



www.toysafety.org watch@toysafety.org

PARENTS BEWARE!! **WHAT'S "HOT" THIS SUMMER IS NOT ALWAYS SAFE**

W.A.T.C.H. Releases Its 2018 Summer Safety Report For Parents and Caregivers

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES, SLINGSHOTS, BACKYARD WATER SLIDES and POOLS **TOP W.A.T.C.H.'S LIST OF 10 POTENTIAL SAFETY CONCERNS THIS SUMMER**

CONTACTS: Alan Eisner (alanseisner@hotmail.com) (617) 320-3122; Lorraine Falling (Falling@comcast.net) (561) 350-9299

(Boston, MA- June 21, 2018) World Against Toys Causing Harm, Inc. (W.A.T.C.H.) kicked off the first day of summer with important safety **information** for parents and caregivers to help keep kids safe during the warm weather months and year round.

At a press conference at Franciscan Children's in Boston, Consumer Advocates Joan E. Siff, President of W.A.T.C.H., and James A. Swartz, a nationally known trial attorney and Director of W.A.T.C.H., showcased **10 Top "Summer Safety Traps"** as representative of the many different types of hazards parents and caregivers can avoid to safeguard children throughout the summer season (**SEE ATTACHED LIST**).

Siff and Swartz said the combination of warm weather and school vacation is an opportunity for children to enjoy the outdoors, but can also be a time for injuries. **Summer months account for nearly half of all injury-related deaths to children, and hospital emergency departments will treat about 2.5 million children injured in accidents**, they noted. W.A.T.C.H. believes awareness of some popular family activities with a track record of injuries and deaths could save lives and reduce injuries.

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs):

Before summer was officially underway, many ATV-related injuries have already been reported for both children and adults. Every year, there are about 650 deaths and 100,000 injuries involving ATVs, which are prone to overturning, associated with high crash rates, and may be even more difficult to control on paved roads.ⁱ

The on-going injuries and deaths associated with ATVs are a wakeup call that some activities should be avoided altogether when it comes to children. Children should never operate ATV vehicles and recent regulations have been passed in many states prohibiting children from driving ATVs.ⁱⁱ

Children who are passengers are also at risk. One study revealed that 23.6% of the children in ATV accidents were either passengers or being pulled by an ATV at the time of injury.ⁱⁱⁱ Earlier this

month two sisters, age 4 and 5, suffered catastrophic brain injuries as passengers in their family's ATV when the vehicle flipped after being driven onto an asphalt road.^{iv}

Recommended safety precautions, such as helmets and protective clothing, could minimize the risk of some injuries, but will NOT prevent all injuries.

Backyard Play:

Family and friends gathering for outdoor birthday parties, barbecues, and backyard play-dates are some of the perks of summer. However, knowing some of the potential hazards that may accompany these outdoor activities can save lives and prevent injuries.

Some toys and games, such as **slingshots and lawn darts**, historically are banned in many states, including Massachusetts, due to the high risks associated with them. However, similar items may still be available for purchase in stores or online. For example, modified versions of **lawn darts** with blunt, weighted bottoms can now be found for sale. These blunt-bottomed lawn darts, intended to be thrown during use in outdoor games, could potentially lead to blunt force head injuries.

Many varieties of **water balloon slingshots** are available for sale this summer and pose the potential dual threat of blunt force trauma to eyes and choking hazards for young children.

Another potential summer safety hazard are on-ground or inflatable **water slides**, such as the traditional Slip 'N Slide. Water slides are an inviting activity when set up at parties on hot summer days, but families may not be aware that these types of slides are only meant to be used by children under a certain size and weight. Adults and teens have been warned not to use these products as life-threatening injuries, including paralysis, have resulted. The slider's forward momentum drives the body into the neck and compresses the spinal cord. In 1993, a Slip 'N Slide model was recalled after reports that seven adults and a 13-year-old teenager suffered neck injuries, quadriplegia, or paraplegia while using the waterslides. Last summer, a father of two was paralyzed after using a Slip 'N Slide at a family barbecue.^v "Do not be lulled into a false sense of security that a toy or activity is safe simply because it is popular," said Siff.

Water Safety is another vitally important issue, particularly in this warm weather as families look to cool down at backyard pools. This month, former Olympic Skier Bode Miller's 19-month-old daughter tragically drowned in a neighbor's backyard pool.^{vi} About fifty-four percent of fatal drownings to children under 5 years old occurred at homes (2015 to 2017).^{vii}

Recently, a 2-year-old boy easily scaled a gate blocking the ladder to his family's above-ground pool.^{viii} Fortunately, in this instance, the boy was uninjured. Said Siff and Swartz: "One of our goals today is to be proactive and raise awareness about water safety including those hazards that may not be widely known but still may be linked to deaths each summer, such as pool covers filled with rain water, "safety" ladders that are not safe, and children falling into pools while using riding toys."

Toys With Small Parts:

Toys with small parts continues to unnecessarily put children at risk. One example is a recently-purchased toy doll with a removable headband that could be a potential choking hazard for a young child. “Consumers may expect that there are sufficient checks and balances in place to prevent dangerous toys from reaching store shelves, but unfortunately this is not always the case,” said Swartz.

Other Safety Concerns :

Other safety hazards highlighted in this year’s safety report include **low-riding wheeled toys** used near roads or pools, **backyard trampolines**, and **toys with blunt edges and projectiles** that have the potential to cause serious eye or impact injuries.

Parents and Caregivers need to remain vigilant:

Siff and Swartz noted that in 2017, there were 15 toy recalls, representing over 1,740,980 units of dangerous toys available for sale in the US and Canada. Once these toys are on the market, they can reappear for resale online or sit like a time bomb in a child’s toy box. The difficulty in purging the market of goods that have been recalled shows that, while recalls are necessary, they are not a cure-all. Recent toy recalls are a further reminder that not all toys are safe and, particularly when children’s safety is at stake, we need to remain vigilant. Siff and Swartz advised parents to remember to regularly examine the toys in their child’s toy box.

Continued injuries and deaths to children from popular warm-weather backyard activities, drowning, toys with small parts and other hazards reveal the urgent need for increased awareness, safer products, better pre-market testing, and a more responsible marketplace to help prevent injuries. In the meantime, parents can avoid many hazards relating to toys and recreational activities by remaining vigilant, identifying safety red flags, and knowing the facts.

i https://www.cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/atv_annual_Report_2016.pdf?v1cLFTM9VNDc23qe6FQyhJq7A7454xCr

ii <https://www.cpsc.gov/Safety-Education/Safety-Education-Centers/ATV-Safety-Information-Center/State-ATV-Information/>

iii <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2017/07/14/peds.2017-0945>

iv <http://fox13now.com/2018/06/05/family-shaken-after-atv-accident-leaves-girls-injured/>

v <https://www.aol.com/article/news/2017/07/14/slip-n-slide-incident-leaves-assistant-vice-principal-paralyzed/23030038/>

vi <https://apnews.com/search/bode%20miller>

vii Pool or Spa Submersion: Estimated Nonfatal Drowning Injuries and Reported Drownings, 2018 Report (CPSC, 5/2018)

viii <http://www.fox25boston.com/news/attleboro-couple-s-two-year-old-boy-nearly-falls-in-pool-due-to-faulty-safety-ladder/771682176>