SAFETY CANADA

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Too Familiar for Comfort.

Summer is a season we often associate with freedom. We spend more time outdoors, we travel, we take on home improvement projects and children are out of school. It's a season many Canadians look forward to all year.

And yet, in that familiarity comes its own set of safety challenges.

Most people understand the risks associated with activities that are inherently dangerous. We know to be cautious when faced with unusual or extreme circumstances.

But we also often overlook the risks attached to the activities we perform regularly. Simple things, too: driving up to the cottage. Using a barbecue. Climbing a ladder to clean the gutters. Supervising children at a backyard gathering.

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PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE: SEE WHAT YOU DON'T SEE

Summer changes how Canadians get around.

Children spend more time outdoors. Cyclists and motorcyclists take advantage of the warmer weather to return to the road. Walking often becomes a more viable method of transportation.

The trend? More people are sharing our roads, and not all of them are protected by a vehicle.

That makes the summer months an important time to highlight vulnerable road users.

Pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists share a level of risk that drivers often do not: they are less protected in the event of a collision.

One challenge is that many Canadians drive the same routes every day. We become familiar with our surroundings and learn to expect what we will encounter.

We can predict traffic patterns. We know the intersections and roads.

But when we think we know what's waiting for us, we stop actively scanning our surroundings. And that's where the unexpected can arrive: a cyclist approaching from behind, a pedestrian entering a crosswalk or a motorcyclist in a space we incorrectly assumed was empty.

It's a moment that unfolds in a matter of seconds, but one that can have serious long-term ramifications.

The solution isn't complicated: slow down, stay alert, check mirrors and blind spots. Approach intersections with care. Expect vulnerable road users to be present until we can confirm they are not.

Visibility and awareness are indispensable safety tools. Eye contact and predictable behaviour, as a motorist or a vulnerable road user, contribute to ensuring that we all can see and be seen.

Road safety is a shared responsibility. Every road user has a role to play in making out roads safer for everyone.

Drivers also have a unique responsibility to remain attentive to those who are less protected than they are themselves.

As summer continues to make its seasonal warmth felt, I encourage all Canadians to take a few extra moments on the road.

Look twice. Slow down and stay aware of your surroundings. After all, the safest trips are the ones where everyone gets home safely.

Make Safety a Priority!



Gareth Jones
President and CEO



Too Familiar for Comfort (Continued from page 1)

These often feel automatic because they are routine. We've done them before, and familiarity can introduce a sense of confidence that can cause us to drop our guard.

Many preventable injuries occur not because people lack knowledge, but because attention drifts. Shortcuts are taken and risks underestimated because activities feel ordinary.

That reality extends across much of the safety landscape. On our roads, familiar routes can lead to less attentive reactions in changing conditions. At work, summer heat can affect concentration and decision-making. At home, when proper equipment or procedures are ignored, projects that seem simple can quickly become hazardous. Even water safety incidents often involve experienced swimmers.

Familiarity can make us less likely to recognize risk. Fortunately, one of the most effective safety tools available is awareness.

Safety is rarely dramatic or sweeping; it's built through small habits and small decisions made consistently. It's built through wearing the right protective equipment, slowing down while driving, staying hydrated and following procedures even when a task feels routine.

None of these are radical choices. But all serve to create safer outcomes for us and for those we love.

As we move on through the summer months, resist the temptation to let familiarity become complacency. Don't let a great summer memory become a cautionary tale because of a moment of inattention.

The activities we enjoy most deserve the same attention to safety as those we consider to be inherently risky.

COMMERCIAL DRIVING FUNDAMENTALS

Professional drivers play a critical role in keeping Canada's transportation network moving safely. The Canada Safety Council's Commercial Driving Fundamentals course provides a strong foundation for those looking to enter the field. Learn more:

https://csc.skillspass.com/cdf/



VEHICLE & ROAD SAFETY

THE ROAD MOST TRAVELLED

When Canadians think about summer driving risks, they often picture long road trips.

Hours on the highway, unfamiliar destinations and heavy vacation traffic all feel like situations that demand extra caution. As a result, many drivers take time to prepare. They plan routes, check weather forecasts, inspect their vehicles and think carefully about rest stops and travel schedules.

But some of the highest-risk drives of the summer may be the ones that receive the least preparation.

The quick trip to the beach, the drive to the cottage, a run to the grocery store, an evening visit with friends...

These journeys often take place on roads we know well, and that's where familiarity can become a challenge.

When drivers use the same roads repeatedly, it's natural to become more comfortable with their surroundings. We know where the curves are. We know the speed limits. We know which intersections tend to be busy and which ones usually aren't.

That familiarity can create a false sense of predictability.

Road conditions change. Construction projects appear. Traffic patterns shift. Pedestrians, cyclists and other vulnerable road users become more common during the summer months. A route that felt routine yesterday may present entirely different conditions today.

Unfortunately, familiarity can make it easier to overlook those changes.

Many collisions occur close to home, on roads drivers use regularly. In these situations, the issue is rarely a lack of driving skill. More often, it is a lapse in attention, an incorrect assumption or a momentary failure to recognize a changing situation.

The solution is straightforward: approach every drive with the same level of attention, whether you're travelling across the province or across town. Eliminate distractions. Leave sufficient following distance. Watch for vulnerable road users. Slow down when conditions warrant it, even on roads you know well.

The roads we drive every day deserve the same respect as the ones we've never seen before.

After all, safe driving isn't determined by the distance travelled. It's determined by the decisions we make along the way.



YOUTH SAFETY

READY OR NOT?

When the school year ends, many families face a challenge that doesn't receive much attention.

Children suddenly have more free time, more independence and fewer structured routines than they do during the rest of the year.

For parents and guardians, that often means making decisions about responsibilities children may not have held before.

Can they stay home alone for an hour? Can they walk to the park with friends? Can they ride their bike across the neighbourhood? Can they prepare a simple meal while an adult is away?

These aren't questions with universal answers. Readiness depends on the child, the situation and the level of preparation involved.

One common mistake is treating independence as something that appears overnight. In reality, safe independence is usually built through practice.

A child who can safely stay home alone for several hours did not develop that ability suddenly. They learned it gradually through conversations, expectations and supervised experience.

The same principle applies to a wide range of summer activities. Children should know what to do if someone comes to the door, if there is an emergency, if plans change unexpectedly or if they begin to feel uncomfortable in a situation.

They should understand how to contact a trusted adult, when to call for help and how to recognize situations that require immediate action.

As independence increases, communication becomes more important, not less. Clear expectations about where children are going, who they are with and when they are expected home can help prevent problems before they develop.

Summer provides valuable opportunities for children to build confidence and responsibility. The goal is not to eliminate independence, but to ensure it grows alongside the skills needed to manage it safely.

Confidence develops best when it is supported by preparation.

HOME ALONE PROGRAM

Preparing children for greater independence doesn't happen overnight.

CSC's Home Alone program helps youth develop the skills and confidence needed to stay safe when home alone for short periods. Through age-appropriate safety training, participants learn how to respond confidently to everyday situations and emergencies.

Contact csc@safety-council.org to find a course near you.



WORKPLACE SAFETY

TOO HOT TO HANDLE

Summer heat can create challenging working conditions, but the temperature alone doesn't determine how well our bodies cope.

One of the most overlooked aspects of heat safety is acclimatization, the process by which the body gradually adapts to working in warmer conditions.

That adaptation doesn't happen overnight, however. Workers starting a new job or experiencing the first prolonged hot spell of the season may be at greater risk of heat-related illness because their bodies haven't yet adjusted to the increased demands.

Even experienced workers can be affected after spending time away from hot working environments.

Heat stress develops when the body can no longer cool itself effectively. High temperatures, humidity, direct sunlight, physical exertion and protective clothing can all contribute to the problem.
Early warning signs may include heavy sweating, muscle cramps, dizziness, headache, nausea and unusual fatigue.

Left unaddressed, heat stress can progress to heat exhaustion or heat stroke, both of which require immediate attention.

Preventing heat-related illness begins before symptoms appear. Gradually increasing exposure to hot conditions, taking scheduled breaks, staying hydrated and planning physically demanding tasks for cooler parts of the day can all help reduce risk.

Supervisors and workers should also watch for signs of heat stress in one another, particularly during the first days of hot weather. As temperatures rise throughout the summer, remember that experience alone doesn't protect against heat.

A New Home for Elmer

Throughout this issue, we've explored how experience shapes the way we recognize and respond to risk. But experience has to start somewhere.



For children, many of life's most important safety lessons are learned long before they face real-world situations. In understanding how to cross the street safely or recognizing everyday hazards at home, early learning helps build the confidence and decision-making skills that last a lifetime.

For generations, Elmer the Safety Elephant has introduced young Canadians to these important concepts through engaging, age-appropriate safety education. As the ways children learn continue to evolve, so too must the resources that support them.

That's why the Canada Safety Council is excited to be developing a new online home for Elmer.

The new website will bring together animated safety videos, educational activities and resources for children, parents, educators and community organizations. We can't wait to share more about the next chapter of Elmer's story soon!

SAFETY CANADA



HOME & COMMUNITY SAFETY

AFTER THE STORM

Summer storms can arrive with little warning, bringing heavy rain, strong winds, hail and power outages. Once the skies clear, it's natural to want to get outside and assess the damage so we can begin cleaning up.

That's when a **different set** of hazards begins.

Many storm-related injuries don't occur during the storm itself. They happen afterward, when people are clearing fallen branches, repairing damaged property or restoring power.

Hidden dangers such as **unstable trees, slippery surfaces, damaged electrical equipment and downed power lines** can remain long after the weather has passed. It's important to approach cleanup with the same level of caution as the storm itself.

Before beginning any work, take time to **assess the area for potential hazards**. Never approach or attempt to move downed power lines, and assume they are energized until utility crews confirm otherwise.

Wear appropriate footwear and protective equipment, and avoid using damaged electrical tools or extension cords until they have been inspected.

Storm cleanup often involves physically demanding tasks, from lifting debris to operating chainsaws and climbing ladders. **Pace yourself,** particularly during periods of hot weather, and don't hesitate to **ask for assistance** with jobs that are too large or too hazardous to complete safely alone.

Recovering from a storm is about more than restoring your property. It's about protecting yourself and your family from the hazards that can remain after the clouds have passed.

A careful cleanup today can help prevent another emergency tomorrow.

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