

Hither & Thither

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Causes of Death in the United States

By Gary W. Helmer

I recently spotted a graphic in Discover magazine that really caught my eye. It was entitled "Top 10 Causes of Death in the U.S. by Age" and it came from a book entitled "Understanding Healthcare" written by Richard Saul Wurman available at www.wurman.com/death.html.

According to Wurman's table, accidents are a clear frontrunner as causes of death and injury. But, what I thought was really interesting was the age quantifier.

The article defined accidents as, "...unintentional injuries, including motor vehicle accidents and medical errors." We all know that motor vehicle accidents are certainly a leading cause of injuries and deaths each year, but medical errors?

The piece went on to say that, "...more people die as a result of medical errors than from motor vehicle accidents, breast cancer, and AIDS. Reports of the number of error-related deaths vary widely, but some are as high as 180,000 deaths a year." As if to make matters worse, "It is also possible that some deaths due to hospital errors are never reported as such." What a frightening statistic!

Accidental deaths account for 4.1 percent of all deaths in America each year, with nearly 98,000 people being killed. It is the fifth leading cause of death for persons of all ages but, accidents are the leading cause

of death in persons ages 1 through 44. It appears that after we reach the age of 44 the body starts to succumb more to illness and disease.

We maintain this trend into old age where after the age of 75 accidents are nearly last as a causal factor of death. It could be argued that the older we get, the wiser we get and tend to avoid situations we know from experience will hurt us. And, due to lifestyle changes maybe we are simply not exposed as much to the situations that lead to accidents.

The most accident prone age group is 25 - 44 with over 27,000 people dying each year from "unintentional injuries." However, between the ages of 15 and 24, over half of all deaths are caused by accidents.

Here is the breakdown of accidents versus other causes per year by age group:

Ages	Accidents	All Others	%
1-4	1,826	1,837	49.8
5-14	2,979	3,770	44.1
15-24	14,113	12,842	52.3
25-44	27,182	74,272	26.8
45-64	19,783	308,067	6.03
65-74	7,698	369,381	2.04
75+	23,353	1,089,138	2.09

What is the average age of soldiers in the Army today? Simplistically, if a person joins the Army at 18 and then remains in the service for at least 20 years, his/her median age would be 28. This places that soldier in the middle of the worst ages for accidents. Moreover, most careerists would spend their entire time in service within the accidents-are-going-to-happen age range.

Now, couple that with deployments to combat and it is easy to see just how much our soldiers have to cope with.

As a commander, supervisor, manager, leader, or safety person, you have the tools, resources, and wherewithal to do everything in your power to educate and reinforce sound safety practices. Our jobs are clear - DO IT! *gwh/03*



Dear Parents:

It won't be long before school starts and you send your child(ren) off into the care of others. You are probably a bit nervous, especially if you have children going to school for the first time. You may have asked yourself how you can ensure your child's safety. One way is to apply some simple rules.

Before Leaving Home

1. Teach your child his/her phone number, address, and other important information on how to contact you in an emergency.
2. Teach your child to never leave or get into a car with a stranger under any circumstance. Teach them to report any such instances immediately.

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3. If someone else is to pick up your child, use a secret code that you have prearranged between your child and the adult.
4. Teach your child who the police are and how they can help them.
5. Teach your child the route to and from home and school.
6. Observe what your child is wearing.
7. Have your child fingerprinted and keep photos current.
8. Print your child's name on clothes, jackets, lunch boxes, etc.
9. Make sure your child knows that if he/she is lost you will be looking for them for as long as it takes.
10. Do background and reference checks on all persons charged with the care of your child. Do not be afraid to call and inquire about people - it is your child that is at stake.

School Bus Rules

1. Practice all rules with younger children.
2. Leave home early, never wait until just before the bus is scheduled to arrive.
3. Use care in crossing roads and ensure that you travel facing traffic.
4. Wait at the bus stop in a safe place and not in the road or street.
5. Never horseplay or run and jump while waiting for the bus. Set the example.
6. Once the bus arrives, wait until it comes to a complete stop and is ready for boarding.
7. Board in a single-file, orderly fashion, never pushing or shoving.
8. Be courteous.
9. Take a seat and stay in the seat the entire trip unless told to

- move by the driver. Avoid standing.
10. Hold book bags on laps.
 11. Do not shout, horseplay, scuffle, or act discourteous on the bus at any time.
 12. Keep hands and arms inside the bus. Do not throw any item from the bus.
 13. Once the bus arrives at its destination, exit in an orderly and courteous manner.
 14. Be alert for any traffic.

Driving or Riding

1. Ensure that you obey all traffic laws and that your child is properly restrained in the vehicle.
2. Use the same route each time so that your child is familiar with it.
3. Never rush - if you are late, you are late. Getting there safely is much more important than getting there on time.
4. Remember to be alert for other children especially at bus stops and at the school itself.
5. Review laws and rules with older children that drive and remember that they are a greater risk when they ride together with friends.

Walking

1. Practice the path to and from school with your child.
2. Walk with your child.
3. Ensure your child dresses appropriately for the season or the situation.

Biking

1. Practice the path to and from school with your child.
2. Always wear an approved helmet - no matter how short the trip!

3. Bike with your child whenever possible.
4. Ensure your child dresses appropriately for the season or the situation.
5. Ensure that your child knows and obeys traffic rules and laws.

What to Wear

1. Ensure your child dresses appropriately for the season or the situation.
2. Remove drawstrings from jackets and sweatshirts - they get caught on everything and are really not necessary.

Never take safety lightly. Your child is a precious gift that demands your best efforts in protection.

Sincerely,
Your Local Safety Office

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A Parting Thought

“And the new trend in cell phones now: these stupid cell phones that also work as a camera - have you seen these? This is a great idea. Now you can take a picture of the accident you just caused while talking on your cell phone.” – Jay Leno

Thanks!