



ASK THE LIBRARY ARCHIVE

Safety at Home

library@nsc.org or 630-775-2199

We're outdoors more now that summer's here, so what should we be aware of to avoid insect bites and stings?

The [American College of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology](#) has safety tips on preventing and treating insect bites and stings. Geared towards workers, but suitable for off-the-job, is the information from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/NIOSH](#). For additional information please contact the Library at 630-775-2199 or library@nsc.org

Tornado season is the next weather challenge we face. Do you have any tips on how to prepare? What's the difference between a Watch and a Warning?

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) if conditions are right, tornadoes can occur in every state in the union. The [National Library of Medicine](#) recently released a bulletin with safety guidelines. The [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#) (FEMA) defines the difference between a Tornado Watch and a Warning and provides other materials. For additional information, please contact the Library at 630-775-2199 or library@nsc.org

We've converted to Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs, but what do we do if one breaks?

CFL bulbs contain mercury, so there are some special clean-up instructions. The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) has information on the proper clean-up and disposal of these special bulbs. For additional information please contact the Library at 630-775-2199 or library@nsc.info

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder? Is it more than just the winter blahs?

Many of us experience some type of winter blues or "cabin fever," but for some of us it can be more than that. The [Cleveland Clinic](#) outlines the symptoms, causes, treatment, and prevention of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), typically experienced in the winter months, but also includes the rarer form of summer SAD which can lead to loss of appetite and trouble sleeping. For additional information please contact the Library at 630-775-2199 or email us at library@nsc.org

How can I avoid frostbite this season? How do I recognize the symptoms?

The National Safety Council has a [Fact Sheet](#) on preventing frostbite and hypothermia and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has [general guidelines](#) for recognizing the signs of frostbite as well as [work-related](#) cold stress prevention guidelines. For additional information, please contact the Library at 630-775-2199 or library@nsc.org and provide your fax number.

Do you have any tips on safely using a snow blower?

Snow blowers/throwers can make the burden of snow cleanup easier to bear, however, using this equipment improperly can result in injury. The [American Society for Surgery of the Hand](#) offers information on the safe operation of snow throwers. [Consumer Reports](#) provides injury statistics

and other tips (especially when children are around,) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission has a [Safety Alert](#) . For additional information, please contact the Library at 630-775-2199 or library@nsc.org and provide your fax number.

My neighbor had a fire in their home because of lint in their clothes dryer. How do we prevent this from happening to us?

According to the National Fire Protection Association in 2010, an estimated 16,800 reported fires involving clothes dryers or washing machines resulted in 51 deaths, 380 civilian injuries and \$236 million in property damage. For general guidelines, please see [NFPA's](#) Clothes Dryer safety tips. [FEMA](#) offers some Do's and Don'ts related to clothes dryers, and the [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) provides a safety alert that includes a diagram. For additional information please contact the Library at 630-775-2199 or email your request to library@nsc.org and provide your fax number.

I know I can't just throw my old phone, TV, PC, or laptop into the trash, but how can I donate or get rid of them?

The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) has a number of suggestions and links to resources on their site. For additional information, contact the Library at library@nsc.org or by calling 630-775-2199 and provide us with your fax number.

When temperatures rise, what should we be aware of when kids or pets are left in the car?

Heat and children left in cars, even for a short time, are not a good mix. According to [Consumer Reports](#), 15 children have died from heat stroke already this year. They provide simple rules to help avert a catastrophe. The [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) also has guidelines on avoiding hypothermia of kids left in cars on hot summer days and a study published in [Pediatrics](#) shows how quickly the temperature can rise inside a vehicle when the temperature climbs. For additional information, please contact the Library at library@nsc.org or 630-775-2199 and provide your fax number.

We are thinking of renting a Bounce House for a summer party. Is there anything, in particular that we should be aware of?

While popular and fun for kids, there are some issues to be aware of. The [Child Injury Prevention Alliance](#) has injury prevention and proper set up and usage tips. Injuries have rapidly increased in recent years too according to a recently released study in [Pediatrics](#). For additional information, contact the Library at library@nsc.org or by calling us at 630-775-2199. Please provide your fax number.

Ever wonder what is actually in those Energy Drinks? And what is the difference between a sports drink and an energy drink?

How much caffeine is too much? Many universities, such as [Brown](#) have tip sheets on specific types of energy drinks and their effects on the body. According to the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#), the effects on children may be severe. The [USADA](#) has a fact sheet that discusses the differences between a sports drink (containing electrolytes) and an energy drink (stimulant) and how to read a label.

Spring weather, while welcome after the winter season, can create flooding situations. Do you have any guidelines on preparedness or clean-up?

Many organizations offer guidance on what to do after the flood such as [EPA's booklet](#) *Flood Cleanup and the Air in Your Home*. [FEMA](#) gives tips on what to do before a flood arrives, lists causes, and offers flood facts related to driving. [OSHA](#) covers flood cleanup for the workplace. For additional information, please provide the Library with your fax number by calling 630-775-2199 or sending an email to library@nsc.org

What safety precautions should I take when using an elevator or escalator? What should I do if I ever get stuck in an elevator?

While we often take them for granted, elevators and escalators deserve our attention. The [National Elevator Industry, Inc.](#) has some general tips about riding in an elevator and some tips

should you ever get stuck in one. The [Elevator Escalator Safety Foundation](#) offers safety education for elevators and escalators. For additional information please provide the Library with your fax number by calling us at 630-775-2199 or emailing us at library@nsc.org

Is a cruise a safe vacation? What steps can we take to have a safer trip?

While most cruises go off without a hitch, injuries, illnesses, and crime can occur. [AARP](#) offers safe traveling tips on their site. Another site operated by the [American Society of Travel Agents](#) provides guidance with booking, excursions, documentation, travel insurance, and other savvy tips. For copies of articles, please provide the Library with your fax number by calling us at 630-775-2199 or emailing us at library@nsc.org

What can I do to help prevent back injuries and maintain a healthy back?

The [University of Virginia](#) provides a good overview and guidelines on back injury prevention including risk factors, materials handling and proper lifting techniques. For on-the-job, the [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety](#) focuses on proper materials handling in the workplace to help prevent back injuries, and the [National Library of Medicine](#) offers an interactive tutorial that provides useful tips. For additional information, please contact the NSC Library at 630-775-2199 or library@nsc.org

What can I do to stay healthy and safe this holiday season?

The holidays can be a happy but hazardous time. Please see these links for tips on how to protect your [health](#), your [children](#) and your [pets](#). For additional information, please contact the Library at library@nsc.org or 630-775-2199.

We have a mold problem in our home. What is the difference between mold and mildew? What can we do clean it up and prevent future problems?

The [CDC](#) provides basic facts and the [EPA](#) has guidelines on getting rid of mold, offers an interactive tour of an IAQ house room-by-room, plus provides additional resources for commercial buildings and schools. For additional information please contact the Library at 630-775-2199 or email us at library@nsc.org

At what age is it safe for a child to be home alone after school?

While the answer depends on the maturity and comfort level of the child, various safety sources suggest 10-12 as the minimum age that parents should consider. The [Child Welfare Information Gateway](#) says that most states do not have laws regarding a legal minimum age, and offers suggestions on how parents can determine if their children are ready. [The American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has a fact sheet with safety and security skills children should have before being left alone.

There are signs posted at gas station pumps telling me to not use my cell phone when fueling my vehicle. Can talking on my cell phone start a fire? What are the hazards?

According to the [Petroleum Equipment Institute](#) cell phones have not caused a fire while refueling, but the PEI does advise against using any electronic device that might distract the motorist during the fueling process. The [Federal Communications Commission](#) also refutes rumors of actual fires but gives a word of caution. For a more technical perspective, the [Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers \(IEEE\)](#) association cites studies conducted.

Our grandchildren will be staying at our house for a visit this summer. What should we do to make sure our home is safe for them?

The NSC's Fact Sheet collection includes sheets for [babyproofing](#) your home and preventing childhood [poisonings](#) and [falls](#). More information is available from the American Academy of Pediatrics healthychildren.org. For copies of selected articles on this topic, please contact the Library with your fax number at 630-775-2199 or send a request to library@nsc.org

We're getting outdoors more now that the weather is warmer. With so many helmets to choose from, how do we pick the right one for the right activity?

The [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) has a brochure to answer that question which provides the type of activity, type of corresponding helmet, and any standards that may apply. For additional information, please contact the Library and provide us with your fax number at library@nsc.org or 630-775-2199.

The [Centers for Disease Control](#) estimates that approximately 1 in 6 Americans (approximately 48 million) people get sick from food related illnesses, approximately 128,000 are hospitalized and about 3,000 die of foodborne disease each year. What can I do to protect myself against food poisoning?

The [University of Chicago Hospitals](#) provides information on what food poisoning is, what causes it, symptoms, treatment and prevention. The [Mayo Clinic](#) also offers guidance for symptoms and prevention. For additional information, please contact the Library with your fax number at library@nsc.org or call 630-775-2199.

The cold and flu season is upon us. What can I do to avoid, or lessen, the symptoms?

Make sure you wash your hands frequently, get enough rest, practice "respiratory etiquette" and stay home when ill to protect others. The [U.S. Centers for Disease Control](#) offers information on preventing the transmission of colds and flu and also offers information on [treating](#) colds and flu. For additional information, please contact the Library at library@nsc.org with your fax number or call 630-775-2199.

As cooler weather approaches, what should we do to stay safe and warm in our homes this winter?

Heating equipment, (especially portable and space heaters, fireplaces and wood stoves) requires careful use and proper maintenance. Be sure to have your furnace serviced before winter and if you are considering adding a portable heater, the [Department of Energy](#) and the [National Fire Protection Association](#) offer a review of the various types of supplemental heaters as well as safety tips. For further information please contact the Library at library@nsc.org or call 630-775-2199.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, about 37,000 people in the United States go to the emergency room every year with injuries from nail guns. How can we prevent injuries when using these tools?

Whether you are a do-it-yourselfer or using a nail gun at work, there are precautions to keep in mind. [The Safety Movement Organization](#) has general tips on the safe use of nail guns. For workers, [OSHA](#) offers pneumatic nail gun safety tips. For selected articles on this topic, please contact the Library at library@nsc.org or 630-775-2199 with your fax number.

I'm thinking of putting up a swing set in my backyard. What are some things I should consider?

The [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) offers comprehensive guidelines and a safety checklist in their *Outdoor Home Playground Safety Handbook*. It includes everything from anchoring to protection against falls. The [National Program for Playground Safety](#) has information to help choose safer playground equipment.

I'm concerned about carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning risks in my home. What should I know about this colorless, odorless, silent killer?

Every year, thousands of people are treated in emergency rooms for CO poisoning. The [Environmental Protection Agency](#), [National Fire Protection Association](#) and the [U.S. Fire Administration](#) have safety tips and information to prevent CO poisoning.

Where can I find information to help prevent boating accidents?

Every year there are approximately 5,000 fatalities from recreational boating accidents. The US [Coast Guard](#) and the [National Safe Boating Council](#) have tips and other information on safe boating. [Boatsafe.com](#) even offers coastal navigation courses and tips for kids.

I'm ready to tackle spring cleaning. How do I choose more environmentally friendly products?

The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) offers some great tips on "green" cleaning. [Green Seal](#) also has a list of certified products and services.

What should I know about 4th of July fireworks?

Fireworks displays are best left to professionals. The [National Fire Protection Association](#) has data on injuries and damages associated with consumer fireworks, such as sparklers. Many states ban certain types of fireworks. The [American Pyrotechnics Association](#) offers regulations for each state.

How can I decorate for the holidays safely?

Holiday decorations such as live trees and candles can be beautiful, but dangerous. The [NSC](#) website has a fact sheet offering decorating tips. Also, the U.S. [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) has a downloadable brochure on the topic. The Library is frequently asked about adding things such as aspirin or bleach to Christmas tree water to extend the life of the tree. The [National Christmas Tree Association](#) offers tips on the care of fresh-cut trees and recommends using only water to keep them fresh.

At what age is a child old enough to use a lawn mower?

According to the current edition of the National Safety Council's *Injury Facts*, there were 83,291 lawn mower-related injuries treated in emergency departments in 2011. Before letting a child mow the lawn, parents must be aware of the hazards that are involved, and be certain the child understands safe operating procedures. The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has a policy statement on mowers, suggesting that children aren't ready to operate walk-behind mowers until age 12 and rider mowers until age 16.

How do I know what is safe to throw away in the trash and what requires special disposal?

Municipal requirements can vary. The [Environmental Protection Agency](#) answers frequently asked questions about recycling and waste management. [Earth 911](#) offers information by zip code on where you can recycle specific items

Do you have any tips on shoveling snow safely?

Whether you're shoveling snow at home or at your workplace, it's important to keep safety in mind. Dressing appropriately, protecting your back and using the right equipment for the task will make the chore safer and easier. The [NSC](#) offers a Fact Sheet and for copies of selected articles, please contact the Library at library@nsc.org or 630-775-2199 with your fax number.

I want to deep fry my turkey for Thanksgiving. What safety issues should I be aware of?

Though popular, turkey fryers can be dangerous and extreme caution is essential when using them. [Underwriters Laboratories](#) and the [National Fire Protection Association](#) discourage the use of these fryers and explain the hazards.

With winter approaching (cold, dry air), how concerned should I be about static build-up at the gas pump? How do I avoid any risks?

The [Petroleum Equipment Institute](#) provides an overview and tips on how to avoid static build-up while refueling. The [American Petroleum Institute](#) also has safety tips on avoiding problems at the gas pump.

What steps can parents take to make sure their children get to and from school safely?

The [NSC](#) offers several back to school safety tips discussing bicycle riding and school buses. In addition, a [compilation](#) of government resources is available for parents, teachers and students.

Is there such a thing as a safe tan?

Those seeking a healthy glow often turn to tanning salons or sunlamps. But the Food and Drug Administration cautions that some of these devices emit ultraviolet radiation that's similar to the sun. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention has a [fact sheet](#) that addresses myths about the "safety" of tanning beds.

What can I do to keep myself and my family safe from recreational water illnesses?

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, recreational water illnesses can be spread by contact with contaminated water from swimming pools, spas, lakes, rivers, or oceans. Recreational water illnesses can cause a wide variety of symptoms and health problems. The [CDC](#) offers safe swimming information for the general public and aquatic facility staff.

Regulations for paints and gasoline have reduced the amount of lead we're exposed to. Should we still be concerned about lead? What are some other ways we might be exposed?

Lead is still around. Lead paint, the leading cause of lead poisoning among children, is still found in older homes. Certain types of other household products such as ceramic dishes and glassware may leach lead. The U.S. [Environmental Protection Agency](#) has additional information on how to minimize your exposure to lead.

Explain the Safe Community movement.

The Safe Community movement was created in the late 1980's by the World Health Organization and the Karolinska Institute in Sweden. The movement recognizes that the people who live, learn, work and play in a community can best understand their community's specific problems, assets and capabilities. Their involvement and commitment are critical factors in creating effective, comprehensive and coordinated interventions against unintentional and intentional injuries. For more information, see [Safe Communities America](#). For an article about Safe Communities, please contact the Library at library@nsc.org or 630-775-2199 with your fax number.

How many smoke alarms should I have in my home? Where should I put them?

According to the [National Fire Protection Association](#), homes with smoke alarms (whether or not they are operational) typically have a death rate that is 40-50% less than the rate for homes without alarms. The NFPA offers recommendations regarding installation and maintenance. The U.S. [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) also offers a brochure on the topic.

Just how dangerous are backyard trampolines?

The Library has recently received numerous requests for information on trampolines. The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) has a policy statement regarding trampoline hazards and injuries. Due to the high number of injuries to children, the AAP recommends against home trampolines. The U.S. [Consumer Product Safety Commission](#) reports that more than 94,900 trampoline injuries occurred in 2012, and offers a safety advisory addressing injury prevention. For more information on this issue, please contact the Library with your fax number at library@nsc.org or 630-775-2199.