



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

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Gov. Blagojevich and Illinois State Board of Education urge safety for students while enjoying summer vacation

IDNR, IDOT and ISP share in stressing proper adult supervision, to prevent unintentional injuries and leading cause of death in children

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich and the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) are encouraging school administrators, parents and community members to keep safety in mind as more than two million Illinois public school students begin their summer vacations. Whether it is swimming, biking, camping, or family vacations – ISBE, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and the Illinois State Police (ISP) urge everyone to be mindful of safety, so accidents and tragedies can be avoided.

“Summer vacation is a highly anticipated time for Illinois’ students,” said Gov. Blagojevich. “As a parent of two young children, safety is always on my mind when planning summer activities. We want everyone to have fun this summer, but we also want to make sure everyone comes back to school this fall.”

“As the school year ends and summer begins, we need to remember the safe practices learned in school,” said State Superintendent of Education Christopher A. Koch. “Summer activities require the same supervision children experience in school and on the playground. Just because school is out, it doesn’t mean we can take a break from the safe practices followed during the school year.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), proper supervision in all summer activities can help prevent both injury and death, as unintentional injuries are the leading cause of death for children. Unintentional injuries include accidental drowning, poisoning and burns. The key for preventing many of these unintentional injury deaths and disabling injuries among children is effective supervision. Swimming with adult supervision, alongside a buddy and at places with lifeguards on duty are all encouraged.

"Whether you are boating and swimming or hiking and biking, the outdoors in Illinois can be a wonderful experience as long as you play it safe," said Acting Illinois Department of Natural Resources Director Sam Flood. "I urge you to continue to enjoy the outdoors by always keeping safety in mind and being prepared for whatever activity you enjoy this summer."

According to the CDC, swimming is the second most popular recreational activity in the United States, and it is the most popular activity for children. Drowning is the second leading cause of injury-related death among children, ages 4 to 11. In 2006 alone, the CDC reported more than 3,900 non-fatal injuries from drowning or near drowning for children up to age 19.

According to the IDNR Office of Law Enforcement, 13 people died and 57 were injured in boating-related accidents on Illinois waters in 2007. That is down slightly from 2006, when there were 17 fatalities and 66 injuries in boating-related accidents. Of the 13 fatalities in 2007, 10 of the victims may have survived, had they been wearing Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs).

Local playgrounds and area parks are also favorite summer spots for children, but can lead to injuries, as well. Every year, emergency departments treat more than 200,000 children, ages 14 and younger, for playground-related injuries. Falls account for 60 percent of playground injuries, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), so parents or adult supervisors should look for play areas that have wood chips or mulch on the surface. Concrete, asphalt and packed dirt surfaces are all very hard and may cause injuries.

"The recent announcement by Governor Blagojevich on the importance of giving bicyclists at least three feet of space while passing in a vehicle is an example of our commitment to safety on the roads, as they fill up during the warmer months," said IDOT Secretary Milton R. Sees. "We also urge motorists to be mindful of the fact that children are more likely to be outdoors at this time of year, and to be extra alert while driving through residential areas."

"There is nothing more tragic to a parent than losing a child due to an accident or an abduction," said ISP Director Larry G. Trent. "Often times, the easiest tasks like buckling a child up or keeping them within view in a public area can determine the safety of the child. Law enforcement asks parents to spend time educating children about potential dangers and how to avoid them."

Here are some summer safety tips from the CDC and the CPSC:

- Make sure children have adult supervision while swimming, boating or playing near water.
- Never swim alone; use a buddy system.
- Use layers of protections for your home swimming pool. Pool barriers, doors and alarms are recommended for added safety.
- Always wear a helmet and other safety gear when biking, skating, skateboarding, or riding all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).
- Always supervise children while they are on play equipment, to make sure they are safe.
- When mowing, keep small children out of the yard. Never carry children on a riding mower.

More information on bicycle safety is available on IDOT's Web site at www.dot.state.il.us.

Additional information about playground safety can be found online at the National Program for Playground Safety at <http://www.playgroundsafety.org>.

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