

families

Safe Kids Campaign, '97

Survey: Parents Need to Do More to Prevent Tragic Mishaps

By Avis Thomas-Lester
Washington Post Staff Writer

Sherri Sanders of Mitchellville travels 40 miles round trip to purchase organic vegetables for making juice for her 3-year-old son, Jalen. But she's been improperly securing him in his automobile safety seat. Peter Sorenson has spent hundreds of dollars on educational toys for his 8-month-old son, Jack, but he has not installed a staircase safety gate or cabinet locks in their Arlington home. Both parents consider themselves loving and "careful."

But according to a survey of 1,560 parents nationwide to be released today by the National Safe Kids Campaign, many parents like Sanders and Sorenson fail to take basic precautions such as testing their smoke detectors, ensuring safe play environments and reducing the temperature setting of their water heaters to prevent scalding.

The survey, conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates Inc., shows that many parents who are not taking proper precautions don't understand the importance of some safety procedures. While 90 percent of parents say they always buckle their children into car seats, only 48 percent al-

ways buckle their children into car seats. And many parents fail to properly secure the restraint seats. The survey, released coincident with the 1997 National Safe Kids Week, May 10-18, an annual event by the campaign, sponsored by Johnson & Johnson, to spotlight the need for parents and care givers to take precautions to prevent unintentional injury, the number one killer of children under 14. Each year, more than 6,900 children die and 50,000 are permanently disabled from preventable injuries suffered in car and bike crashes, drownings, fires, poisonings, chokes and falls.

"We are heartened so many parents have heard the message of safety and are protecting their children from unintentional injury—but we still have a long way to go," says former U.S. surgeon general C. Everett Koop, campaign chairman.

The annual event also reaches out to children with the Gear Up Games, an interactive obstacle course utilizing safety equipment highlighted in the Safe Kids Gear Up Guide, which illustrates basic equipment and precautions. The games will kick off at 10 a.m. today on the Ellipse featuring

many children who have been affected by accidents. The games will be held around the country during the week and locally at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Kennedy Playgro-

und, Seventh and P streets NW. Sanders says she didn't pull the chest straps snug on son's car seat for fear he'd be uncomfortable. "I travel out of the driveway without him in that seat," she said. "I can't believe he might not have been safe anyway."

And Sorenson, after seeing the Safe Kids Gear Up Guide said he was heading to a store that day to purchase a carbon dioxide detector, a fire extinguisher, batteries and a guard.

"We watch Jack very carefully, but I guess there's a lot that we're not doing," he said. "I guess we've been a lot and you know what they say about that."

The Safe Kids Gear Up Guide may be obtained by sending a check or money order for \$2 to the National Safe Kids Campaign, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Suite 1000, D.C. 20004. Contact the campaign at 202-662-0600.

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The survey, conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates Inc., shows that many parents who are not taking proper precautions don't understand the importance of some safety procedures. While 90 percent of parents say they always buckle their children into car seats, only 48 percent al-

ways require their child to ride in the back seat. And many parents fail to properly secure the restraints inside the car and the children in the seats.

The survey's release coincides with the 1997 National Safe Kids Week, May 10-18, an annual event by the campaign, sponsored by Johnson & Johnson, to spotlight the need for parents and care givers to take precautions to prevent unintentional injury, the number one killer of children under 14. Each year, more than 6,900 children die and 50,000 are permanently disabled from preventable injuries suffered in car and bike crashes, drownings, fires, poisonings, chokes and falls.

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24 "All-Stars," children whose lives have been affected by injury. Games will be held around the country during the week and locally at 10 a.m. Saturday at the Kennedy Playground, Seventh and P streets NW.

Sanders says she didn't pull the chest straps snug on her son's car seat for fear he'd be uncomfortable. "I wouldn't travel out of the driveway without him in that seat," she said. "I can't believe he might not have been safe anyway."

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