

# **Window Safety Program**

## ***Report to the Minnesota Legislature 2009***

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**Minnesota Department of Health**

**March 2010**



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# Window Safety Program

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**March 2010**

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As requested by Minnesota Statute 3.197: This report cost approximately \$480.00 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

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## Executive Summary

2007 Minnesota Session Law, Chapter 147, Article 16, Sec. 19. requires the Minnesota Department of Health to provide targeted education on window safety.

This is a progress report detailing the work being done on the window safety program by the Minnesota Department of Health since the 2008 report. In this report, the activities mentioned below will be described in more detail along with an update on current window fall injury data.

- The Window Safety Advisory Committee was convened in 2008 to discuss recommendations for educational efforts related to window safety. A news release was issued in April 2008 reminding parents to check their homes for window safety.
- “Keep the Promise” window safety educational brochures were distributed at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair.
- Window safety educational information was distributed during National Window Safety Week of April 2009 through the Community Health Services (CHS) Mailbag.
- Window safety information was presented to maternal and child health staff of local public health departments at regional meetings and to Positive Alternatives grantees.
- The window safety Web page on the Minnesota Department of Health Family Home Visiting program Web site was updated, <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/fhv/safety/windowsafety.html>.
- The Home Safety Checklist and Reference Guide, which includes a question on and resources about window safety, was updated during 2009 and will be available in the spring of 2010 at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/fhv/safety.html>.
- Window safety education information was posted on the *Minnesota Parents Know* Web site, <http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/index.html>.

A final report of window safety education activities and data on injuries resulting from falls from windows will be submitted in March 2011.

## Background

In 2007, legislation was written to address residential window safety requirements. 2007 Minnesota Session Law, Chapter 147, Article 16, Sec. 19. requires the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to provide targeted education on window safety. A copy of the statute is attached as Appendix A. The law directs MDH to create a safety program to raise awareness of the precautions needed to prevent children from falling through open windows. The commissioner of health is required to provide window safety awareness. The commissioner has accomplished this through the collaborative efforts of the Family Home Visiting Program in the Community and Family Health Division and the Injury and Violence Prevention Unit in the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Division.

## Window Safety Data

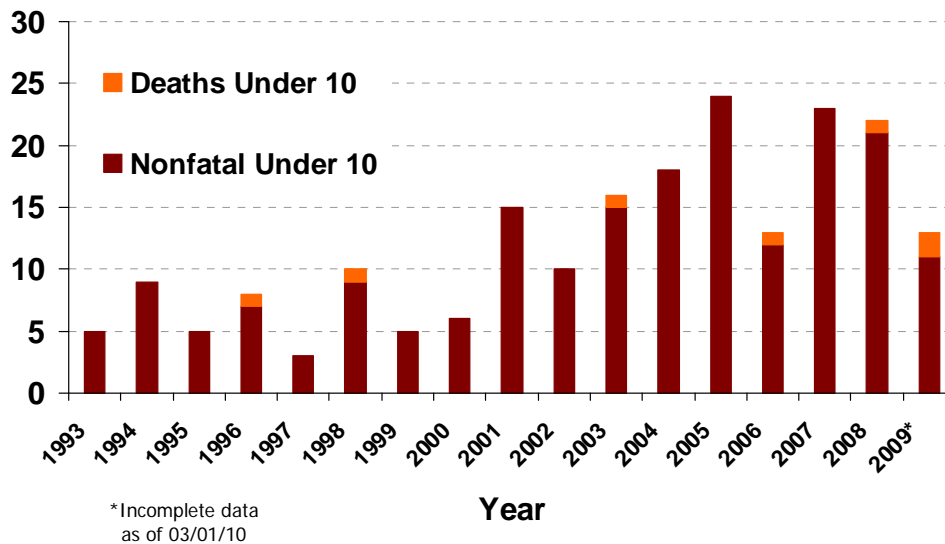
Epidemiologists in the Injury and Violence Prevention Unit at the MDH annually review injury data to identify deaths and severe trauma resulting from falls from windows. Cases are identified from injury resulting in death, hospitalized traumatic brain or spinal cord injury, or inclusion in the state trauma system. Injuries resulting in lesser severity are not able to be specifically attributed to window falls. As such, the reviewed data represent the “tip of the iceberg” of all injury due to window falls.

The following is a graph showing window falls in Minnesota that resulted in severe injury or death of children under the age of 10 from 1993 to 2010.

Severe injury and death resulting from window falls is a relatively rare event. While there are more than 690,000 children under the age of 10 living in Minnesota, there are fewer than 25 such events in any year. Rare events may "cluster" temporally; such an occurrence may be a statistical phenomenon not related to exposure. The data in the graph may suggest an increasing trend in severe injury and death, peaking in 2005. However, increases may also result from improvements in the reporting systems used to identify the cases.

# Falls from Window Resulting in Severe Injury or Death, Minnesota

Potential for reporting bias: From year 2007 *Report of Injury* forms added a “fall from window” check-off box; data from previous years included only keyword searches of text fields.



## Window Safety Education

In April 2008, during National Window Safety Week, the MDH issued a news release on window safety. A copy of the press release is attached as Appendix B. The Window Safety Advisory Committee was convened soon after on May 8, 2008.

The charge to the committee was to advise the MDH on developing a window safety awareness program to prevent children from falling through open windows. The committee was encouraged to explore ideas and strategies for providing window safety awareness education to parents and caregivers of young children. The group was in consensus that key window safety messages have already been developed and it is more efficient and effective to utilize existing resources and messages. Recommendations were made by the committee in regards to venues that provide educational opportunities including distributing the “Keeping the Promise of Safety” brochure at the 2008 Minnesota State Fair (brochure available to view electronically at, <http://downloads.nsc.org/pdf/windowbr.pdf>). A copy of the brochure is attached as Appendix C.

Throughout 2009, window safety education materials were distributed to local public health department family home visitors through the Community Health Services (CHS) Mailbag and at regional maternal and child health meetings and to Positive Alternative grantees.

The window safety Web page on the MDH Family Home Visiting program web site was updated in fall 2009. Materials posted or linked to on the page were reviewed and the overall look of the page was enhanced so it is easier to scan and more user-friendly. The window safety page can be viewed at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/fhv/safety/windowsafety.html>. Screen shots of the new Web page are attached as Appendix D.

Window safety educational information for parents has been posted on the *Minnesota Parents Know* web site, <http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us>. This information includes a link back to the MDH window safety web page. The *Minnesota Parents Know* site is a resource filled with trusted child development, health and parenting information for parents of children of all ages. It is hosted by the Minnesota Department of Education.

The Home Safety Checklist and Reference Guide, which includes a question about and resources on window safety, was updated in 2009. A committee consisting of local public health as well as MDH staff provided input and feedback on the revisions. The Window Safety Advisory Committee made recommendations on wording for the question pertaining specifically to window safety as well as the revised content in the reference guide. The updated Home Safety Checklist and Reference Guide will be available in the spring of 2010 and can be viewed at <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/fhv/safety.html>. A copy of the Home Safety Checklist is attached as Appendix E.

Another component of the window safety legislation required the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (MDLI) to adopt rules for window fall prevention devices as part of the Minnesota State Building Code by July 1, 2009. The MDH participated on the Window Fall Prevention Advisory Committee, sponsored by the MDLI. This committee developed the recommendations for rule language regarding window screens, window locks and a window safety device.

The MDH will continue to identify effective methods to promote the revised Home Safety Checklist and Reference Guide in conjunction with window safety education. A news release in April 2010, during National Window Safety Week, is planned to promote the Home Safety Checklist. The resource will also be shared with participants of the second Annual Minnesota Childhood Injury Prevention Summit in September 2010.

## Statute Mandating Window Safety Education Legislative Report

2007 Minnesota Session Law, Chapter 147, Article 16, Sec. 19. WINDOW SAFETY EDUCATION.

The commissioner of health shall create in the department's current educational safety program a component targeted at parents and caregivers of young children to provide awareness of the need to take precautions to prevent children from falling through open windows. The commissioner of health shall consult with representatives of the residential building industry, the window products industry, the child safety advocacy community, and the Department of Labor and Industry to create the window safety program component. The program must include the gathering of data about falls from windows that result in severe injury in order to measure the effectiveness of the safety program. The commissioner of health may consult with other child safety advocacy groups, experts, and interested parties in the development and implementation of the window safety program. The commissioner of health shall prepare and submit a final report on the window safety program to the legislature by March 1, 2011. The commissioner shall prepare and submit a yearly progress report to the legislature by March 1 of each year beginning in 2008 until the submission of the final report. The final report must include a summary of the safety program, the impact of the program on children falling from windows, and any recommendations for further study or action.

*Minnesota Department of Health*

## News Release

April 21, 2008

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### **With warmer weather, health officials urge parents to check window safety**

*April 20-26, is National Window Safety Week*

Falls from windows account for an estimated 12 deaths and 4,000 injuries among children under 10 years of age every year in the U.S. In Minnesota, between 1993 and 2007, there were at least 193 serious injuries from unintentional window falls, with 19 being fatal. Of these, 151 were among children under 10 years of age, with four fatalities.

“Warmer weather and National Window Safety Week remind us how important it is to check our homes for window safety,” said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Dr. Sanne Magnan. “There are simple steps we can all take to prevent injuries and deaths from tragic window falls.”

Commissioner Magnan urges Minnesotans, especially parents and child caregivers, to follow these recommendations:

- Do not rely on insect screens to keep children from falling out of windows. They are neither designed nor intended to keep children from falling out of windows.
- Keep furniture – or anything children can use to climb – away from windows. Children may use such objects to climb to an open window and potentially fall.
- Provide careful supervision of children. Careful supervision greatly reduces the risk of falls and injuries, so watch children as they play.
- Consult your local fire department or building code official for more information about the proper use of window guards.
- Be aware that the window guards or window fall prevention devices must have a release mechanism so that they can be opened for escape in a fire emergency.
- Include windows in home emergency escape plans. Be sure to identify all doors and windows that can be used. Make sure they open easily, and keep escape routes free from clutter.
- Develop and practice an emergency escape plan in the event that fire or smoke blocks the primary exit. Children may have to rely on a window to escape in a fire, so help them learn to safely use a window under these circumstances.

Michael Fischer, director of advocacy for the Window & Door Manufacturers Association and a member of the National Safety Council’s Window Safety Task Force, reminds parents to think about window safety.



“Many window falls happen in spring when windows are opened to let in spring breezes,” Fischer said. “Insect screens are designed to keep bugs out and not to keep children in. Whenever small children are present, it is important to keep windows closed.”

For more information about window safety, see the National Safety Council Window Safety Web page, at: <http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/windows.htm>.

**-MDH-**

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*For more information, contact:*

**John Stieger**  
**MDH Communications**  
**651-201-4998**



Keeping  
the promise

of safety.  
window safety awareness

Every day you  
whisper a promise  
to your child, “I’ll  
always love you  
and keep you safe.”

But keeping your  
home and children  
safe takes more  
than promises.

It can only be  
done with safety  
**awareness,**  
planning and  
preventive action.

**f**ires and falls of all kinds are among  
the leading causes of injury and  
death in young children. While some  
falls occur from windows, it’s important  
to realize that in a fire, a window can  
save a child’s life. That is why windows  
play a critical role in home safety.

Fire is frightening. All too often, the bodies of young children are found after a fire in places where they tried to hide. Teach your children that they can't hide from fire: They must escape it. Decide on at least two emergency escape routes from your home. Windows provide one of the fastest, easiest alternative ways out of a burning home. Teach children how to safely escape through windows and take time to practice with them.

# Windows can serve as emergency escape routes.

Every family member should know how to operate the windows used for fire emergencies. Delays in escaping from a fire cost lives and increase injuries. Often paint, dirt or weathering can seal a window shut. Make sure yours open easily from the inside and are not blocked by furniture or other objects.

Remember that security bars, grilles and grates not only keep intruders out, they can also lock you in. The same holds true for window guards. Everyone should always be able to get out through a window without using tools, keys, special knowledge or effort.

## Window safety.

Preventing falls out of windows is as important as learning how to use one in an emergency. Unattended children run the greatest risk of falls and injuries, so the best first step is to watch your children as they play. Nothing can substitute for careful supervision.

When youngsters are around, close and lock your windows. If you need ventilation, open only windows they cannot reach. Be sure to keep furniture - or anything children can climb - away from windows. And teach your children not to play near windows.

Never depend on insect screens to prevent falls. Insect screens are designed to provide ventilation. They will not hold a child's weight against them.

Only solid information and proper preparations can help you keep the promise of safety you give to your loved ones. For more ways to protect your home and family please contact:

### National Fire Protection Association

Department of Public Education  
One Batterymarch Park  
Quincy, MA 02269-9101

### National Safety Council

1121 Spring Lake Drive  
Itasca, IL 60143-3201

This safety message brought to you by the National Safety Council and the membership of the American Architectural Manufacturers Association, the National Wood Window and Door Association, and the Screen Manufacturers Association.

## Family Home Visiting Revised Window Safety Web Pages

Family Home Visiting - Window Safety and Window Fall Prevention - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Address http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fhv/mch/fhv/safety/windowsafety.html Go

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- [Infant Mortality](#)

## Window Safety and Window Fall Prevention



Window safety is an important issue year-round, but spring and summer are excellent times to share information with parents and caregivers about preventing falls from windows. For instance, window screens are not designed to keep children from falling through them. Keep furniture, or anything children can use for climbing, away from windows. Children may use these objects to climb to an open window and fall.

Below you will find links to quality and easy to understand information on window safety and what you can do to prevent falls from windows.

- [Window Safety Resources](#)
- [News Release \(April 21, 2008\): With warmer weather, health officials urge parents to check window safety](#)

### Window Safety Education Advisory Committee, 2008

- [Window Safety Education Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda \(May 8, 2008\)](#)
- [Window Safety Education Advisory Committee Meeting Summary Notes \(May 8, 2008\)](#)

Go Back To > [Home Safety](#) page.

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- [Infant Mortality](#)

**Window Safety Resources**



Minnesota Safety Council: Preventing Falls From Windows  
<http://www.minnesotasafetycouncil.org/facts/factsheet.cfm?FS=61&CID=1%2CHome%20Safety&KW=window>

National Safety Council  
<http://www.nsc.org/News/Window.aspx>

National Safety Council Window Safety Checklist  
[http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/window\\_checklist.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/window_checklist.aspx)

National Safety Council Window Safety Tips  
<http://downloads.nsc.org/pdf/windowbr.pdf>

National Safety Council Brochure: Keeping the Promise  
<http://downloads.nsc.org/pdf/windowbr.pdf>

National Safety Council Window Safety Activity Book  
[http://downloads.nsc.org/pdf/LookOutKids\\_042103.pdf](http://downloads.nsc.org/pdf/LookOutKids_042103.pdf)

[http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/window\\_checklist.aspx](http://www.nsc.org/resources/issues/window_checklist.aspx)

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# Home Safety Checklist

Do you know how safe your home is for your baby or young children?  
Use this checklist to help you spot what parts of your home are safe and where you can make it safer.

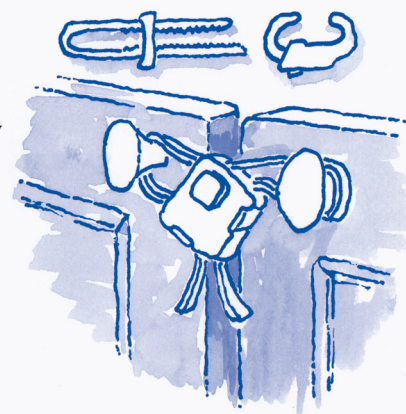
## 1 Safe Sleep

- Is your baby always placed on his/her back to sleep?
- Is your baby sleeping alone in a crib-type bed for nighttime and naps at home and away from home?
- Have you checked your baby's bed to make sure there are no broken or missing crib slats? Crib slats must be no more than  $2\frac{3}{8}$  inches apart (size of the top of a pop can).
- Is the crib mattress firm and fitted snugly inside the crib (no extra room around edges)?
- Is your baby's crib empty of pillows, comforters, stuffed toys, bumper pads and other soft items?



## 3 Safe Storage

- Are there safety latches or locks on cabinets and drawers that contain potentially dangerous items? These items include:
  - Vitamins
  - Cigarettes
  - Plastic bags
  - Matches and lighters
  - Knives, scissors, razors blades, and other sharp objects
  - Cleaning supplies, pesticides, and other poisonous materials – keep these in their original containers
  - Guns and ammunition – must be stored separately
  - Medications, including over-the-counter medicines



Remember: Child-resistant packaging is not child proof.

## 2 Bathroom

- When your child is in the bathtub, is an adult always present?
- Is your hot water heater set to never go above 120°F?
- When you run your child's bathwater, do you test the temperature first with your wrist or elbow?
- Are there non-skid strips or a mat on the bottom of the bathtub?

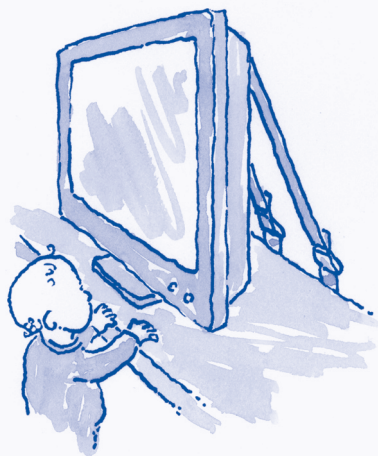
## 4 Kitchen

- Are small appliances in the kitchen (coffee maker, toaster) and bathroom (hairdryer, curling iron) unplugged and put away? If they cannot be stored in a cabinet or drawer, push them to the back of the counter.
- Are back burners on the stovetop used for cooking?
- Are pot handles turned toward the back of the stove?

## 5 Around the House

- Are the MN Poison Center phone number (1-800-222-1222) and other emergency contacts posted near all of your telephones, programmed in your cell phone or in an obvious location in your home? It is not necessary to keep syrup of ipecac in your home. In case of poisoning, always call the poison center and the experts there will advise you on what to do.
- Are small toys and objects that your baby could choke on out of reach and picked up off the floor?
- Are working carbon monoxide detectors installed within 10 feet of each room used for sleeping? Carbon monoxide detectors should be tested monthly and the batteries changed every year.
- Are working smoke detectors placed in each sleeping room as well as in the hallways outside the sleeping rooms? Smoke detectors should be tested monthly and the batteries changed every year.
- Is everyone living in your home aware of an emergency exit plan in case of a fire?
- Is your home smoke-free (no one smokes inside your home)?

- Are heavy or unstable pieces of furniture, such as TVs, entertainment centers, and bookshelves, anchored to the floor or secured to the wall?



- Are safety/baby gates installed at the top and bottom of all stairs?

- Are there shock prevention plugs or covers on all unused electrical outlets?

- Are the windows in your house or apartment child-safe? Things to do:

- Move furniture away from windows.
- Keep windows, especially those reachable by children, locked or have window guards or stops to prevent them from being open more than four inches.



- Are electrical cords in good condition (not frayed)? Arrange the cords so they are out of your child's reach.
- Are you keeping your child safe from lead poisoning?
  - Peeling paint or paint dust on walls and windows can have lead if your home was built before 1978.
  - Certain folk remedies may contain lead.
- Are the pull cords for window blinds or draperies out of children's reach? If cords for blinds or draperies are looped, cut them to create two short cords.

## 6 In the Car

- Are age-appropriate child safety seats properly installed and used when children are riding in motor vehicles?
- Does everyone wear seatbelts (or ride in an age-appropriate, properly installed child safety seat) while riding in motor vehicles?

