

Home Hazards

Each year in the United States approximately 2,500 children die from unintentional injuries sustained in the home. And as families spend more time indoors during the fall and winter months, there is an increased likelihood of injury, such as burns from fireplace usage.

Addressing the issue, Capital Area Head Start asked Penn State Children's Hospital at the Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center for help in developing a program to reduce the risk of safety hazards in the homes of the children they serve.

In addition to providing in-service training to Head Start staff and creating a resource manual for Head Start classrooms and home visits, Penn State injury prevention staff produced tools that introduce home-safety issues to parents—expanding an existing program called Home Safe Home. For example, a comprehensive,

35-question checklist addresses the most common home injuries: fires/burns, poisoning, choking, falls and water-related hazards.

“Already we have reached many children and families with safety information and devices, and we have trained more than 50 agency workers at several training sessions,” said Susan Rzucidlo, pediatric trauma program manager and program director of Injury Prevention Programs for the Children's Hospital.

An assessment of the first year of the program (2006) revealed that parents are taking steps to reduce obvious hazards like keeping matches out of children's reach and storing electrical devices properly. However, families fell short in other areas, such as practicing fire-escape plans, installing outlet caps and cabinet latches, and reducing water hazards.

Still, Head Start staff members find that once families are made



An interactive Safe Kids Hazard House helps make the message about common household dangers hit home.

aware of opportunities for improvement, they become motivated to make changes. “The overall impact of this collaboration with Penn State Children's Hospital ... is amazing,” said Melanie Heller of Capital Area Head Start.

Statewide Emergency Communications



It is not uncommon for the fire department and the police department in the same jurisdiction to use different, and incompatible, radio systems. But

in a wide variety of cases, particularly a major disaster, the ability to communicate freely across public safety jurisdictions and disciplines—known as “interoperability”—is vital. A statewide plan for communications interoperability, required by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security by November, would ensure that radios using one type of system could connect to radios using another type.

Critical Step. A conference held at Penn State in June 2007 was seen as a critical step in the development of a plan in Pennsylvania. Sponsored by the Office of Public

Safety Radio Services with Penn State Conferences (a unit of Outreach) and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the Interoperability Conference focused on identifying and standardizing response communications with the Pennsylvania Statewide Radio Network.

Connection Questions. Conference sessions—attended by state and county public safety communications managers and other governmental officials—addressed ways in which each county could connect to the state's radio network.

A New Partnership. “Establishing this forum for joint planning and exchange of information among federal, state, county and municipal officials is a milestone in Pennsylvania public safety and emergency response communications, marking the start of a new era of partnership and cooperation toward ensuring the safety and security of our citizens,” said Dr. Jonathan Spanos, director of Customer Support/Interoperability in Pennsylvania's Office of Public Safety Radio Services.