
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Abrupt personality changes
- Dramatic mood changes
- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling trapped
- Acting reckless or engaging in risky activities seemingly without thinking
- Hostile behavior
- Withdrawing from friends, family and/or society
- Increasing alcohol or drug use
- Giving away possessions
- Significant weight change
- Sleeping all the time or inability to sleep especially when accompanied by agitation
- Neglecting personal appearance
- Neglecting work
- Seeing no reason for living or having no sense of purpose in life
- Abrupt ending of a personal relationship
- Unusually long grief reaction

#### Protective Factors for Suicide

- Cultural and religious beliefs that discourage suicide and support selfpreservation
- Skill in solving problems, resolving conflict and handling disputes non-violently
- Strong connections to family
- Strong connections to community support
- Effective professional care for mental, physical and substance abuse disorders
- Easy access to a number of different types of professional help

- Being supported to seek help
- Mental and medical health care relationships that are ongoing
- No access to highly lethal means of suicide

#### Risk Factors for Suicide

- Mental disorders
- Previous suicide attempt
- Alcohol and other substance use disorders
- Impulsive and/or aggressive tendencies
- Hopelessness
- History of trauma or abuse
- Some major physical illnesses
- Family history of suicide
- Job or financial loss
- Relationship or social loss
- Easy access to lethal means
- Local clusters of suicide that have a contagious influence
- Lack of social support
- Sense of isolation
- Stigma associated with seeking help
- Barriers to accessing mental health care and substance abuse treatment
- Certain cultural and religious beliefs (those that believe suicide is noble)
- Exposure to and influence of others who have died by suicide

## **Motor Vehicle Crashes**

In 2009, motor vehicle crashes was the second leading cause of injury death among Idahoans. Observing these simple tips will help keep you and your family safe on the road:

- Always wear your seatbelt.
- Always place children in an age-appropriate safety seat or booster seat:
  - Infants should be placed in a <u>rear-facing safety</u> <u>seat</u> until they are 2 years of age or until they reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat's manufacturer.



- Toddlers 2 years or older, or those younger than 2 years who have outgrown the rear-facing weight or height limit for their car safety seat, should use a <u>forward-facing safety seat</u> with a harness for as long as possible, up to the highest weight or height allowed by their car safety seat's manufacturer.
- Young children whose weight or height is above the forward-facing limit for their car safety seat should use a <u>belt-positioning booster seat</u> until the vehicle seat belt fits properly, typically when they have reached 4 feet 9 inches in height and are between 8 and 12 years of age.
- Observe posted speed limits; never drive too fast for road conditions.
- Allow plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front of you.
- Don't drink and drive; and never drive under the influence of drugs.

#### **Fall Prevention**



Falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury deaths in the home. Seniors over the age of 65 are especially vulnerable to fall hazards as the result of diminished lower body strength and problems with walking and balance. Other risk factors include: taking four or more medications per day; taking medications for anxiety, depression, or mental illness; visual impairments; and

chronic health conditions such as arthritis, osteoporosis, heart disease and diabetes.

These tips can help prevent falls both within and outside of your home. Compare your home to the items on this list. Note the areas that need improvement to keep your home safe.

#### **Lighting**

- Light bulbs should be a minimum of 60-75 watts in rooms and stairways.
- Replace burned-out bulbs promptly.
- Keep several flashlights in the house and check the batteries regularly.

#### Floors and Walkways

- Arrange furniture so that you have plenty of room to walk without obstacles.
- Keep walkways free of cords, furniture, clutter, and other obstacles.
- Remove throw rugs or secure them with double-stick tape or tacks.
- If you have hardwood floors, consider carpets. Hardwood floors present a greater risk of slip and fall.
- Use non-slip or non-skid floor wax—or none at all.
- Don't "leave it for later." Take care of spills and dropped objects promptly.

#### **Steps and Stairways**

- All stairs and steps should have secure handrails on both sides.
- Check the condition of the stairs for loose carpet, loose steps, or uneven steps.
- Stairways should be well lit with light switches at the top and bottom.
- Keep stairways free of clutter.

#### **Living Room**

- Make sure your furniture is easy for you to get in and out of (knee height or higher is easiest).
- Keep a phone on a low table within reach of the floor.
- Arrange the room to create clear walking spaces.

#### **Bedroom**

- Keep a light/flashlight and a phone within reach of your bed.
- Make sure there are nightlights between your bedroom and bathroom.

#### <u>Kitchen</u>

- Keep regularly-used items within comfortable reach.
- Never climb on chairs—only use stepstools with a handlebar on the back.

#### **Bathrooms**

- Put grab bars by the toilet and in the shower or tub to give you extra support.
- Put a non-slip mat or non-slip adhesive strips on the shower or tub to help prevent slips.

## Yards, Outdoor Stairs, and Walkways

- Keep outdoor stairs and walkways well-lit and free of breaks and cracks.
- Make sure there are handrails on both sides of stairs.
- Look out for uneven ground, stones, branches, pets, garden hoses, or tools.
- Factor in weather—any type of wet or icy walkways can cause slips.

#### Stay Safe

- Keep walkways clear and dry to reduce slips and trips.
- Ensure good lighting which will improve visibility and balance.
- Install secure handrails on both sides of stairs.
- Keep items within your reach at waist level.
- Wear footwear with a tread to grip the floor.

An additional way seniors can protect themselves from injuries due to falls is to participate in a fall prevention class such as *Fit and Fall Proof*<sup>TM</sup>. You will learn ways to help improve your strength, balance, flexibility and mobility. To learn more about *Fit and Fall Proof*<sup>TM</sup> classes near you, or to receive a free copy of *Stay Active and Independent for Life—An Information Guide for Adults 65+*, call the Idaho 211 Careline (dial 2-1-1).

## **Poisoning Prevention**

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare contracts with the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center to staff a poison and drug hotline for Idahoans and health care professionals. By having a hotline for people to call for treatment information, a trip to the hospital may be prevented. In the event of a poisoning emergency, call 1-800-222-1222.



These tips can help prevent a poisoning exposure in the home and at work:

- Put the Poison Center phone number on or near every phone and in your cellphone. That number is: 1-800-222-1222.
- Only take medicine prescribed to you.
- Read the label before giving medicine or using a household product. Turn on the light and put on your glasses if you need them to read.
- Take medicine where children can't watch because they learn by imitating adults.
- Store medications, cleaning products and other household chemicals away from children in locked cabinets.
- Use properly labeled and child-resistant packaging.
- Dispose of old medication properly.

- Store food and household products in different areas to avoid getting them mixed-up by mistake.
- Keep household products in their original containers.
- Do not mix household products together, such as ammonia and bleach. You could unintentionally make a poisonous gas.
- Talk to your primary care provider about age-appropriate counseling and education on poisoning prevention.

## **Bicycling and Pedestrian Safety**



On average, in the United States, a cyclist or pedestrian is killed in a traffic crash every 120 minutes and is injured every eight minutes. In 2010, 10 pedestrians and 4 cyclists from Idaho were killed in collisions with motor vehicles. Although bicycling and walking are good forms of exercise and transportation, there are risks of being injured or killed while participating in these activities. To help protect yourself, practice these bicycle and pedestrian safety tips:

#### Bicycle Safety Tips

• Use taillights and reflective or brightly colored clothing to help drivers see you during the day and

night. You are also required by law to use a headlight when riding a bike at night.

- Wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet when you ride to help prevent head injuries in the event of a crash. Discard any helmet that was previously used in a crash.
- Know the rules of the road and obey traffic signs, signals, and lane markings.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs as they can impair your ability to ride safely.
- Use caution when crossing driveways and alley entrances. Drivers may not see you.

#### Pedestrian Safety Tips

Adults should supervise children when crossing streets. Smaller children may
be difficult for drivers to see and young children may not be able to judge
whether it is safe to cross a street.

- Always look left, right, and left again before crossing a street.
- Increase visibility at night by carrying a flashlight and using reflective clothing.
- If possible walk on a sidewalk; but if you must walk in the street, walk facing traffic.
- Make eye-contact with drivers to be sure they see you.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs as they can impair your ability to walk safely.
- Use caution when crossing driveways and alley entrances. Drivers may not see you.

## **Drowning Prevention**



Drownings are preventable. Most drownings can be prevented by restricting swimming areas, providing proper signage, fencing pool areas and waterways, having lifeguard supervision, wearing life jackets, and carefully watching children. Close supervision is a child's best protection. While recreating in and around water, keep these safety tips in mind:

- Know your limits; drowning often happens when swimmers become overly tired in the water.
- Take swimming lessons.
- · Learn to float and tread water.
- Wear a lifejacket, especially when swimming and boating in open waters.
- Swim only in lifeguarded, designated areas.
- Always ensure children have constant parental/adult supervision.
- Avoid swimming while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Check water conditions; never dive or jump into unfamiliar or shallow waters.
- Avoid swimming or boating in high waters.
- Never swim in irrigation canals or ditches.

#### **Fire and Burns**

Burns are the fourth leading cause of unintentional injury death in the United States and the fifth leading cause of unintentional injury death in Idaho resulting in 20 fatalities during 2010. There are approximately 5,000 deaths, 54,000 hospitalizations and 1.4 million fire and burn injuries each year in the United States. Severe burn injuries



require multiple hospitalizations, lengthy treatment and may result in permanent disfigurement. Here are some tips to protect yourself and your loved ones from the danger of smoke, flames, and scald burns:

#### Protection from Flame Burns and Smoke

- Install smoke detectors in your home. Smoke detectors are effective, reliable and inexpensive devices which reduce injuries in residential fires. They provide early warning of fire danger and the opportunity of early escape.
- Make a fire escape plan. Practice your plan regularly with your family.
- Plan two ways out of each room.
- Immediately leave your home when a fire occurs.
- Never open doors that are excessively warm or hot to the touch.
- Designate a meeting place away from your home. Once out—stay out.

#### Protection from Scald Burns

Toddlers, particularly children under 2 years of age, are most at risk for scald burns. Scald burns are usually caused by hot liquids such as tap water in the bath or spilling of hot drinks or liquids from large containers on the stove. Here are some safety tips to prevent scald burns:

#### In the bathroom. . .

- Set water heater thermostats at or below 120° F (or 50° C).
- Check the temperature of the water before placing a child in the tub or shower.

#### In the kitchen. . .

- Turn pot handles toward the back of the stove so children cannot pull them down. Whenever possible, use back burners when cooking.
- Wear long oven mitts to protect your skin while cooking or when transferring hot liquids or dishes.
- Keep children away from the stove while cooking; create a "No Kid Zone" around the stove for young children by placing tape on the floor.

#### From Hot Drinks. . .

- Keep hot drinks away from the edges of tables and counters, especially where they might be reached by young children.
- Use a "travel mug" with a tight-fitting lid for all hot drinks. This can help prevent a burn if a cup is tipped over.
- Do not hold or carry a child while you have a hot drink in your hand.
- Never attempt to boil water in a microwave oven as it may become superheated (above 212° F [or 100° C]).

#### If you do experience a scald burn. . .

- Immediately place the scalded area of the skin in cool, running water. Do this for at least 3 minutes.
- Do not put ice, butter or lotion on the burn as this could make the burn worse.
- Seek medical attention if blistering appears over the area of the scald burn, especially for young children and the elderly.

## Choking and Suffocation



During 2007, almost 6,000 deaths nationwide were attributed to incidents of unintentional choking and suffocation. Children under the age of 4 years and the elderly are more susceptible to this hazard. Fatal choking in young children typically involves not only round food products such as candies, nuts, grapes, and hot dogs, but also non-food

products such as undersized pacifiers, small toys, and latex balloons.

Additionally, children are at risk of suffocation from such elements as plastic bags, plastic dry cleaning covers, old refrigerators, and grain silos in farm settings. Here are some tips to protect the young and elderly from choking and suffocation hazards:

#### Choking & Suffocation Prevention Tips for Infants,

#### Toddlers and Children. . .

- Always place your infant on his or her back to sleep; sixty-percent of infant suffocations occur in the sleeping environment.
- Always ensure cords attached to curtain rods or shades are well outside the reach of your child.
- Never sleep in the same bed as your infant; you can accidentally roll onto your infant in your sleep and suffocate them. Never place an infant in soft bedding to sleep, even on their backs.
- Keep small round foods such as hot dogs, candies, nuts, grapes and popcorn out of your child's reach as they can create a choking hazard.
- Always check your child's toys for parts that may become loose or dislodged and can create a choking hazard.
- Inspect bunk beds, cribs, playground equipment, baby strollers, carriages and high-chairs for openings that may present strangulation hazards.
- Warn your child to never suck or chew on a deflated rubber balloon. Always monitor your child carefully if they are allowed to play with balloons.
- Carefully dispose of any plastic bags or keep them away from children less than 3 years old.
- Childproof abandoned refrigerators by removing doors to prevent entrapment.

The elderly are also at high risk for choking on food and non-food items, usually as a result of under-chewed food, use of sedative drugs, or diseases affecting coordination or mental function.

#### Choking Prevention Tips for the Elderly. . .

- Before a meal, chop food into small pieces.
- During a meal, chew thoroughly before swallowing.
- Do not talk or laugh while chewing or swallowing food.
- Be cautious when chewing soft or sticky food.

## **Unintentional Discharge of Firearms**

Idaho has a long and rich tradition of outdoor sports that includes hunting and recreational shooting. With that tradition comes the responsibility of safe gun ownership. In 2010, three Idahoans lost their lives due to the accidental discharge of firearms. It is estimated that 2 in 5 U.S. households with children have guns in the house, and one quarter of those guns are stored loaded (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). The safety tips that follow can help protect Idaho families from experiencing the tragedy associated with the unintentional discharge of a firearm:



- Secure your gun—there are many low cost devices
   available such as gun safes and trigger locks to keep your gun secure. Hiding
   guns or putting on the "safety" is not enough.
- Lock and store ammunition separately. Store ammunition with the same care you store your gun.
- Learn and teach gun safety. Take a gun safety class with your child. Remove the mystery about guns by answering your child's questions openly and honestly. Be factual, not emotional.
- Remember other families may have guns in their household. Before you send children over to play at a friend's house, ask their parents whether they have a gun in the home, and if so, how it is stored. Explain that you just want to make sure that your child is in a safe environment.
- Emphasize to children that they should never touch a gun and should always tell an adult if they come across one. Teach them—"Stop, Don't Touch, Leave the Area, Tell an Adult."

## **Injury Prevention & Surveillance Program Goals**

## The goals of the Injury Prevention & Surveillance Program are to:

- Reduce the death, disability, and unnecessary healthcare costs to Idaho residents as a result of unintentional and violent injury.
- Enhance the development of a sustainable injury prevention and control program to become a proactive and influential focus for reducing injury in Idaho.

- Develop an injury surveillance system that will store information on planning, implementing, and evaluating statewide injury prevention efforts.
- Develop an injury prevention plan with statewide partners, stakeholders and decision makers that will help reduce injuries.

# Accomplishments of the Injury Prevention & Surveillance Program

#### The Idaho Poison Control Reporting System

Each year, the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center provides data to the Department of Health and Welfare on the nature of the over 25,000 calls it receives from Idaho each year. In 2008, the Injury Prevention & Surveillance Program developed the Idaho Poison Control Reporting System in which these data could be stored, analyzed and retrieved to assess the impact of poisoning exposure on Idaho residents. The underlying data base serves as the engine used to generate the annual Idaho Poison Control Report. The information provided in this report each year provides Idahoans, public health practitioners, and policy makers with a better understanding of the scope and magnitude of unintentional and intentional poisoning in Idaho.

## Concussion Management in Youth Sports

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that as many as 3.8 million sports-related and recreation-related concussions occur in the United States each year. The prevalence of the injury is so high that for young people aged 15 to 24, concussion is second only to motor vehicle crashes when it comes to traumatic brain injury.

In 2010, the Injury Prevention & Surveillance Program joined with Idaho State University (ISU) to get the word out about the *Idaho Concussion Awareness Campaign*. The program collaborated with ISU to print and distribute the newsletter titled, *Get Current on Concussion*. The newsletter provides valuable information to coaches, parents, and athletes about identification and management strategies to help prevent concussion in youth sports.

During the 2010 Idaho legislative session, ISU, with the support of the Idaho High School Activities Association, was instrumental in enabling legislation requiring the State Board of Education to develop and promulgate guidelines for management of concussion in youth sports (Idaho Statute 33-1625, 2010).

#### Kids Don't Float Program

In 2011, the Injury Prevention and Surveillance Program approached the Boating Safety Program of the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation (IDPR) about opportunities to expand the *Kids Don't Float Program* in Idaho. *Kids Don't Float* (KDF), originally developed in Alaska in 1996, is a successful drowning prevention program which includes a personal floatation device (PFD) loaner component and an education component. The goals of the program are to increase public awareness of drowning issues, with the outcome of decreasing the fatality rate for childhood drowning.

The loaner component of the program (pictured at right) provides instructional signage on how to properly fit a PFD (lifejacket) which may be borrowed from "loaner stations." These loaner stations are being established at public boating facilities within Idaho state parks. Costs associated with the construction of the loaner stations and provision of the life-

jackets is provided through a federal grant sponsored by the United States Coast Guard.

Previously, KDF loaner stations had only been established at public boating facilities in Idaho state parks. Through the collaboration of the Injury Prevention & Surveillance Program and IDPR, loaner stations are now also being constructed in those state parks having only recreational swimming areas. The Injury Prevention & Surveillance Program also has introduced a strong public health message into the program and provides drowning prevention tips for parents on loaner station message boards. The most recent KDF loaner station was constructed at Eagle Island State Park in the summer of 2011.

#### A publication of the:



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www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov

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