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.¹

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.²

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.² 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.

---

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/
vi https://apnews.com/search/bode%20miller
### W.A.T.C.H.’s “Top 10 Summer Safety Traps” for 2018

*All-terrain vehicles, water balloon sling shots, & above-ground pools are examples of some of the many potential hazards to watch out for so children can have a safer summer.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trap: 1</th>
<th>Water Balloon Slingshots</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hazard:</strong></td>
<td>Potential for Eye and Choking Injuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W.A.T.C.H. Out!</strong></td>
<td>Water balloon slingshots, popular for warm weather play, pose the potential dual threat for projectile eye injuries and small part hazards for young children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FACTS:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sling shots can shoot ammunition with great force: The Black Series Outdoor Slingshot Target Game warns, “This is a potentially powerful slingshot, please use caution at all times.” The Bunch O Balloons Slingshot is marketed with the capability to “launch water balloons up to 150 FT.” and boasts that you can fill “100s of balloons in minutes.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Balloons left behind can be a potential hazard for young children: Balloon-related Fatalities: Between 2014-2016, 5 children twelve years old and younger died from balloons/balloon strings (strangulation, asphyxia, choking, asphyxia/suffocation). Not permitted to be sold for use by oral-age children, balloons are well known by the toy industry as posing a significant risk of choking.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some products have inconsistent or confusing marketing: The Black Series Outdoor Slingshot Target Game on the box warns “Not intended for children under 8 years of age.” The package insert states “This item is not a toy. Adult supervision required at all times.” However, the same package insert reads “a great game for teenagers and adults.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Warnings and instructions may be unrealistic to follow during play: the Bunch O Balloons Slingshot and the Black Series Outdoor Slingshot Target include warnings not to “aim at eyes or face.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• State Regulations: some states prohibit the sale of weaponry such as slingshots.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TO DO:</strong></td>
<td>Beware of slingshots that are capable of forcibly firing water balloons with the potential to cause serious eye injuries! Beware of balloons that could be choking hazards for young children! Beware of games with instructions and warnings that may be unrealistic to follow in the real world!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Trap: 2
**Lawn Darts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAZARD:</th>
<th>Potential for Blunt Impact Injury</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>W.A.T.C.H. OUT!</strong></td>
<td>Topping this year’s list of backyard fun that could take a serious turn is the new generation of lawn darts. Beware, these blunt bottomed lawn darts, intended to be thrown during use in outdoor games, could potentially lead to blunt force head injuries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FACTS:</strong></td>
<td>In 1988, pointed lawn darts were banned for sale in the United States. Modified versions of lawn darts with blunt, weighted bottoms can now be found for sale.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TO DO:</strong></td>
<td>Watch out for the potential of blunt impact injuries with toys that are intended to be thrown!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Trap: 3
**Low Riding Wheeled Toys (Big Wheels & Other Plastic Tricycles)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAZARD:</th>
<th>Potential for Fall, Head and Impact Injuries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>W.A.T.C.H. OUT!</strong></td>
<td>Big wheels and similar plastic tricycles, designed low to the ground, are potentially hazardous for outdoor use. Their low profile makes them particularly difficult for motorists to see in driveways and near roads. Additionally, when riding near pools, children have died when falling from riding toys into pools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **FACTS:** | - In 2016, riding toys were associated with 43 percent of toy-related deaths (children under 15 years). All were due to motor vehicle involvement.  
  - Historically, some manufacturers added tall flags to low profile riding toys to make them more visible to motorists.  
  - As far back as 1977, 1978, 1980 and 1982 there are recorded incidents of children being struck by cars while riding plastic tricycles.  
  - Riding toys should not be used near bodies of water as children have fallen in. There were 7 deaths from 2011 to 2012 when children fell from tricycles. In 2012, 4 children died when they fell from tricycles into a pool and drowned.  
  - A recently purchased *The Original Big Wheels* includes warnings such as “Never use near motor vehicles,” “Never use near streets, swimming pools, hills, steps or sloped driveways” and “Always wear a properly fitted helmet.” |
| **TO DO:** | Low-profile riding toys should not be used near driveways and roads where motorists may not see them or on pool patios where there is a risk of drowning! Always wear helmets when using wheeled toys! |
### TRAP: 4  BACKYARD IN-GROUND and ABOVE-GROUND POOLS

![Backyard Pool Image]

**HAZARD:** Potential for Drowning

**W.A.T.C.H. OUT!** The number of children that drown in backyard pools each summer highlights the importance of raising awareness about water safety. Checking water safety measures at home is an important way to kick-off the summer. It takes just moments for an accident to happen. Beware of safety traps near pools. Young children can drown after scaling ladders or other objects stored near above-ground pools.

**FACTS:**
- 10 people die in the U.S. every day from accidental drowning.
- This month, former Olympic Skier Bode Miller’s 19-month-old daughter tragically drowned in a neighbor’s backyard pool.\(^i\)
- Recently, a 2-year-old boy easily scaled a gate blocking the ladder to the family’s above ground pool. His mother said “If I turned my back for a minute, he would have been right in.”\(^iii\)
- An average of 66 children younger than 15 years drown in above-ground pools annually. This accounts for nineteen percent of pool and spa fatalities for this age group.\(^iv\)
- Pool and spa-related submersion incidences: In 2015, a reported 347 children under 15 years old drowned in pools and spas. From 2015 to 2017, an estimated 6,400 children each year under 15 years old were seen in hospitals for submersion related injuries.

**TO DO:** When it comes to water safety, multiple barriers of protection should be used to prevent access and guard against accidental drowning. Remove toys when not in use. Regularly check all water safety measures used around the home and backyard including: “safety” devices that may be broken or defective, pool covers, alarms, automatic-locking gates, and more. Remove anything that children could use to access an above-ground pool. Never leave children unattended near water!

### TRAP: 5  ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES (ATVs)

![ATV Image]

**HAZARD:** Potential For Head, Bone and Other Impact Injuries

**W.A.T.C.H. OUT!** Before summer was even officially underway this year, many ATV-related injuries were reported for both children and adults. Children should not operate ATV vehicles. Families should know the facts before deciding whether or not to allow children to ride as passengers in ATVs which have been associated with high crash rates and have been prone to overturning. This activity, popular in many states, has been associated with often devastating injuries including chest, head and internal traumas.

**FACTS:**
- According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children lack the
coordination, reflexes and judgment to avoid crashes while driving ATVs and other motorized vehicles. Many states have passed regulations prohibiting children from driving ATVs (in MA, children under 14 are prohibited from operating ATVs).

- Many fatalities happen on paved roads and public ways in part due to tip-overs and the inability to control the vehicles on these types of surfaces. Every year, there are about 650 deaths and 100,000 injuries involving ATV's. Nearly one-third (32%) of reported deaths from 2010 to 2013 involved ATVs being ridden on paved roads or parking lots.

- Earlier this month, four and five year old sisters suffered catastrophic brain injuries as passengers in their family’s ATV when the vehicle flipped after being driven onto an asphalt road. Recently on June 15th, a fifteen year-old boy died while riding an ATV in New York.

**TO DO:**

*Children should not drive ATVs! Families should know the history of serious injuries associated with ATV use when weighing the risks of children riding as passengers; The safest choice may be for children to stay away from ATVs altogether!*

*Recommended safety precautions, such as avoiding paved roads and wearing helmets, could minimize the risk of some injuries but not prevent all injuries.*

**TRAP: 6**

**TOYS WITH SMALL PARTS**

**HAZARD:** Potential for choking injuries

**W.A.T.C.H. OUT!**

Recently there have been numerous recalls addressing the issue of toys with parts that can detach, posing a choking hazard to young children. These hidden hazards, difficult for parents to identify at the time of purchase, must be prevented with better design and pre-market testing before they reach toy store shelves. Although a year-round concern, toys with small parts have earned a place as a summer safety trap due to the continuing volume of recalls from these types of dangerous toys. The above-pictured *My First Porsche - Wooden Car* was recalled (May 2018) because the wheels could detach posing a choking hazard to young children. Despite W.A.T.C.H.’s sustained efforts over the years, toys with small parts continue to put young children in danger. Recently a doll was purchased with a decorative ribbon headband that if detached could present a potential choking hazard.

**FACTS:**

Every three minutes, a child sustains a toy-related injury. vi Recent recalls of toys due to choking hazards are evidence of the continued problem of toys with small parts sold to young children. In 2017, there were over 1,740,980 units of dangerous toys recalled after they were available for sale in the US and Canada.

**TO DO:**

*This summer, continue to watch out for unsafe toys! Avoid toys for young children that may present a choking hazard. Become familiar with the types of choking and ingestion hazards associated with toy injuries and deaths in the past. Check toys for long slender parts, pieces that could easily break off, and soft materials that could be ingested and block a young child’s airway!*
### TRAP: 7  SHALLOW WATER: BABY POOLS, GARDEN BUCKETS, POOL COVERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAZARD:</th>
<th>Potential for drowning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>W.A.T.C.H. OUT!</strong></td>
<td>Shallow bodies of water in backyards are often overlooked as water hazards for young children. Gaps in pool covers as well as sagging pool covers that can collect water may put children at risk of drowning. Baby pools are portable and convenient to assemble; yet the potential for serious injury is easily overlooked. Baby pools are often left filled with water without barriers to prevent access. Water in backyard baby pools and other containers, such as buckets and fountains, may be inviting to children but can potentially and tragically lead to drowning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| FACTS: | Young children can drown in as little as 2 inches of water. In a 2018 report, the CPSC re-confirmed that the most water submersion incidents to children under five-years-old occur at residential locations. Children have drowned in water collected in unexpected places, such as pool covers. Another report for non-pool/ non-spa injury statistics, which typically involve smaller bodies of water such as buckets and fountains, emphasized the seriousness of the risk that even shallow water poses to children: From 2006 to 2010, there were 434 deaths and 233 injuries to children under 5 years from non-pool and non-spa related submersions. 92% of these injuries and deaths occurred at home. |

| TO DO: | *Never leave baby pools and other containers with water unattended in your backyard--empty after each use and turn upside down so they cannot collect rainwater!* |

### TRAP: 8  Backyard Water Slides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAZARD:</th>
<th>Potential for neck, spine, head and other life-threatening injuries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>W.A.T.C.H. OUT!</strong></td>
<td>Many teens may not know the serious consequences that have resulted from using backyard water slides that are designed for use by younger children only. These water slides, set up on the ground, have the potential to result in neck injury and paralysis if used by adults and teens.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| FACTS: | • In 1993, Slip ‘N Slides by WHAM-O were recalled after reports that seven adults and a 13-year-old teenager suffered neck injuries, quadriplegia, or paraplegia while using the water slides. CPSC warns consumers that these popular summertime toys for children should not be used by adults or |

---

W.A.T.C.H.’S 2018 Summer Safety Report For Parents and Caregivers  www.toysafety.org  watch@toysafety.org
teenagers due to the risk of neck injury and paralysis.

- Because of their weight and height, adults and teenagers who dive onto Slip ‘N Slide type water slides may hit and abruptly stop in such a way that could cause permanent spinal cord injury, resulting in quadriplegia or paraplegia. The slider’s forward momentum drives the body into the neck and compresses the spinal cord.
- 2012 Liquid Motion waterslides were recalled after a man injured his neck.
- The Little Tikes Wet and Dry First Slide pictured above contains warnings including “This product is not intended for anyone over 60 LBS” and “Because of their size, older children and adults risk spine, head, neck and other life-threatening injuries from using this slide.”

**TO DO:**

*Know the risks: serious injuries have been associated with backyard water slides, including paralysis!*

**TRAP:** 9

**HIGH-POWERED WATER GUNS AND GUNS WITH PROJECTILE AMMUNITION**

**HAZARD:** Potential For Eye Injury!

**W.A.T.C.H. OUT!** High-powered water guns, replica guns with projectile “ammunition,” toy bow and arrows, and other toys that “take aim” can turn summer outdoor play into a serious matter when eyes are involved. Projectile ammunition, even foam darts and water streams, can lead to serious eye injuries. These products are often sold with inadequate or no warnings and without protective eye gear.

**FACTS:** This Air Warriors Thermal Hunter, shown in the above (right) photograph, is sold for ages “6+” with 4 darts marketed to “blasts up to 90 feet!” Projectile toy guns have been known to shoot supplied ammunition with enough force to potentially cause eye injuries. Eye injuries to children from non-powder guns alone, such as airsoft and pellet guns, increased exponentially by more than 500% between 2010 and 2012.* Forty-five percent of the estimated 240,000 toy-related injuries in 2016 (107,400), occurred to the head and face area.

**TO DO:**

*Projectile-firing toys can cause serious eye injuries! Avoid toys that have enough force to injure an eye. In addition to toys that shoot “bullets,” watch out for foam dart guns, high-powered water guns, and other projectile toys that could potentially lead to eye contusions and even blindness.*

**TRAP:** 10

**BOUNCE HOUSES and BACKYARD TRAMPOLINES**

**HAZARD:** Potential for impact and other serious injuries
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W.A.T.C.H. OUT!</th>
<th>Backyard activities that are designed for children to jump and bounce can be an invitation for injury. <strong>Bounce Houses:</strong> Colorful, inflatable bounce houses are frequent staples at backyard birthday parties during the summer months. However, the inherent potential danger of a &quot;toy&quot; that invites children to jump and bounce in close proximity to each other is not worth the risk. In addition, there have been numerous reports of these bounce houses falling over or being blown away. In April, 5 children in South Carolina went to the hospital with injuries after a bounce house became airborne. Many similar incidents have led to injuries. <strong>Backyard Trampolines:</strong> Although popular among children and adolescents, backyard trampolines have been associated with potentially catastrophic injuries including fractures, cervical spine injuries and paralysis. Netting, padding and adult supervision have not prevented the numerous injuries relating to trampoline use and may provide a false sense of security. Trampolines are not toys and should not be used at homes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| FACTS: | **Bounce Houses:** Bounce houses and other inflatable amusements for children have led to injuries and deaths. From 2003 to 2013, inflatable amusements were responsible for approximately 113,272 injuries (90% involved moon bounces aka bounce houses) and 12 reported deaths. 
**Backyard Trampolines:** Trampolines cause about 100,000 injuries each. There were 22 trampoline-related deaths between 2000 and 2009. Most injuries from trampolines occur at private homes (95% of fractures). 1 in every 200 injuries results in permanent neurological damage. The American Academy of Pediatrics warns against the use of home trampolines due to the potential for permanent and devastating consequences. |
| TO DO: | *Avoid bounce houses! Do not use backyard trampolines! Do not have a false sense of security that a toy is safe because it is popular. Know the facts and what injuries may have been reported before choosing toys and activities for children.* |

Any reference to, or photographic representation of, specific products herein neither constitutes nor implies a recommendation or a criticism of such products, but rather is used only as visual examples to aid in the discussion of the types of potential hazards discussed.

W.A.T.C.H., Inc. is a non-profit organization working to educate the public about child safety. W.A.T.C.H. helps raise awareness about the dangers lurking in many toys, children’s products, and recreational activities. Noted trial attorneys, authors and consumer advocates, Edward Swartz (1934-2010), James Swartz, Joan Siff and W.A.T.C.H. have been responsible for the “10 WORST TOYS” nominees released for over 44 years as well as a Summer Safety Report addressing summer hazards for children. For more information on W.A.T.C.H. and the press conference, please visit [www.toysafety.org](http://www.toysafety.org).

Joan E. Siff, President of W.A.T.C.H. & Board Member, Franciscan Children’s.

James A. Swartz, Director of W.A.T.C.H., noted trial attorney, author and consumer advocate.

Franciscan Children’s, located in the Brighton neighborhood of Boston, is the largest pediatric rehabilitation facility in New England. Programs and services offered address the medical, behavioral and educational needs of children. For more information on Franciscan Children’s please visit [www.franciscanchildrens.org](http://www.franciscanchildrens.org). Become a fan on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/FranciscanHFC](http://www.facebook.com/FranciscanHFC) or follow Franciscan Children’s on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/FranciscanChildrens](http://www.twitter.com/FranciscanChildrens).


---

i Mass. Gen. L. ch. 269, §12 (1987): Whoever manufactures or causes to be manufactured, or sells or exposes for sale, an instrument or weapon of the kind usually known as a ...sling shot.... shall be punished by a fine of not less than fifty nor more than one thousand dollars or by imprisonment for not more than six months; provided, however, that such sling shots may be manufactured and sold to clubs or associations conducting sporting events where such sling shots are used.

ii [https://apnews.com/search/bode%20miller](https://apnews.com/search/bode%20miller)

