

Tips for enjoying a safe summer

After a long winter, Minnesotans are eager to take advantage of every bit of summertime. While we're enjoying activities that the warmer weather brings, it is important to keep safety in mind. Accidents and injuries are bound to happen, but there are many that can be prevented if safety precautions are taken.

Water safety

In the Land of 10,000 Lakes, many of us spend a lot of time in, on, or around the water in the summer; however, fun water activities can pose risks if the proper safety efforts are forgotten.

Always wear a life jacket when boating or canoeing. In addition, make sure that someone is always watching children when they are near water. Young children can drown in only a couple of inches of water – it's so important for children to have supervision when enjoying the pool or beach. If you do suspect that someone is struggling in the water, call 911 immediately. And remember: Consuming alcohol while driving a boat is the same as driving a car, it shouldn't be done.



Child safety

Summer break symbolizes freedom for many children -- freedom from school, homework, and the confinement of indoor play. Many children extend this sense of freedom, exploring their neighborhoods on foot or by bike. But as with any freedom comes responsibility.

Set clear landmark boundaries for where your child is allowed to play within the neighborhood. Always make sure your child knows his or her full address and phone number before leaving the house. Whenever possible, urge your child to take along a friend (or two) -- someone that can seek help in case of accidents, injury, or other emergencies.

Educate your kids on the basic tactics that adult abusers use to manipulate children (e.g., offering rides or candy, posing as a family friend, needing their help to find a dog, telling the child

they'll be in trouble or a parent will be in trouble if they don't comply, et cetera). Empower them with the ability to say "no" to anything that makes them scared, uncomfortable, or confused. If your children find themselves in a scary or uncomfortable situation, they should be instructed to seek out a trusted adult for help (teacher, parent, police, neighbor, et cetera).

All kids should be familiar with 911. Teach them how, why, and when to use it and what to expect once they are connected with a dispatcher.

Bike safety

Every year, nearly 900 people die from injuries sustained in bicycle accidents and another 567,000 end up in hospital emergency rooms as a result of their injuries. For children, an average of nearly 600 emergency room visits per day -- or 25 every hour -- happen because of bicycle accidents.

Always wear a helmet no matter how old you are; ride with traffic, not against it; follow all traffic signs; and walk your bicycle across busy streets. Teach your kids to make eye contact with drivers. Bikers should make sure drivers are paying attention and are going to stop before they cross the street.

Most crashes occur on paths and trails, since there are often people with children, strollers, pets, in-line skaters, or other bicyclists riding slower or faster than you on the same path.

ATVs

All-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are off-road vehicles often used for recreation, but with the thrills come major safety risks.

ATVs can be unstable and hard to control, particularly at high speeds. Rollovers and collisions happen often, and some of these are fatal. Injuries from riding ATVs are common too and can mean a visit to the emergency room. As a result, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) discourages kids and teens ages 16 or younger from driving

or riding on ATVs.

If you decide to let your child ride an ATV, make sure he or she follows safety precautions and understands how to safely operate the vehicle. In Minnesota, youth ATV operators need to get certified before riding on public lands. Children ages six to nine years old should complete the free study guide course recommended by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Children ages 10 to 15 must complete the ATV Safety Course with a hands-on component. Anyone born after July 1, 1987 (or is 16 years or older) must complete the only ATV Safety Course to meet certification requirements. Visit the MN DNR's website to learn more about these classes and certification at www.dnr.state.mn.us.

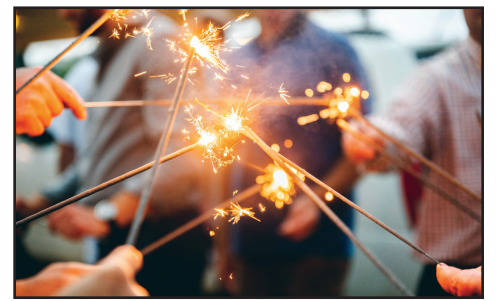
Fire

Nothing says summer like grilling with family and friends. But according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), between 2014-2018, grills were involved in an average of 10,600 home fires per year. These fires caused annual averages of 10 civilian deaths, 160 reported civilian injuries, and \$149 million in direct property damage. To ensure that your summer grilling is safe, it is important to have a fire extinguisher in your home, keep your eye on the grill when cooking, and make sure that every member of your family knows the quickest and safest route to safety if a fire were to occur in your home.



Fireworks

As we approach the Fourth of July, many backyard barbecues involve celebrating the holiday with fireworks. Statistics show an average of 75 hospital visits each year in Minnesota due to firework injuries. More than 30 percent of firework injuries are from sparklers; 45 percent of firework injuries happen to children, according to statistics from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety and State Fire Marshal Office. Fireworks also start more than 16,000 fires annually, according to the NFPA. When



celebrating this holiday with fireworks, keep your family safe by leaving the displays to the professionals and never let children near fireworks.

Home security

Many people will travel in the summertime, leaving their homes vulnerable to many risks. Before you leave, protect your home. Make your home look occupied while you are away by programming automatic timers that allow you to control lights, thermostats, doors, and much more. Keep your travels offline -- don't share your vacation/getaway plans online. Posting anywhere that you are away is an open invitation to thieves who are looking for an easy target. Let neighbors or family you trust know you will be away so they can check on your house from time to time. Suspend your mail, or ask a neighbor to pick it up while you're gone.

Severe weather

Living in the Midwest, we're no strangers to severe weather. Practice tornado drills with your family to ensure that everyone knows the safest place to be in the event of a strong storm or tornado.

Summer break is a time for fun, relaxation, and exploration. Please consider these important safety reminders this summer to ensure that you and your family will create fun-in-the-sun memories for years to come.

If you have questions about the summer safety or anything else, please feel free to contact Scott County Sheriff Luke Hennen any time by email at LHennen@co.scott.mn.us, by phone at (952) 496-8625, by mail, or in person at the Scott County Sheriff's Office, 301 Fuller Street South, Shakopee, MN 55379. You can also visit our website at www.scottcountymn.gov/sheriff.

SCALE SCENE

Continued from previous page

civic groups, elected officials, local governments, and organizations across the state and country.

The goal of the campaign is to incorporate greater awareness of Native Americans, along with accurate information about their history, culture, and modern businesses and tribal governments, into Minnesota's K-12 education system. Programming for the campaign has included listening sessions, meetings with the Minnesota Department of Education, cultivating a resource scan that will help improve classroom resources and curriculum, and providing professional development for teachers and school administrators.

As part of the campaign, the SMSC launched the podcast "Native Minnesota with Rebecca Crooks-Stratton," which highlights thought leaders and change makers in Minnesota and Indian Country. The podcast discusses Native representation, leadership, and the importance of understanding Minnesota's history and historical trauma.

"I think understanding more about people in our communities and the differences—but also the similarities, is really important," said Secretary/Treasurer Crooks-Stratton during the October 2021 podcast. "Seeing yourself reflected in your education and your curriculum, and how your story fits in the larger community is so important for all of our children." Listen to or watch the podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and YouTube. Learn more at UnderstandNativeMN.org/Podcast.

Summer is a busy season at the SMSC. Stay up to date at ShakopeeDakota.org or visit us on social media.

Veterans' SCENE

By Derek Falwell

Scott County Veterans Services Officer



Here are a handful of updates on a few different topics pertaining to the VA as well as our Scott County office. We've mentioned this in the past, yet given the current climate we thought it would be a good time to mention again: **Our office's bus is operating and bringing veterans to and from their medical appointments at the Minneapolis VA.** If you would like to use our bus to get to your medical appointments, reservations can be made by us to schedule those rides at (952) 496-8176. Our bus runs Monday through Thursday, and we ask that your appointments be scheduled between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. It's always a good idea to call as soon as you know of your appointment as the bus can fill up if you wait too long.

Our office has been open for in-person appointments for some time now. We're able to take appointments, both in person as well as over the phone if that's more convenient. For in-person appointments, the County has suspended its indoor mask policy, so everyone is free to take whatever level of precaution they choose.

Over the past year or so, the VA has made a few changes to the benefits available to veterans of the Vietnam War as well as OIF/OEF veterans that were exposed to, or in close contact with, burn pits. For Vietnam veterans, the list of medical conditions presumptively linked to Agent Orange exposure has

grown to include bladder cancer, hypothyroidism, and Parkinsonism. (Parkinsonism is described by the VA as any condition that causes a combination of abnormal or slow movements, trouble speaking, stiff muscles, or tremors.) For OIF/OEF veterans that were exposed to burn pits, the VA has made asthma, rhinitis, and sinusitis presumptively linked to the toxins in burn pits. These changes will make it easier for veterans to receive benefits due to toxins they were exposed to in service. The hope is that as more research is done, those lists will continue to grow. For any questions pertaining to the new conditions, or to schedule an appointment to discuss or file a disability claim, please call our office to set up a time.

Each spring, the VA mails out their **annual Summary of Benefits letters**, usually mailed out in May or June. These letters are mailed to every veteran receiving VA benefits and can be a useful document to hold onto. If you are a veteran that is eligible for the Disabled Veterans Property Tax Exclusion, those are the letters the taxation office needs with your applications, and they are also helpful if applying for a loan or buying a home or vehicle as proof of income, so it's a good idea to file those away and save them.

As always, if you have any questions or would like to schedule an appointment, please call our office at (952) 496-8176.