

UNINTENTIONAL HOME INJURIES

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH ISSUE PROFILE

Community Action for a Renewed Environment (CARE)
Environmental Sustainability for the Salina Community

Issue: Unintentional home injuries in the United States

Background: Injury in the home is extremely common, accounting for approximately one-third of all injuries. The home is the second most common location of unintentional fatal injuries in the U.S., with motor vehicles traveling on the road being the first. The home is the site of nearly 20% of all injury death. The top-five leading causes of unintentional home injury death are falls, poisonings, fire/burn, choking/suffocation, and drowning; together these causes account for 90% of all unintentional home-injury deaths. Yet the majority of these home injuries do not result in death. For every home injury death, there are approximately 650 nonfatal injuries. Children under age five and adults over age 70 are the highest risk groups for home injury, both fatal and nonfatal.

Standards: There are no local standards or regulations

Community Specific Indicators:

What does the data say? Nearly 20% of all city of Salina emergency response calls are for a fall in the home. There was no data received from Salina Regional Health Center on poisonings, burns, choking, or drowning, although the national statistics indicate the age group for drowning being similar to that of the fall-in-the-home category. These were unintentional drownings in the bath tub. The poisonings are indicated throughout the age groups, with the elderly being at risk due to memory issues and frequency of administration of medication.

Who is affected? Falls account for 52.5 % of all home deaths for adults 65-74 nationally. There are no local statistics for these categories to this point.

How is the community affected? Injuries increase visits to medical facilities and increase the risk of permanent disability for the elderly. These risk factors increase the need for out-of-home nursing facilities.

What are the contributing factors and behaviors of the community?

- Poisonings – Children ages one to five are more likely to have increased lead levels if they are poor or live in older housing. Children enrolled in Medicaid have levels three times the level of non-Medicaid children. Older populations are more likely to confuse medicine dosages and frequency of ingestion, causing unintentional overdoses.
- Falls – Due to the rapid aging population, injuries caused by falls are increasing due to the aging process, lower body weakness, and balance and

walking issues. Children ages one to five are consistent in the percentage of injuries due to carelessness and clumsiness.

- Drowning – This is the leading cause of death ages one to four with one-third drowning in a bath tub.

How does a community protect itself? Education seems to be the best option due to cost-saving statistics. For every \$1 spent on prevention and education, there is a \$7 savings in Medicare costs. All of these life-threatening issues are preventable if the correct education and implementation programs are initiated.

Data Sources:

- Salina Fire Dept.
- HomeSafetyCouncil.com

Age of Data: 2001-2002

Additional data needed: Local data is needed to establish a local need and justification.

Paper prepared by Brian Darnell, January 2010.