

Tips for Parents

TEACHING CHILDREN TO USE 9-1-1

Parents can use the following safety tips to teach their children the proper way to use **9-1-1** to report emergencies:

- Never say "nine eleven." There is no eleven on a telephone keypad or dial. Always say "nine-one-one."
- Always call from a safe place. If there is a fire in the house, get out first and then call.
- Post your address near the phone.
- Never call **9-1-1** as a prank or joke. You can get into trouble and keep someone who really needs help from getting it in time.
- Call **9-1-1** if you think you have an emergency and explain the situation to the dispatcher.

If you call 9-1-1 by mistake, don't hang up. Explain the mistake to the dispatcher and say there is no emergency.

EXERCISING PARENTAL AUTHORITY

Good citizenship begins at home. Parents and guardians bear the primary responsibility for the actions of their children. They must set good examples for their children at home and in their community, teach morals and values, provide a safe home environment, make sure that their children get a good education, direct their children into constructive activities, be involved in their children's activities, make their children responsible and accountable for their actions, etc.

Some general parent tips are listed below:

- Talk to your children. If they don't seem to be listening, keep talking. And tell them you love them.
- Listen to your children. This is more important than talking. Children know you care when you listen. Ask questions and listen.
- Have clear family rules. The consequences of breaking them should be clear.
- Be a good role model. Actions speak louder than words. Be the person you want your children to be.
- Discuss the consequences of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use. Tobacco is addictive. It yellows teeth, fouls breath, and kills. Drugs alter judgment and perspective, and interfere with physical, emotional, and social growth. They are also addictive.
- Know what your children are doing. Know what they do in school and after school. Know their friends. Be involved in their lives.
- Educate yourself on the social and emotional needs of your children.

CHILDREN & COMPUTERS

With the ever-increasing development of computer technology and the increasing number of people who are computer literate, it is much more likely that our children may be victimized or exploited in a computer environment. The "Information Super Highway" which is made up of BBS services, commercial on-line services, such as Prodigy, America Online, CompuServe and the Internet, allow millions of people around the world to communicate anonymously in a virtually uncontrolled electronic world.

Advise your children to observe the following safety rules whenever they are on-line. **Remind them that no matter how safe or friendly a BBS seems (and this includes the major on-line services), there is always a potential for danger.**

- Never give out any personal information about themselves--particularly real names, addresses, phone number, financial information, etc. to anyone that they meet on computer bulletin boards.
- Report all electronic harassment and/or abuse to their parents. As parents, you should notify the BBS SYSOP (systems operator) of the problem. If the SYSOP does not give you satisfaction in stopping the abuse, notify the police.
- Never set up face-to-face meetings with anyone they have met on the BBS. If anyone you meet on-line wants to meet you--tell your parents.

Safeguard all credit card and telephone card numbers. Parents should pay for BBS service by money order whenever possible.

Warning Signs of Possible Computer Crime Problems

- Lack of interest in self and appearance, grooming, or indications of lack of sleep.
- Computer and modem running late at night, (even when unattended.)
- Computer files ending in GIF, JPG, BMP, TIF, PCX, DL, GL, FLI. These are picture or graphic image files and parents should know what they illustrate. Image files may be pictures of a sexual nature and can be of very high quality, moving, and even include sound.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PROTECT YOUR CHILDREN

- Learn about computers.
- Talk to your kids about their use of the computer and the dangers on-line.
- Be involved with your kids in using the computer. This is a great opportunity to spend time with your child.
- Keep the computer in a common area of your home. Virtually every case where children were involved in computer crimes or were victims of abuse via computer, computers were in the children's room.

Child Abduction

The number of children reported missing each year is staggering. The following precautions will help protect your child from abduction:

- Teach your children how to use telephones to call home, other places you might be, and 9-1-1 in an emergency. Also teach them how to answer the phone and door when you are not at home.
- Update regularly the photos and descriptions of your children in your home file. Have a set of fingerprints and footprints made.
- Know where your children are at all times. Never leave them unattended in a public place.
- Be sure your child knows what to do if you become separated in a public place.
- Explain to your child who a stranger is.
- Choose a secret word to use with your children in an emergency or a situation in which another person is pick them up.
- Explain in a non-frightening way tactics child abductors might use. Also tell your child how to respond.
- Walk to school with your child and point out possible danger spots like alleys and vacant lots. Ask neighbors to provide a "safe home" in an emergency.
- Be cautious in selecting others to care for your child.

Listen to anything your child wants to report and discuss.