



# GENERAL SAFETY

## INFORMATION & QUICK TIPS

Amusement Rides • Child Safety • Cybersecurity • Halloween • Harvest Season • Home Protection  
Holiday Shopping • Identity Theft • Low-Head Dams • Memorial Day • New Year's Eve • Pet Preparedness  
St. Patrick's Day • Thanksgiving • Winter Holidays • Workplace Violence • Youth Helmet Safety



# AMUSEMENT RIDES

A day at an amusement park or fair offers seemingly endless fun, but a tragedy can happen in an instant. The National Safety Council found that in 2023 about 1,500 people were injured while riding a fixed-site amusement ride in the United States and Canada. Some injuries may be unpreventable, but many can be avoided by following safety guidelines, observing ride activity and understanding how personal situations can affect the ride.

## QUICK TIPS

- Read all posted rules and listen to instructions given by the ride's operator.
- Secure all clothing and personal possessions such as cell phones, hats, sunglasses and wallets.
- Always use all the safety equipment provided (seat belt, shoulder harness, lap bar, etc.).
- If children cannot be trusted to stay seated with hands and feet inside, do not let them ride.
- Explain to children that they should not get off a ride until the operator says to unload. Tell them not to exit the ride while it is still in motion.

---

## RIDE SAFETY TIPS

### RULES FOR EVERYONE

Below are some tips that everyone should follow regardless of age or special conditions.

- Read all posted rules and listen to instructions given by the ride's operator.
- Keep hands, arms, legs and feet inside the ride at all times.
- Secure all clothing and personal possessions such as cell phones, hats, sunglasses and wallets.
- A person of extreme height or weight size should pay close attention to all posted signs. If there is difficulty sitting in any seat properly, do not stay on that ride.
- Always use all the safety equipment provided (seat belt, shoulder harness, lap bar, etc.).
- Remain in the ride until it comes to a complete stop at the unloading point. If a ride stops temporarily due to mechanical failure or other reasons, stay seated and wait for an operator to provide further instructions.

- Do not board a ride if there are broken parts, signs of improper maintenance or an inattentive operator. Immediately call the IDHS Amusement Ride Hotline at 1-888-203-5020 to report this information.
- Every ride should have a prominently displayed, current permit issued by IDHS. The permit is about the size of a business card and is typically located at the operator's station. Permits are good for one year. If the ride has no such permit, or if the permit has expired, call the IDHS Amusement Ride Hotline at 1-888-203-5020 to report this information.
- Understand physical conditions and limitations. If personal health could be at risk for any reason, or if a pre-existing condition of any kind could be aggravated, do not board the ride.

## RIDES AND CHILDREN

Do not put children on rides if they show extreme fear. The child could attempt to escape the ride, which could cause serious safety issues.

- Watch the ride while operating before boarding with children. Point out the operator and the entrance and exit locations prior to riding. Make sure they understand the instructions and warnings fully.
- Tell children to hold on tightly with both hands to lap bars, handholds or any other item designed specifically for hand placement. Explain this reduces the risk of injury.
- Obey minimum height, age and weight restrictions. Never sneak children onto rides they are too small or too young for because they may not be physically or developmentally able to stay safely seated.
- If children cannot be trusted to stay seated with hands and feet inside, do not let them ride.
- Load children to the inside, away from open doorways or on the side closest to the ride operator. Some rides will have very specific requirements.
- Explain to children that although rides sometimes stop temporarily, they should not get off until the operator says to unload. Tell them not to exit the ride while it is still in motion.

## PATRONS WITH DISABILITIES

Amusement facilities are making strides in inclusivity, but it is not always possible to include everybody. The forces exerted by some amusement rides or devices can be dangerous to a rider who cannot maintain the posture required for that ride.

- Upon entering an amusement facility, a guest with a disability should visit an information desk and request any information regarding access to the rides.
- Ask about specific amusement rides before someone with a disability is placed on the ride. Some rides can be too much for the person to handle mentally or physically. Operators can answer most questions about specific details of the ride.
- Many amusement rides and attractions have rapidly flashing lights that could cause a seizure.
- If someone is showing signs of distress before the ride begins, notify the operator and have the person get off the ride. A distressed person could attempt to escape during the ride, which would cause serious safety hazards.



# CHILD SAFETY

Each year, 3.5 million American children receive emergency care for injuries that occurred in the home. It can be difficult to balance protecting children and providing fun childhood experiences. Taking the time to discuss safety and taking a few extra precautions will help ensure children will have the opportunity to make memories that will last a lifetime.

## QUICK TIPS

- Report any suspicious strangers or vehicles in the neighborhood to the police.
- Advise children to never answer doors without adult supervision.
- Regularly supervise children playing outside alone to help make sure an accident or emergency does not occur.
- To prevent drowning, children should wear a life jacket when swimming or boating.
- Children should always wear a helmet when bicycling, skateboarding, roller skating or riding a scooter.

---

## CHILD SAFETY TIPS

### AT HOME

More than one-third of injuries in children age 14 and younger occur in the home. Following a few safety tips can help prevent accidents or allow help to arrive more quickly.

- Teach kids when and how to dial 911.
- Children should know their parents' names, phone number(s) and address(es). This information helps emergency personnel respond to situations more efficiently.
- Discuss household emergency and escape plans with children. Emergencies can occur at any time, so practice the plans during various times of the day.
- Report any suspicious strangers or vehicles in the neighborhood to the police.
- Advise children to never answer doors without adult supervision.
- Children should be at least 3 feet away from the stove when it is being used. Handles of cooking equipment should be kept turned sideways to prevent children from pulling on them.



- Sharp and fragile decorations should be kept out of children's reach to prevent injuries.
- Store prescriptions and medicines in high cabinets that are out of reach of children.
- Before allowing children to leave the home on their own, know where they are going and whom they are spending time with. Choose a time they need to return home.

## OUTDOORS

The National Safety Council reports that falls comprise 80% of playground injuries. Not every bruise or scratch can be prevented, but the following safety tips will help keep children safe when they are playing outdoors.

- When crossing a street, always look both ways before walking into the roadway.
- Look for kids playing near the street and slow down. Children are often unpredictable and unaware of danger around them. Never assume a child will stop to check for traffic or will yield the right of way.
- Regularly supervise children playing outside alone to help make sure an accident or emergency does not occur. Take turns with other parents in the neighborhood or enlist a trustworthy family member to help with supervision.
- Children should ride bikes, rollerblades or skateboards with a group of friends. If an emergency occurs, one child can contact help.
- Always wear a helmet when biking, skateboarding, roller skating or riding a scooter. The helmet will help protect against head injuries.
- Supervise young children at all times around fall hazards, such as stairs and playground equipment, whether at home or out to play.
- To prevent drowning, children should wear a life jacket when swimming or boating, always swim with adult supervision and take regular breaks to avoid becoming overly tired.

## BICYCLE HELMETS

Helmets are the most effective safety device available for bicycle accidents, and properly wearing a bicycle helmet greatly reduces the odds of severe head injuries. Learn how to make sure a child's helmet fits and is worn correctly.

- When buying a helmet, let children pick out their own; they will be more likely to wear them for every ride.
- Make sure the bottom of the helmet is only one or two finger widths above the eyebrows.
- The helmet should be level and low on the forehead (not tilted).
- Check that the helmet does not rock back and forth or side to side more than an inch.

Learn more helmet safety tips on the [Youth Helmet Safety](#) page.

# CYBERSECURITY

Data privacy is an ever-changing field, and governments across the United States are enacting new laws and regulations to help safeguard American personal information in an increasingly digital society.

Indiana has not been immune to the emerging cybersecurity threats. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), more than 23,000 Hoosiers became victims of an online cyberattack during 2024 alone, amounting to more than \$125 million in losses. Cyberattacks are also a major threat for Indiana governments, schools, businesses and other organizations. An Indiana cybersecurity incident reporting law went into effect in 2021, requiring all political subdivisions to report cybersecurity incidents to the Indiana Office of Technology.

As attacks continue to become more commonplace and sophisticated, it is important that all Indiana families and businesses know how to identify and avoid online threats. Hoosiers can learn more about cybersecurity and how to better protect their data privacy by reviewing the tips below and by visiting the Indiana Cybersecurity Hub.

## QUICK TIPS

- Create strong passwords of at least eight characters long, and use combinations of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and punctuation.
- Use different usernames and passwords for your accounts, and be sure to implement multi-factor authentication.
- Do not open or download files, answer questions or follow tasks in emails sent from unknown or unsolicited senders. Never send personal or financial information to them.
- Keep antivirus programs updated on all devices.
- Back up important files to an external hard drive, flash drive or online cloud storage account.

## CYBERSECURITY TIPS

### PASSWORDS

Passwords are keys to personal information and data. Having a strong password will help keep intruders out.

- Passwords should be at least eight characters long and use combinations of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and punctuation.
- Never use the same username and password on multiple websites.
- Never use personal information such as names, ages, birthdays or a pet's name.
- Avoid entering personal passwords on shared devices.
- Implement multi-factor authentication on your accounts, including email, social media, online shopping, financial services, gaming and entertainment.

## SHOPPING

Online shopping sales have steadily increased over the past decade and now make up more than 10 percent of total U.S. retail trade revenue, which means sensitive financial information is being transmitted and stored online more and more. Protect this information by following these tips.

- Before purchasing an item, check the website for security and authentication notices.
- Be aware of severely undervalued prices.
- On auction sites, check the seller's reputation, read reviews about the seller and thoroughly read the item's description.
- At checkout, use a secure payment method such as a debit or credit card.
- Avoid shopping on a public computer or public Wi-Fi network.

## COMMUNICATION

Today, a lot of information is shared through forms of online communication. Practicing discretion will help keep this information in the right hands.

- Never open, answer or follow links in emails sent from an unknown or unsolicited sender.
- Never send personal or financial information to an unknown or unsolicited individual.
- Do not download files or programs from an unknown company or source.
- Change social media privacy settings so only trusted individuals can see posted information.
- Limit the amount of personal information shared on social media.
- Never share financial information, account information or passwords on social media.

## DEVICES

According to the Pew Research Center, 97 percent of Americans own a cell phone, half own a tablet computer and about 75 percent own a desktop or laptop computer. These devices hold personal information, so protecting them from cybercriminals is important.

- During travel, always keep laptops and mobile devices nearby or locked with a strong password, especially if they are not within reach.
- Never answer calls or messages from unknown contacts.
- Protect devices with strong passwords.
- Encrypt all confidential or personal information.

## SOFTWARE

In addition to caution and strong passwords, software programs can also provide a layer of protection for devices. Research the programs and decide which one is the best fit for the household or business.



- Back up important files to an external hard drive, flash drive or online cloud storage account.
- Install antivirus software that detects and removes viruses from electronic devices.
- Keep device operating systems, applications and security software updated. Turn on automatic updates.
- Install a firewall to block harmful material.

## WORKPLACE DO'S AND DON'TS

### *Workplace Do's*

Remembering to practice digital safety tips at work could prevent a company from having to spend millions of dollars to deal with the consequences of a cyberattack.

- Understand common terminology about cybersecurity. A great way to prevent cyberattacks is understanding what they are and how they work.
- Use passwords that are at least eight characters long and use combinations of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and punctuation. A strong password reduces the possibility of cybercriminals finding personal information.
- Keep antivirus programs updated on all electronic devices. These programs can detect and remove possible cyberattacks.
- Change social media privacy settings so only trusted individuals can view posts.
- Regularly change passwords for every account.
- Lock computers when leaving the desk or workstation. Leaving computers unlocked allows unauthorized individuals to access sensitive work-related information.
- Verify the email sender before opening a message. The message may seem legitimate, but it could hold a virus.
- Ask employers about available cybersecurity training courses.
- During travel, always keep laptops and electronic devices nearby or locked with a strong password, especially if they are not within reach.

### *Workplace Don'ts*

Avoiding a few common mistakes can make the workplace more secure and decrease the likelihood of a cyberattack.

- Never use the same username and password on multiple websites. Using the same password can increase the chance of cybercriminals stealing information from multiple accounts.
- Never use personal information like names, pet names or birthdates in passwords.
- Never share passwords with others.
- Never click on links or follow tasks in emails from unknown or unsolicited sources.
- Never download images, documents or software from unknown or unsolicited sources.
- Never share sensitive work-related information with unauthorized individuals.
- Never keep computers on all the time.



# HALLOWEEN SAFETY

Ghosts and vampires are not the only spooky things Hoosiers should be concerned about on Halloween. Trick-or-treating can be filled with an array of dangers. According to Safe Kids Worldwide, children are more than twice as likely to die from a vehicle accident when they are out collecting treats than any other time of the year. Practice a few of these simple tips to keep the holiday safe and fun.

## QUICK TIPS

- Masks can dangerously restrict vision. Try using non-toxic makeup to make sure children can see everything happening around them.
- Tell children to never enter a stranger's home or vehicle.
- Make sure young children are accompanied by a responsible adult.
- To prevent the chances of a fire, consider using a flashlight or glow stick in jack o' lanterns.

---

## HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS

### COSTUMES

For many, a great part of Halloween is the ability to dress up. Here is how to stay safe and stylish when gathering treats:

- Make sure costumes, wigs and accessories are fire resistant.
- Costumes and accessories should fit correctly to prevent tripping.
- Avoid dark colors — it could make it difficult for drivers to see the children.
- If avoiding dark colors is impossible, place reflective tape on costumes and bags so trick-or-treaters are more visible to drivers at night.
- Masks can dangerously restrict vision. Try using non-toxic makeup to make sure children can see everything happening around them.
- Remove makeup at the end of the night to prevent any potential allergic reactions or skin irritations.

## TRICK-OR-TREATING

- Tell children to never enter a stranger's home or vehicle.
- No treats should be eaten until they are checked by an adult.
- Young children should be with a responsible adult.
- Older children should have a specific route and time they return home.
- Stay in well-lit areas and on sidewalks to prevent being hit by a vehicle. When crossing a street, remind children to look both ways before stepping off the sidewalk.
- Carry flashlights or electric lanterns to prevent injuries, both on the sidewalk and in the street.
- Notify law enforcement immediately if something is suspicious.

## HOME SAFETY

Halloween safety does not only apply to costumes and trick-or-treating. Safety should be remembered when decorating and handing out treats.

- When preparing a jack o' lantern, consider having young children draw the pumpkin's face, but have parents do the actual carving.
- To prevent the chances of a fire, consider using a flashlight or glow stick in pumpkins.
- If using a candle in a pumpkin, display it in an area where costumes will not accidentally brush against the pumpkin.
- Remove dangerous items from the yard that can injure and trip children.
- Keep the sidewalk and porch free from debris and slipping hazards.
- Pets should be restrained to avoid any stress-induced aggression and to prevent them from escaping.





# HARVEST SEASON

During the harvest season, more slow-moving farm equipment is on Indiana's roadways. The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) encourages motorists to exercise caution and patience during September, October and November while sharing the road with these large vehicles.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2022 four vehicles were involved in crashes with farm vehicles in Indiana, causing one fatality.

By law, farm equipment must have the nationally designated slow-moving vehicle sign — a red triangle-shaped reflector — to warn oncoming drivers that their equipment is on the road. These vehicles often travel at speeds no higher than 25 mph, and the most common types Hoosiers will encounter are combines and tractors pulling grain carts or wagons.

## QUICK TIPS

- Do not tailgate farm vehicles.
- Exercise caution when passing farm vehicles.
- Be patient and allow plenty of time to get to your destination.

---

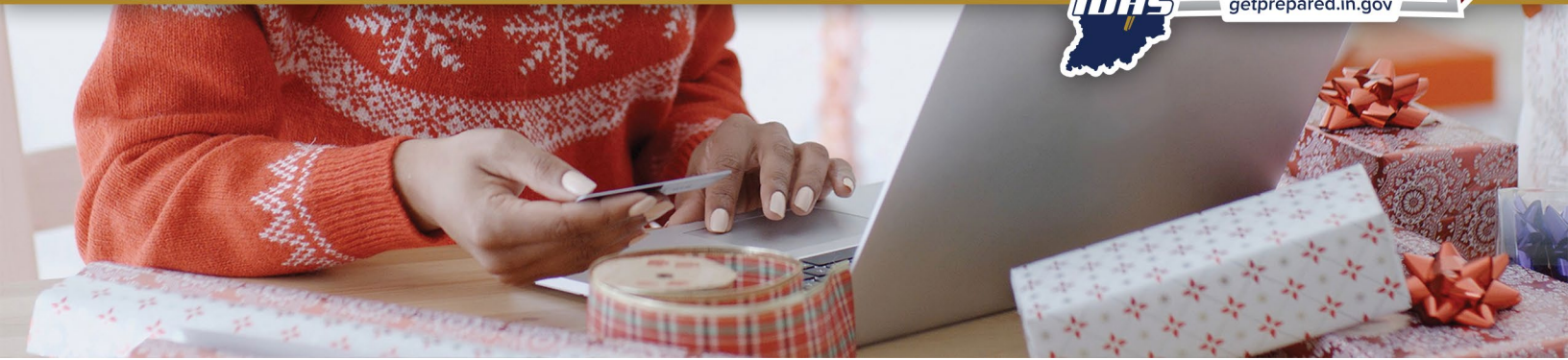
## HARVEST SEASON SAFETY TIPS

### DRIVING DURING HARVEST SEASON

Motorists should follow the tips below when approaching large farm equipment:

- Avoid distractions.
- Most farmers will pull over when they are able to let you pass, but it may take time for them to get to a safe place to do so. Be careful and patient when passing.
- Do not pass within 100 feet of any intersection, railroad grade crossing, bridge, elevation structure or tunnel.
- Do not tailgate farm vehicles, as they might have to make sudden stops along the road.

- Do not try to pass a slow-moving vehicle on the left without ensuring that the vehicle is not planning a left turn. It may appear that the driver is pulling over for you to pass when it is actually preparing to turn. You could drive right into its path, endangering yourself and the farmer.
- Farm equipment is wide, sometimes taking up most of the roadway. Exercise caution when passing.
- Be aware of alternate routes, and allow plenty of time to get to your destination.



# HOLIDAY SHOPPING SAFETY

The winter holiday season is a popular time of the year for shopping, with consumers nationwide spending on average close to \$1,000 on gifts, holiday decorations or food (and more), according to the National Retail Federation. During this time of substantial spending, Hoosiers should follow the tips below to protect themselves and their property.

## QUICK TIPS

- Do not leave packages visible in a vehicle, and consider locking them in the trunk.
- Contact store security or police if you notice suspicious activity, including a person loitering around your vehicle.
- If a fire alarm sounds, leave your shopping carts and bags and evacuate the building immediately. No bargain is worth ignoring a fire alarm.
- Make sure your Internet connection is secure when shopping online. Before you give your payment information, check for indicators that security software is in place.

---

## HOLIDAY SHOPPING TIPS

### STORE SHOPPING

While looking for great deals during the holiday season, be aware of criminals looking to get your things for free.

- Make a plan ahead of time with children in the event that they become separated in a store, including teaching them to seek help from store employees or security officers.
- Park in a well-lit area. When you get out of your vehicle, look around and see if anything looks suspicious or out of place, and be sure to lock your vehicle.
- Do not leave packages visible in a vehicle, and consider locking them in the trunk.
- Keep your wallet inside a coat or front pants pocket, and hold a purse close to the body.
- Do not use public Wi-Fi while shopping. Cyber thieves can intercept your device's signal and collect personal data and payment information. If using public Wi-Fi, consider installing a VPN to create a secured connection.



- When walking between the store and parking lot, have keys in hand as you approach the vehicle, and check the back seat and around the vehicle before getting inside.
- Contact store security or police if you notice suspicious activity, including a person loitering around your vehicle.

Find more shopping safety tips from the Indiana State Police.

## ONLINE SHOPPING

Sixty percent of consumers plan to shop online during the winter holiday season. Online shoppers should follow these tips to help guard their personal and financial data.

### *Holiday Email Precautions*

- Email advertising and spam traffic may increase during the holiday season. If the subject of an email from a known or unknown sender seems suspicious, delete the email without opening it. If an advertisement or other offer sounds too good to be true, it may be. Check it out through a reliable source.
- Never open email attachments or follow embedded links from senders you do not know.
- Never convey personal information, such as credit card numbers, bank account numbers, Social Security numbers, passwords, etc., in emails.

### *Online Shopping*

- Keep any virus protection or other computer security software updated on the device you intend to use for online shopping.
- Make sure your Internet connection is secure. Before you give your payment information, check for indicators that security software is in place.
- Create complex passwords to safeguard personal information like credit card numbers and billing addresses. Use a combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters (&, ^, %). Consider using multi-factor authentication.
- Avoid visiting unknown websites. Malicious software could be downloaded, so stick to shopping only well-known, reputable sites and verify that the website URL begins with "https" and has a padlock symbol by it.

### *Safe Online Purchasing*

- When making online purchases with a credit or debit card, use a secure online escrow broker to provide payment.
- If available, consider using your bank's virtual credit card service. Virtual credit cards can only be used once and usually expire in 24 hours.
- Make sure you print or save a hard copy of every transaction receipt in case there is confusion later about payment.

## RETAIL FIRE SAFETY

Retail outlets are often crowded with merchandise and people during the holiday shopping season. Make sure you know how to get out of every building you visit in case there is a fire.

- Be aware of your surroundings in any store or building, and know where the exits are located. Periodically, take a moment to reorient yourself to these exits while you are shopping.
- Notify building security or another employee if you notice exits that are blocked with merchandise, displays or other items.

- If a fire alarm sounds, leave your shopping carts and bags and evacuate the building immediately. No bargain is worth ignoring a fire alarm.
- Retail store owners and employees should be aware of building occupancy limits and attentive to potential overcrowding. If you think a building may be filled past capacity, notify a store employee or consider returning to that store later.
- If retailers are closely monitoring occupancy levels, they may ask customers to wait before entering the store until another patron exits to avoid exceeding building capacity. Please follow these directions or consider returning to the store when it is less crowded.

# HOME PROTECTION

During 2023, more than 13,000 burglaries occurred across Indiana. Securing homes against burglary or home invasions is a logical step in protecting property and personal safety.

Preventive measures can minimize the threat of a break-in or home invasion. Some home invasions are crimes of opportunity and securing a home can protect against this. However, many instances are planned, and intruders may have been watching the neighborhood for several days. Be aware of people in the neighborhood and contact local police if something seems concerning or out of place.

## QUICK TIPS

- Lock or secure windows and doors, both while home and out of the house.
- Never leave a spare key hidden under a rock or door mat.
- Keep purses, car keys, money and jewelry away from windows.
- Never open the door to strangers. This is especially important to teach children.
- If a weapon is part of the home defense plan, seek training on how to properly use and secure the weapon. Practice skills regularly.

---

## HOME PROTECTION SAFETY TIPS

### OUTSIDE THE HOME

- Lock or secure windows and doors, both while home and out of the house.
- Placing a bell, chime or other noisemaking item on a door can provide early warning that visitors have arrived. The noise may also cause potential intruders to reconsider plans.
- If possible, reinforce doors and locks to make kicking in doors more difficult.
- If living in an apartment where improvements are not possible, consider using a door barricade bar while in the home and secure sliding glass doors.
- Never leave a spare key hidden under a rock or door mat.
- Cut back trees or bushes near windows and doors that could provide concealment.
- Make sure the home is lit well at night, to eliminate concealment opportunities.



## INSIDE THE HOME

- Consider investing in an alarm and advertise that the home has one by placing stickers in windows and signs in the yard.
- Have emergency plans and protocols set up where children or teens can see them. Additionally, have important contact phone numbers next to the plan.
- Designate a safe room that can be secured from the inside and educate all household members on where to go in a crisis. Verify that the room has a charged cell phone and/or functioning landline phone, a flashlight, a first-aid kit and emergency water.
- Close all curtains and blinds at night.
- Keep purses, car keys, money and jewelry away from windows.
- Choose and practice various escape routes from the home.

## PERSONAL TRAINING

- Teach family members to be observant of their surroundings and aware of suspicious activity when coming home. Call the police if someone is acting suspiciously.
- Never open the door to strangers. This is especially important to teach children.
- Teach members of the household how to call 911 and have a script ready for them to read to the dispatcher. This will help them calmly explain the emergency situation.
- Teach children to call trusted adults for help in cases when adults are not at home.
- If the designated safe room is used, shelter in place until police arrive.
- If a weapon is part of the home defense plan, seek training on how to properly use and secure the weapon. Practice skills regularly.



# IDENTITY THEFT

In an era characterized by digital interconnectedness, the risk of identity theft has been heightened. Online activities like socializing and shopping come with both convenience and potential danger. As technology evolves, so do the tactics of cybercriminals who aim to misuse others' personal data for their gain. Understanding the threats and learning proactive strategies to safeguard your identity is vital.

## QUICK TIPS

- Store sensitive documents in a locked cabinet, or use a secure digital storage system. Avoid carrying unnecessary identification and shred old financial statements before disposing of them.
- Create unique, strong passwords for all online accounts, and avoid using easily guessable information like birthdays or names. Enable multi-factor authentication whenever possible.
- Only provide personal information on secure websites with "https://" in the URL. Be wary of unsolicited emails or calls asking for sensitive data, and never share personal details over the phone unless you initiated the call.
- Regularly review bank and credit card statements for unauthorized transactions. Sign up for account alerts to receive notifications of suspicious activities.
- Consider freezing your credit to prevent unauthorized access to your financial information. This adds an extra layer of protection and prevents fraudsters from opening new accounts in your name.

## IDENTITY THEFT SAFETY TIPS

### PREVENTION

- If you receive mail with your personal information on it, be sure to remove the mail from your mailbox as soon as you can each day.
- Be cautious of suspicious emails, texts or links. Hackers often try to trick you into sharing personal information. Always verify the source before clicking.
- Protect your Social Security number. Do not carry your Social Security card, and refrain from sharing the number unless necessary. Ask the organization requesting it why, how it will protect the number and if you can provide only the last four digits or different identifying information altogether.

- Use complex passwords with a mix of letters, numbers and symbols. Avoid using easily guessable information like birthdays or names.
- Use reliable antivirus software and keep your devices up to date with the latest security patches.
- Avoid using public Wi-Fi for sensitive transactions, and opt for a Virtual Private Network (VPN) when accessing the internet on the go.
- Use a strong password to protect your home Wi-Fi network.
- Adjust your privacy settings on social media platforms to limit who can see your personal information and posts.
- Identity thieves may pose as government agencies, financial institutions or even acquaintances. Always verify the authenticity of requests for personal information before sharing anything.
- Whenever possible, enable multi-factor authentication for your online accounts. This adds an extra layer of security by requiring a second verification step.

## DETECTION

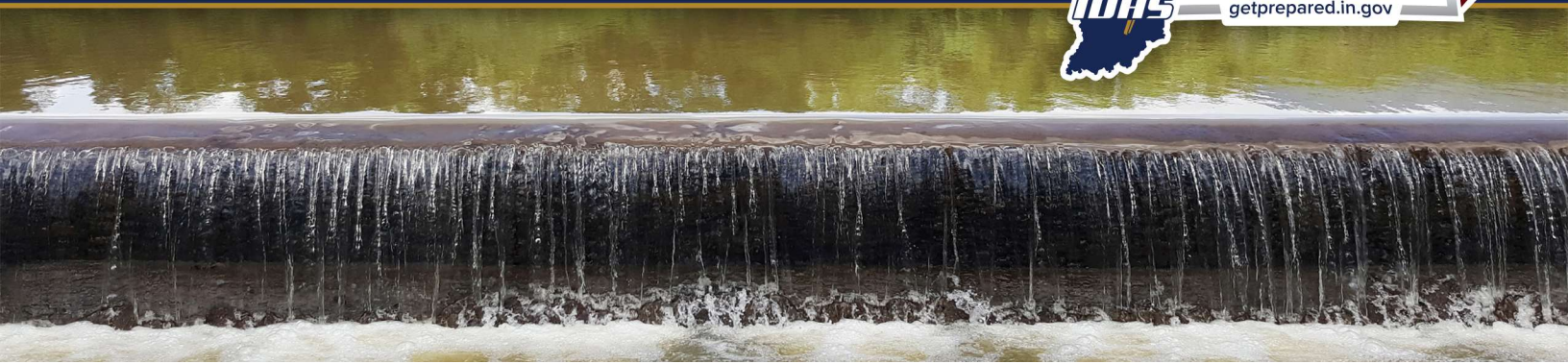
Here are some ways you can find out if identity theft occurs:

- You may be notified by organizations if your data was involved in a data breach.
- If bills you owe stop coming, that may signal someone altered your billing address. Similarly, beginning to receive bills for services you do not use could also be a sign someone is using your identity for new accounts.
- Check your banking and financial account statements, including Social Security statements, to look for errors or charges that you did not authorize.
- Obtain free credit reports from all three major bureaus annually, and review them for inaccuracies or suspicious activities. Report any discrepancies immediately.
- You may be unexpectedly denied credit, including credit cards or loans, or your credit score may change unexpectedly.
- You may be notified that a tax return has been filed on your behalf without your knowledge.

## REPORTING

If you suspect you may be a victim of identity theft, you can get help from trusted organizations.

- Start a log of all the conversations you have and steps you take as you start to deal with the situation.
- Report your suspicions to your bank and financial institutions.
- Contact the three major credit bureaus. Ask them to place fraud alerts and credit freezes on your accounts.
- Contact the Federal Trade Commission and follow its recommended steps at [www.identitytheft.gov](http://www.identitytheft.gov).



# LOW-HEAD DAMS

In March 2020, the Indiana legislature passed House Bill 1099, which prohibits people from accessing low-head dams and the waters within 50 feet of the dams when warning signs are present, among other provisions. For National Dam Safety Awareness Day on May 31, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) urges Hoosiers to learn more about low-head dams, where they are and to avoid them.

## *What Is a Low-Head Dam?*

A low-head dam is a manmade structure spanning a river or stream channel in which water flows over the entire length of the top of the dam. Moderate-to-high currents flowing over these dams create strong turbulent and recirculating forces that can pull and trap individuals underwater. These dams typically range from a 1- to 15-foot drop. Because of their relatively small size and drop, low-head dams may not always appear to be dangerous.

## QUICK TIPS

- Be aware of any low-head dams in the area where you are boating or swimming.
- Always wear a personal flotation device when boating or swimming.
- Stay away from low-head dams. It is almost impossible to escape them if you get caught.
- If caught below a low-head dam, tuck your chin into your chest, draw your knees up and wrap your arms around them.
- If someone else is trapped, call 911. Perform shore-assisted rescue if possible, but do not get into the water to save the person. Many dam-related deaths are from people who were trying to rescue someone who was trapped.

---

## LOW-HEAD DAM SAFETY TIPS

### RECREATIONAL SAFETY

A reoccurring theme of dam-related deaths is that victims had been recreating nearby and were unaware of the power of the water, especially when the water level was up, which only enhances dangerous water velocities and the risk of unseen obstructions. The churning action below low-head dams is dangerous for swimming, boating, fishing and other water recreational activities. When recreating in a natural body of water, such as a



river, be aware of the distance from any low-head dams. It is possible to be caught in a low-head dam while moving upstream or downstream.

There are more than 150 low-head dams cataloged in Indiana. Hoosiers who boat and swim in stream systems are encouraged to learn where low-head dams are located before going so they can be avoided. In many cases, low-head dams are difficult to see from upstream, which can cause an unsuspecting people to go over the dam and place themselves in danger.

Always wear a personal flotation device (PFD) when recreating in a natural body of water. If recreating near water, bring ring buoys, boat cushions or one-gallon milk jugs filled halfway with water and tied to 50 feet of rope. Using any of these items can help retrieve a person caught in a low-head dam without putting a rescuer in danger. When kayaking or canoeing, always pick up and carry the vessel around low-head dams.

## IF CAUGHT IN A LOW-HEAD DAM

It is nearly impossible to escape the recirculating current of a low-head dam without assistance. If caught in the boil of a low-head dam, tuck your chin into your chest, draw your knees up and wrap your arms around them. By doing so, conditions may push you out of and away from the hydraulic current, along the streambed. After swimming away from the current, try to swim along the face of the dam towards the nearest bank.

If you see someone trapped in a low-head dam, call 911 immediately. Whether on shore or in a kayak or other boat, do not jump in to save the person, and do not approach the hydraulic current. Stand on the bank and shout encouragement to the individual until help arrives. The most effective and safest form of rescue is shore-assisted. Shore-assisted rescue will not put the rescuer at risk. It is important to note that more than 25 percent of dam-related deaths are the rescuers themselves who do not succeed in saving the person drowning (source: Indiana DNR).

## LOW-HEAD DAM FACTS

- Between 2010 and May 2020, IDHS documented reports of 25 people who have died in Indiana near or at low-head dams.
- The average age of deceased victims in dam-related incidents from 2010 to May 2020 was 33.
- Across Indiana from 2010 to May 2020, at least 17 people were injured and more than 50 people were rescued at dams (all types).
- The age range of dam-related deaths in Indiana is between 6 and 73 years of age (2010 to May 2020).



# MEMORIAL DAY

Memorial Day weekend is a busy time for the Hoosier State. From honoring those who gave their lives serving in the armed forces to family gatherings to attending the historic Indianapolis 500 race, the traditions of this holiday weekend are long. Gear up for summer by reviewing, sharing and following these safety tips.

## QUICK TIPS

- Grills should be placed well away from the buildings, deck railings, eaves and overhanging tree branches.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from the reach of children.
- Before a car trip, have a mechanic check the brakes, heater, defroster, tires and windshield wipers.
- If someone is attempting to drive drunk, stop the person and call a ride service or loved one.
- Check weather forecasts daily, purchase an all-hazards weather radio and have multiple ways to receive weather alerts.

---

## MEMORIAL DAY SAFETY TIPS

### OUTDOOR COOKING

Cookouts are popular during Memorial Day weekend. These tips can help reduce the chances of a fire not just spoiling the food but damaging property or hurting someone.

- Clean grills by removing any grease or fat buildup before use.
- Inspect gas grills for leaks or breakages before use. If found, have a professional service the grill before using it again.
- Grills should be placed well away from the buildings, deck railings, eaves and overhanging tree branches.
- Avoid placing grills on dry grass or leaves. A stray spark could catch them on fire.
- Never leave an outdoor charcoal or gas grill unattended. Flames could become uncontrollable and start a large fire.
- If using charcoal starter fluid, never add it to a flame. The liquid can cause a flareup and injure someone.

## FIREWORKS

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission compiles an annual fireworks report and finds that about half of emergency department-treated fireworks injuries happen to people younger than 20 years old, and 30 percent of fireworks injuries are to children younger than 15 years old. Injuries are most common to hands, head and legs. If fireworks are planned for the festivities, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Never smoke or consume alcohol when lighting fireworks.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from the reach of children.
- Steer clear of others setting off fireworks. They can backfire or shoot off in the wrong direction.
- Do not attempt to make or alter any fireworks or firework devices.
- Always have a fire extinguisher or water supply, such as a hose or bucket of water, nearby.
- After a firework has finished burning, douse it with plenty of water before throwing it away to prevent starting a trash fire.
- Become more familiar with the state fireworks laws in Indiana and check local ordinances for any fireworks limitations that might exist in the area.

## TRAVEL

Stay safe away from home by taking some precautions:

- Before a trip, have a mechanic check the vehicle's brakes, heater, defroster, tires and windshield wipers.
- Check weather reports on local news outlets and check the county travel status map before leaving.
- If traveling with children, remind them not to speak to strangers, and have a responsible adult be with them at all times.
- If flying, pay attention to and follow instructions shared by flight attendants. In case of an emergency, or to help prevent one, their instructions are important to follow.
- Make copies of important identification, such as passports and licenses, ahead of time to help the replacement process if they were to get lost while traveling.

## ALCOHOL

### *Safe Drinking*

High temperatures and alcohol are not a good combination. Follow the tips below to help prevent alcohol poisoning and other injuries.

- Pace alcoholic drinks throughout an event, and consume a glass of water between every drink. Heat combined with alcohol dehydrates the body, making it more prone to heat illnesses and alcohol poisoning.
- Do not operate a grill or campfire while intoxicated. Alcohol can impair movements and mental faculties, which makes performing potentially dangerous activities even more risky.
- Pay attention to the surroundings. If someone is attempting to drive drunk, stop the person and call a taxi service or loved one.
- Never leave drinks alone or accept a drink from a stranger to help prevent the chance of consuming a drugged beverage.

### *Alcohol Poisoning*

Alcohol poisoning can be deadly. Symptoms and warning signs of alcohol poisoning vary based on a person's sex, age, health, diet and how much alcohol was consumed. Keep an eye out for the following and call 911 immediately if someone who was drinking alcohol experiences these symptoms:

- Confusion
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Slow breathing (less than eight breaths a minute)
- Irregular breathing (gap of more than 10 seconds between breaths)
- Blue-tinged or pale skin
- Unconsciousness (and cannot be woken up)

## SEVERE WEATHER

### *Extreme Heat*

Overexposure to heat can be hazardous, and the humid conditions frequently experienced in Indiana can add to the discomfort and danger of high temperatures.

- Avoid strenuous activities when hot weather is expected.
- Stay hydrated and nourished. Drink fluids regularly, regardless of the activity level. Avoid sugary, caffeinated and alcoholic beverages because they increase the rate of dehydration.
- Take time to cool off. If possible, stay indoors in an air-conditioned building. If the home does not have air conditioning, spend time in an air-conditioned public facility. Check local news to see if there are any local heat-relief shelters.

### *Thunderstorms*

According to the National Severe Storms Laboratory, an average of 100,000 thunderstorms occur each year in the United States. The following tips will help the entire household be prepared for severe thunderstorms.

- Check weather forecasts daily, purchase an all-hazards weather radio and have multiple ways to receive weather alerts.
- If a thunderstorm is expected, postpone or cancel outdoor activities and monitor weather reports on radio, television, websites and social media.
- Look for fire hazards and beware of possible water, gas or oil leaks. Report broken utility lines to the appropriate authorities.

### *Flooding*

A few simple steps can help protect an entire household in the event of a flooding emergency.

- Be aware of any nearby floodplains – flat areas of land near a body of water that is prone to flooding.
- Do not try to drive through water. As little as 2 feet can cause most cars to float, and as little as a few inches of moving water can wash away most cars. Turn around; don't drown!
- Pump out flooded basements gradually (about one-third of the water per day) to avoid structural damage.





# MISINFORMATION

Misinformation spreads rapidly in today's digital world, particularly during crises or breaking news. Misinformation can take many forms, including altered images, false statistics or fabricated stories. Learning how to recognize and respond to it helps protect you, your community and the truth.

## QUICK TIPS

- Always check the source before sharing any news, photo or claim online.
- Look for supporting evidence from trusted, official organizations.
- Pause before sharing emotionally charged or sensational content.
- Report false or misleading posts when possible.
- Talk respectfully with friends or family who may have been misinformed.

---

## MISINFORMATION SAFETY TIPS

### HOW TO SPOT MISINFORMATION

Not all misinformation is easily identifiable. It often looks professional or emotionally compelling. Being skeptical and asking questions is the first step to stay properly informed.

#### *Signs of Misinformation*

- Headlines that use dramatic or emotional language to create panic or outrage
- Claims that include “secret,” “leaked” or “they do not want you to know”
- Posts that have no clear author or link to a reputable source
- Websites that mimic the look of real news outlets but end in unfamiliar domains
- Stories that lack multiple sources or contradict known facts

#### *Steps to Verify*

- Check the source. Is it a government agency, local news outlet or health department?
- Look up the claim on a fact-checking website.
- See if other credible sources are reporting the same information.

- Check the date. Old stories or photos are often reused out of context.
- Reverse image search photos to see where they first appeared.

## HOW TO TELL IF A PHOTO OR VIDEO IS AI-GENERATED OR ALTERED

Artificial intelligence can now create highly realistic images, videos and audio clips. Some are harmless, but others are used to mislead or misinform.

### *Signs of AI-Generated Content*

- People with unusual features, such as mismatched earrings, blurry teeth or inconsistent shadows
- Videos where lip movements do not match speech and facial expressions appear stiff
- Images that show objects or people in unrealistic scenarios or with distorted details
- Photos with excessive smoothness or lack of texture in skin and hair

### *Stay Ahead*

- Use online tools that can analyze media to determine if AI was used.
- Look for media with verified timestamps, geotags or source information.
- Stay updated with guidance from trusted agencies, such as CISA, the FBI or the National Cybersecurity Alliance.

## HOW TO TALK TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Seeing someone you care about sharing something false or misleading can be uncomfortable. However, respectful conversations can help slow the spread of misinformation without damaging relationships.

### *Approach with Understanding*

- Start from a place of curiosity, not criticism.
- Ask where they found the information and what they think about it.
- Use phrases like “That is interesting. I saw something different from ...” or “Can I show you what I found about that?”

### *Avoid These Pitfalls*

- Do not call someone gullible, stupid or a liar. This will shut down the conversation.
- Do not argue to win. Aim to share information, not to shame.
- Do not overwhelm with facts. Focus on one or two trustworthy sources.

### *What To Share Instead*

- Link to official information from FEMA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, state agencies or local governments.
- Explain that misinformation is common, and even smart people fall for it.
- Offer to look up facts together so both parties feel involved.



# NEW YEAR'S EVE

Each year, drunk driving is involved in more than 135 traffic fatalities (on average) during the New Year's holiday, which represents about 40 percent of the total traffic fatalities during the holiday period (2011–2021). Whether you are hosting or attending a New Year's celebration, make a resolution to celebrate it responsibly and safely.

## QUICK TIPS

- Practice proper fireworks safety, and be aware of local and state fireworks laws.
- Do not let a person who has been drinking get behind the wheel of a vehicle. Take the person's keys and help arrange a safe ride home.
- Carry a cell phone charger to ensure your cell phone is available in case of an emergency.
- Report drunk drivers and suspicious individuals to law enforcement.

---

## NEW YEAR'S EVE SAFETY TIPS

### HOSTING A CELEBRATION

Hosting a New Year's party is a fun way to bring in the New Year with loved ones. Help keep your attendees safe during the celebration:

- Practice proper fireworks safety, and be aware of local and state fireworks laws.
- Avoid drunk driving by designating someone to collect car keys.
- Pop champagne bottle corks away from guests and at a 45-degree angle.
- Enforce a maximum number of alcoholic drinks people can consume.
- Provide partygoers the opportunity to sleep over in a guest bedroom or on couches.
- Do not let a person who has been drinking get behind the wheel of a vehicle. Take the person's keys and help arrange a safe ride home.

## ATTENDING A CELEBRATION

Attending a New Year's celebration can be fun, but also full of potential hazards. When attending or traveling, practice proper precautions:

- Attend the celebration with trusted friends or loved ones.
  - Choose a designated driver responsible for driving the group home from the celebration.
  - Carry a cell phone charger to ensure your cell phone is available in case of an emergency.
  - Consume food before drinking alcoholic beverages.
  - Monitor your alcohol intake, and do not allow yourself (or others who have been drinking) to drive.
  - Always wear a seat belt.
- Report drunk drivers and suspicious individuals to law enforcement.





# PET PREPAREDNESS

Disasters impact every household member, including pets. The Indiana State Board of Animal Health reports that about 5 percent of people do not evacuate during disasters because they cannot leave with their pets. Whether taking pets along during an evacuation or choosing to leave them at home, have a disaster kit tailored for pets to help keep everyone safe in an emergency.

## QUICK TIPS

- Create a disaster kit with pet supplies.
- If evacuating with a pet, do so early.
- If unable to evacuate with a pet, leave enough dry food and fresh water to last at least three days.

---

## PET PREPAREDNESS TIPS

### BEFORE A DISASTER

- Confirm potential evacuation locations that allow animals.
- Maintain reliable identification and current photos on each pet.
- Practice the evacuation plan with each pet for a better understanding of how they will react.
- Create a disaster kit with pet supplies.

### EVACUATING WITH A PET

During times of a disaster, it may or may not be possible to evacuate with a pet. If evacuating with a pet is possible, follow these steps to be prepared:

- If possible, evacuate pets early.
- Call ahead to make a reservation at the chosen evacuation spot.
- Keep areas clean and sterilized to prevent the potential spread of illness.
- Keep pets separated from unknown animals and people to prevent stress-related aggression.

## KEEPING PETS SAFE AT HOME

When evacuating with a pet is not possible, follow these steps to keep animals safer when they must stay behind:

- Create a buddy system and ask neighbors to check on the animals.
- Do not leave vitamin treats, which can be fatal if overeaten.
- In case of a lost pet, contact the area kennels, boarding shelters, humane shelters and veterinary hospitals.
- Leave animals in rooms without windows.
- Leave enough dry food and fresh water to last at least three days.
- Maintain reliable identification on each pet.
- Never leave animals outdoors where they are vulnerable to the weather and can escape.

## DISASTER KIT ITEMS

Family disaster kits should contain items for pets, or a kit should be made specifically for them. Here are a few items to include in either kit:

- Bedding
- Cat litter and litter pan
- Cleaning supplies for accidents (paper towels, disinfectant)
- Collar, leash and harness
- Current photos
- Dry food and water for at least three days
- Food and water bowls
- List of veterinarian clinic, veterinary hospitals and kennel phone numbers
- Medications, including flea/tick and heartworm preventatives
- Pet carrier
- Plastic bags for waste
- Vaccination records



# SCAMS

Scammers often take advantage of emergencies, confusion or fear, tricking people into giving away money, personal information or access to their accounts. Whether after a disaster, through phone calls or online, know the signs of a scam to protect yourself and your family.

## QUICK TIPS

- Never disclose personal or financial information unless you are sure of the identity of the person you are speaking with.
- Be cautious of anyone who pressures you to act immediately or pay with gift cards, wire transfers or cryptocurrency.
- Always verify the identity of a caller, door-to-door visitor or online seller before engaging further.
- Watch for spelling errors, urgent messages or unusual links in emails and texts.
- Report suspected scams to local law enforcement and the Federal Trade Commission at [reportfraud.ftc.gov](https://reportfraud.ftc.gov).

---

## SCAMS SAFETY TIPS

### SCAMS AFTER DISASTERS

Scammers often target communities recovering from hurricanes, tornadoes, floods or other disasters. They may impersonate government officials, contractors or charities.

#### *Common Scams*

- **Fake contractors:** Scammers may go door-to-door, offering quick repairs or tree removal services. They often demand upfront payment and never return.
- **FEMA impersonators:** Some scammers claim to represent FEMA or a local emergency agency and ask for Social Security numbers, bank accounts or payment for assistance.
- **Bogus charities:** Fraudulent organizations may solicit donations using names similar to those of legitimate nonprofits. They often ask for cash, gift cards or wire transfers.

- **Debris removal scams:** Scammers may offer to remove storm debris but disappear after receiving payment.
- **Rental or housing scams:** Some individuals list properties that are already occupied or non-existent and request deposits upfront.

### *Do's and Do Not's*

- Ask for identification from anyone claiming to be from a government agency.
- Verify the contractor's credentials and request references.
- Research a charity before donating at Give.org or CharityNavigator.org.
- Pay in full for services before work begins.
- Share personal or financial information over the phone or at the door.
- Assume a logo or badge makes someone legitimate.

## ONLINE SCAMS

Online scams can appear through email, websites, texts or social media. These scams may promise money, ask for login credentials or deliver malware through suspicious links.

### *Common Scams*

- **Phishing emails or texts:** These may appear to come from a trusted source but include links that steal your information or infect your device.
- **Online shopping scams:** Fraudulent websites or sellers may collect payment for goods that are never delivered.
- **Romance scams:** Scammers may build trust over several weeks or months before requesting money.
- **Tech support scams:** Pop-up messages or calls claim there is a virus on your device and ask for remote access or payment.
- **Job offer scams:** Offers that require upfront fees or ask for personal information before hiring are often fake.

### *Protect Yourself*

- Hover over links to see where they lead before clicking.
- Use strong, unique passwords and enable multi-factor authentication when available.
- Keep your device and antivirus software up to date.
- Avoid downloading attachments or software from unknown sources.
- Research any suspicious emails or websites before responding or providing information.

## SCAMS TARGETING SENIORS

Older adults may be more frequently targeted by scams that appear credible or emotionally manipulative. Education and vigilance are key to prevention.

### *Common Scams*

- **Grandparent scams:** A scammer pretends to be a grandchild in trouble, requesting urgent financial assistance.
- **Government impersonation:** Scammers pose as IRS, Social Security or Medicare officials requesting personal data or payment.
- **Lottery or prize scams:** Victims are told they won a prize but must pay fees to receive it.



- **Home repair scams:** Fake contractors may target older homeowners, offering unnecessary or overpriced services.
- **Health scams:** Scammers may offer fake medications, medical devices or insurance coverage.

### *Safety Recommendations*

- Discuss common scams with family and caregivers.
- Let unknown calls go to voicemail and never press numbers in automated messages.
- Do not rush to send money, even if a caller says it is an emergency.
- Keep personal documents in a secure place and shred sensitive paperwork.
- Designate a trusted family member to review financial or legal decisions if needed.

## IDENTITY THEFT

Identity theft occurs when someone uses another person's personal information to open accounts, make purchases or commit fraud. It can happen digitally or in person.

### *Online*

- Be cautious when entering personal information on websites. Ensure the URL starts with "https."
- Do not reuse passwords across different accounts.
- Avoid using public Wi-Fi to log into financial accounts or make purchases.
- Monitor accounts regularly for suspicious activity.
- Use secure, encrypted platforms for sharing sensitive information.

### *In Person*

- Do not carry your Social Security card unless needed.
- Keep checkbooks, passports and personal records in a locked location.
- Collect mail promptly and consider a locked mailbox.
- Shred old bank statements, credit card offers and medical records.
- Report lost or stolen ID or payment cards immediately to the issuing agency.

# SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms are an integral part of everyday life, helping people stay connected, informed and entertained. But with that connection comes the risk of scams, misinformation, cyberbullying and more. Practicing social media safety helps protect personal information, mental health and even physical well-being.

## QUICK TIPS

- Adjust privacy settings on all social media accounts to limit who can see your information.
- Never share personal information such as your home address, full birthdate or travel plans.
- Think before posting. Once something is online, it can be saved, shared or misused.
- Be cautious when interacting with people you do not know in real life.
- Report any harmful, threatening or suspicious behavior to the platform and local authorities as needed.

---

## SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY TIPS

### FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

Children and teens often use social media before fully understanding the risks. Parents and guardians play a crucial role in helping their children use platforms safely.

#### *Key Guidelines*

- Establish guidelines for which platforms are suitable and when they can be used.
- Keep accounts private, and monitor friend or follower lists.
- Talk regularly with your child about whom they interact with online.
- Encourage open conversations about what they see and experience on social media.
- Use parental controls or monitoring tools when appropriate.

#### *Do's and Do Not's*

- Teach children to avoid sharing location, school names or phone numbers.
- Follow or be friends with your child on their social media platforms if agreed upon.
- Model good online behavior through your own social media use.

- Do not assume children fully understand the risks of oversharing.
- Do not wait until there is a problem to start conversations about online safety.

## FOR TEENS

Social media is a powerful tool for staying connected. Still, it also comes with the pressure to share, compare and respond quickly. Staying smart online helps keep you and your friends safe.

### *Smart Practices*

- Keep accounts private and limit who can comment or message you.
- Avoid posting your exact location or daily routines.
- Do not share passwords, even with close friends and family.
- Think about how posts may affect your future in school, jobs or relationships.
- If something online makes you uncomfortable, talk to a trusted adult.

### *Dealing with Cyberbullying*

- Do not respond to hurtful comments or messages.
- Save screenshots and report bullying behavior to the platform.
- Talk to a parent, teacher or school counselor if it continues.
- Remember that you can block or mute accounts.

## FOR ADULTS

Social media can be an excellent tool for communication, networking and news. It can also expose users to misinformation, scams and personal data theft.

### *Safety Tips*

- Use strong, unique passwords and update them regularly.
- Be cautious when accepting friend requests or messages from individuals you do not know.
- Avoid sharing sensitive life updates, financial information or your full birthdate.
- Watch out for phishing links disguised as news stories, quizzes or sales.
- Stay informed by following trusted sources and verifying information before sharing.

### *Preventing Identity Theft*

- Limit what personal details are visible in your public profile.
- Turn off location tagging and avoid posting real-time travel updates.
- Be cautious when managing accounts linked to financial or health care platforms.
- Regularly review your account's login activity and security settings to ensure optimal protection.

## RECOGNIZING AND REPORTING THREATS OR HOAXES

Social media can disseminate real-time information quickly, but it can also amplify false or dangerous rumors or threats.

### *What To Watch For*

- Posts that claim breaking news without linking to credible sources
- Images or videos with no verifiable origin
- Messages that urge followers to "share before it is taken down"
- Threats of violence, harm or school incidents

- Accounts impersonating government officials or organizations

#### *What To Do*

- Do not share or forward suspicious content.
- Verify news from official sources such as state agencies, local law enforcement or media outlets.
- Report threats to the platform and local law enforcement if they appear credible and actionable.
- Take screenshots to preserve content in case it is deleted.

# ST. PATRICK'S DAY

The National Retail Federation reports about half of the U.S. population celebrates St. Patrick's Day each year. The popular holiday, which is famous for wearing green, decorating with shamrocks and drinking green beer, can be fun if everyone celebrates responsibly. Take precautions and learn some safety tips before the festivities begin.

## QUICK TIPS

- If someone is attempting to drive drunk, stop the person and call a family member, friend or service to take the person.
- Never ride in a car with a drunk driver.
- Call law enforcement immediately after seeing someone intoxicated driving.
- If hosting a party with alcohol available, offer guests the ability to stay the night.
- Learn the signs of alcohol poisoning, and call 911 for medical help if you notice the symptoms.

---

## ST. PATRICK'S DAY SAFETY TIPS

### ATTENDING A CELEBRATION

About one-fourth of Americans plan to celebrate St. Patrick's Day at a bar or restaurant, on average. Consider the following before going out this year, and remember it only takes one drink to impair driving.

- Before attending any festivities, choose a designated driver, who is responsible for driving a group of friends home.
- If someone is attempting to drive drunk, stop the person and call a family member, friend or service to take the person.
- Pace alcoholic drinks throughout the night, and consume a glass of water between every drink.
- Attend with a group of trusted friends who will have each other's best interests in mind.
- Never leave drinks alone or accept a drink from a stranger, to help prevent the chance of consuming a drugged beverage.
- Never ride in a car with a drunk driver.



- Consume a large meal before drinking any alcohol, and eat when drinking because it will help reduce hangover symptoms.
- Call law enforcement immediately after seeing someone intoxicated driving.

## HOSTING A CELEBRATION

Hosting a holiday gathering means finding ideas for guests to enjoy the time together, and also providing ways to keep them safe. Plan ahead with these tips.

- If alcohol will be had, collect car keys from guests when they enter the home, and have a designated person keep care of them to make sure no one who is intoxicated can drive away.
- Offer guests the ability to stay the night.
- Have a large variety of non-alcoholic refreshments available.
- Consider placing a limit on how many alcoholic drinks guests can consume.
- Keep an eye on children and pets to prevent them from ingesting alcohol.
- Remove any shamrocks, which are poisonous to animals, from within reach of pets.

## ALCOHOL POISONING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Alcohol poisoning can be deadly. Symptoms and warning signs of alcohol poisoning vary based on a person's sex, age, health, diet and how much alcohol was consumed. Keep an eye out for the following and call 911 immediately if someone who was drinking alcohol experiences these symptoms:

- Confusion
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Slow breathing (less than eight breaths a minute)
- Irregular breathing (gap of more than 10 seconds between breaths)
- Blue-tinged or pale skin
- Unconsciousness (and cannot be woken up)



# THANKSGIVING

Thanksgiving is a time for relaxation and spending time with loved ones, but the holiday can become dangerous in an instant. Thanksgiving Day ranks as the No. 1 day of the year when home cooking fires occur, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The National Safety Council estimates about 500 people die in car accidents during Thanksgiving weekend each year. Follow some basic tips to help keep the holiday fun and safe for everyone.

## QUICK TIPS

- Stay in the kitchen while cooking food on a stovetop, and stay at home while food is in the oven.
- Have a fully stocked emergency vehicle kit in case your car breaks down while traveling.
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher near the kitchen, and do not use water to put out a grease fire.

---

## THANKSGIVING SAFETY TIPS

### COOKING

Food is a major aspect of nearly every Thanksgiving celebration. Before the feast begins, keep the following cooking safety information in mind.

- Stay in the kitchen while cooking food on the stovetop, and stay at home while food is in the oven. Unattended cooking is the most common contributing factor in cooking fires and fire deaths (NFPA).
- Remove items from the stovetop that could catch fire, such as oven mitts, utensils, towels and food packages.
- Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the stove to avoid burns from the appliance or spilled food.
- Deep fryers should always be used outdoors at a safe distance from buildings, porches and any other flammable materials.
- Never leave a fryer unattended.

- Make sure that meat is completely thawed before being cooked in a fryer, or else a grease fire could occur.
- Keep an all-purpose fire extinguisher nearby and never use water to douse a grease fire.
- If a fire is too large to address safely, evacuate the home and call 911.

## TRAVELING

The holidays see an increase in travelers on their way to visit loved ones. With more people traveling, extra precaution should be practiced.

- Keep track of weather and road conditions through local radio, news channels or social media postings. Other resources include the Indiana county travel status map and the Indiana Department of Transportation's travel information page. The advisory map and an INDOT Mobile app are also available on Android and Apple devices.
- If traveling by car, have a mechanic check the vehicle before departing.
- If traveling with children, remind them to not speak to strangers and to stay with a responsible adult at all times.
- Have a fully stocked emergency vehicle kit in the event of a car breakdown.
- Immediately report anything that appears suspicious to law enforcement.
- Thanksgiving Eve is the deadliest time for alcohol-related fatal accidents. Never drink alcohol and drive because it impairs physical and mental faculties.

## PETS

For many, pets are important members of the household. Help keep the holiday enjoyable for them too.

- Pets should only have small, boneless portions of fully cooked turkey.
- If guests visit, consider restricting room access to prevent stress-induced aggression.
- Remind guests to not feed pets any table scraps. Too much food can lead to stomach problems.
- To discourage begging, feed pets at the same time the Thanksgiving meal is consumed.
- Remove trash and the turkey carcass immediately to prevent pets from eating bones or other harmful foods.



# WINTER HOLIDAY SAFETY

Before dashing through the snow and roasting chestnuts over a fire, review some safety tips. Practicing caution will help keep this winter holiday season merry.

## QUICK TIPS

- Water Christmas trees daily and keep them at least 3 feet away from heat sources.
- Use battery-powered candles instead of real candles.
- Avoid shopping on public Wi-Fi connections or public computers.
- Minimize the amount of time deliveries are left outside.
- Have a fully stocked emergency kit inside your vehicle.

---

## WINTER HOLIDAY SAFETY TIPS

### DECORATING SAFETY

For many, “decking the halls” is an essential part of making the winter holiday season festive, but many dangers can lurk behind the cheerful decorations. The National Fire Protection Association reports that one third of Christmas tree fires are caused by electrical problems and one in five are caused by placing the tree too close to a heat source. Holiday decorating does not have to be dangerous if a few safety tips are kept in mind.

#### *Christmas Tree Management*

The steps of safely maintaining a real or artificial Christmas tree are similar since both focus on fire safety. Review the following safety tips about both tree options before choosing one this holiday season:

- Artificial trees should be flame retardant and checked by a testing organization such as Underwriters Laboratories.
- Real trees should have green pine needles that do not fall off when touched.
- Add water to the stand daily to prevent a real tree from drying out and catching fire.
- Both artificial and real trees can catch fire, so they should be placed at least 3 feet away from any heat source.
- Christmas trees should have a sturdy stand to prevent them from falling over.

- Remove trees from the property when the needles begin falling, to prevent a home fire.
- Consider recycling real trees after Christmas to prevent them from entering a landfill.

### *Lighting Safety*

- Lights always need to be turned off before going to bed or leaving home.
- Check product instructions or descriptions for proper use. Some lights specify the safe locations for use.
- Buy lights that were reviewed by a testing organization such as Underwriters Laboratories.
- Replace strings of lights that have worn, broken cords and broken bulbs.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions on how many light strings can be connected.
- To prevent wind damage, outdoor lights should be securely fastened to trees, exterior wall siding and fences.
- If hanging outdoor lights, stay away from overhead power or feeder lines.

### *Decorations*

- Consider using an electronic kinara, advent wreath, menorah or other religious candleholder to lower the chances of a fire.
- If candles are used in decorations, place them on a flat surface to prevent tipping, and extinguish them before going to bed or leaving the home.
- Candles should never be used to decorate a tree because it could catch on fire.
- Households with children should avoid fragile and sharp decorations to prevent a potential injury.
- Keep poisonous plants such as poinsettias out of reach of pets and children, who may try to eat them.

## PERSONAL SAFETY

Cybercriminals, thieves and road hazards can become real-life Scrooges this time of the year. Take some time to review safety tips that can help keep the season festive.

### *Online Shopping*

Shopping online can be a great tool in finding the perfect holiday gifts. About 60 percent of consumers plan to shop online during the winter holiday season, according to the National Retail Federation. Review the following tips about staying safe online before clicking on the checkout button.

- Email advertising and spam traffic may increase during the holiday season. If the subject of an email from a known or unknown sender seems suspicious, delete the email without opening it.
- If an advertisement or other offer sounds too good to be true, it may be. Check it out through a reliable source.
- Keep security software updated on every electronic device.
- Avoid shopping on public Wi-Fi connections or public computers. It is hard to ensure they are secure.
- Use complex passwords to safeguard personal information. A combination of uppercase and lowercase letters, numbers and special characters offers the most protection.
- Avoid visiting unknown webpages because malicious software could be downloaded.
- When making online purchases with a credit or debit card, use a secure online escrow broker to provide payment.
- If available, consider using a virtual credit card service. The terms of use vary based on the service provider.
- Make sure to print or save a hard copy of every transaction receipt in the event there is confusion about payment.



### *Home Safety*

Jack Frost is not the only one tapping on the window. A 2022 C+R Research report found that 34 percent of Americans know someone who has had a package stolen during the year at least once. Safeguard against possible thefts by following these tips.

- Try not to leave multiple or large packages outside for long time periods. Stay home when a delivery is expected, or have a package delivered to a friend or family member who can receive it immediately.
- Consider installing a doorbell camera.
- Ask the delivery service to try to hide the package or hold it for pickup later.
- Do not leave presents near windows or doors where thieves can see them.
- When leaving the home, lock every door and window to make it more difficult for thieves to break in and commit a burglary.
- When away from home for an extended period, ask a trusted friend or neighbor to visit the house for some time every day. Also check with the local police department to see if officers can keep an eye on the house.
- Remember to ask for daily newspaper and mail delivery to be stopped if traveling for a long period of time.

### *Traveling*

Before going over the river and through the woods this holiday season, review some traveling safety tips.

- Keep track of weather and road conditions through local radio, news channels or social media postings. Other resources include the Indiana county travel status map and the Indiana Department of Transportation's travel information page. The advisory map and an INDOT Mobile app are also available on Android and Apple devices.
- If traveling by vehicle, have a mechanic complete a vehicle inspection before the planned departure.
- If traveling with children, remind them not to speak to strangers and to keep a responsible adult with them at all times.
- Pets should always be kept in their carriers or secured on a leash to prevent escape.
- Have a fully-stocked emergency vehicle kit.
- If something appears suspicious, immediately report it to law enforcement.
- Never drive after consuming any alcohol. Call a taxi, designate a sober driver or stay the night to prevent accidents.



# WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

The term “workplace violence” includes many behaviors, such as threats, harassment and intimidation, as well as physical violence and homicide. Overall, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), nearly 2 million American workers are victims of some form of workplace violence every year. Most incidents that employees and managers deal with are assaults, domestic violence, stalking, threats, harassment and physical or emotional abuse.

## QUICK TIPS

- Watch for the warning signs and quiet calls for help; take reasonable actions.
- Maintain a reasonable distance from the aggressor.
- Avoid physical retaliation unless it is the last resort for self-defense.
- Report violent incidents to the local police promptly.
- Alert supervisors to any concerns about safety or security, and report all incidents immediately in writing.

## WORKPLACE VIOLENCE SAFETY TIPS

### FOUR TYPES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- Type 1: Violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace but enter to commit robbery or another crime
- Type 2: Violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, students, inmates or others for whom an organization provides services
- Type 3: Violence against coworkers, supervisors or managers by a present or former employee
- Type 4: Violence committed in the workplace by someone who doesn’t work there but has a personal relationship with an employee — an abusive spouse or domestic partner

# WARNING SIGNS OF COWORKER VIOLENCE

The following behaviors could indicate a need for concern and further investigation:

- Exhibiting emotional instability or irrational behavior
- Undergoing profound personality changes
- Feeling victimized by supervisors or the entire organization
- Making threats or alluding to acts of workplace violence
- Exhibiting signs of extreme paranoia, depression or stress
- Displaying behavior inappropriate to the situation at hand
- Slamming doors, or banging or throwing equipment, tools
- Exhibiting signs of drug or alcohol abuse

## WARNING SIGN LEVELS AND SUGGESTED ACTIONS

### *Level One (Early Warning)*

The person is showing intimidating, disrespectful, uncooperative or verbally abusive behavior.

- Report concerns to a supervisor to seek help in assessing and responding to the situation.
- Document the behavior in question.

### *Level Two (Situational Escalation)*

The person argues with others, sees themselves as a victim, refuses to obey agency policies, sabotages or steals property, or verbalizes or writes threats to co-workers.

- If warranted, call 911 and secure personal safety and the safety of others.
- Document the observed behavior in question.

### *Level Three (Extreme Escalation)*

The person displays intense anger resulting in suicide threats, physical fights, destruction of property or the utilization of weapons to harm others.

- Call 911 immediately.

## FOR VICTIMS DURING INCIDENTS

- Never put personal safety at risk.
- Maintain a reasonable distance from the aggressor.
- Avoid any sudden movements or any seemingly threatening gestures, such as pointing.
- Avoid physical retaliation unless it is the last resort for self-defense.

## FOR EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS AFTER AN INCIDENT

### *Employees*

- Report violent incidents to the local police promptly.
- Alert supervisors to any concerns about safety or security, and report all incidents immediately in writing. Stay calm, providing short answers. Speak clearly and slowly.
- Take notes about each episode of violence: date, time, place, behavior (whether you were alone or isolated, humiliating remarks, injustice, abuse, etc.) and names of witnesses.

### *Employers*

- Discuss the circumstances of the incident with staff members.
- Set up measures to help the victim(s) take control and go back to work.
- Keep a record of all workplace violence incidents in the organization.
- Strengthen existing prevention measures after determining how and why the workplace violence occurred despite prevention measures.

## PREVENTING WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- Watch for the warning signs and quiet calls for help; take reasonable actions.
- Conduct background screenings for all new employees.
- Plan for workplace violence like any other threat.
- Work with experts to develop and implement policies and procedures for dealing with potentially dangerous employees, and develop and promote employee wellness programs.



# YOUTH HELMET SAFETY

Bicycling is a leading cause of head injury for children ages 14 and younger, leading to about 20,000 hospital emergency rooms visits a year in the United States. Many more are treated by family doctors or para-medical professionals in incidents that go unreported. In Indiana, about 9 out of 10 children who ride bicycles say they rarely or never wear a helmet, according to the Indiana Department of Health.

Helmets are designed to absorb the impact of crashes instead of the head and brain, so they should be worn whenever riding any type of equipment that moves you faster than your own feet, such as bicycles, scooters, skateboards and skates. In fact, studies show helmets can reduce the odds of severe head injuries in accidents by about 70 percent and fatal head injuries by 65 percent.

The Indiana Department of Homeland Security encourages all Hoosiers to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle. Use the helmet safety guide below to learn how to find a good helmet and wear it properly.

## QUICK TIPS

- Adults should set good examples for children and wear bicycle helmets too.
- Buy helmets that fit the individual properly.
- Make sure the child's helmet fits the head snugly now. Do not let the child use a helmet that they will "grow into."
- Replace helmets that have been involved in a crash or if the foam has cracked.
- Make sure children wear their helmets every time they ride.

---

## YOUTH HELMET SAFETY TIPS

### FACTS AND TIPS

- Crashes can happen anywhere. Many children do not wear helmets because they are not riding on the road, but serious injuries also occur away from vehicle traffic, and those injuries are most often head injuries. With this in mind, helmets should be worn regardless of where children ride.
- Helmets are the most effective safety device available to reduce head injury and death from bicycle crashes. Parents should make sure children wear a helmet every time they ride.



- Make sure helmets fit and children know how to put them on properly. Helmets should sit on top of the head in a level position and should not rock forward, backward or side to side. The helmet straps must always be buckled, but not too tightly.
- Parents wearing helmets make a big difference! About 86 percent of parents who say they always wear a helmet say their children do too, but only 38 percent of children wear their helmet when their parents never do. Set a good example and wear a helmet on every ride.
- Parents should check children's helmets regularly. Replace a helmet if it has been used in a crash or the foam has been cracked (even from dropping the helmet).

### *Did You Know?*

- Every two minutes, a child is treated in an emergency room for an unintentional bicycle-related incident.
- More children ages 5 to 14 are seen in emergency rooms for biking related-injuries than any other sport.
- Helmet use is the most effective way to reduce bicycle-related fatalities.
- Non-motorized scooters cause more injuries to kids than any other toy.
- Every \$12 spent on a bicycle helmet for a child generates \$580 in cost-saving benefits to society.

Sources: Safe Kids Worldwide, Safe Kids Indiana

## FIND THE RIGHT HELMET

Choosing a quality helmet can help reduce injury risk, but which helmet should a child use?

Not all helmets are the same. They are designed for different activities and may not protect the head in all situations. Bicycle helmets are made specifically for bicycling and are manufactured according to federal safety standards, whereas other types of helmets may only be made to voluntary safety standards. Since 1999, all bicycle helmets must meet the standards of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to provide protection against skull fractures and severe brain injuries. Check the applicable standards for bike and other types of helmets at the CPSC website.

Be aware that unsafe or counterfeit helmets that do not meet safety standards exist and are often sold online. CPSC-certified helmets should contain a sticker on the inside that includes information on its compliance, including the month and year of its manufacture. Find the requirements for instructions and labels that should come with all CPSC-certified helmets.

### *Sizing a Helmet*

Remember that helmets should be selected based on head size, not age! Follow the steps below to find the size of the helmet needed, and then see the table matching head size with helmet size.

- Using a soft measuring tape, place the tape above the eyebrows.
- Hold the tape in place while wrapping it around the head until the two sides of the tape meet.
- Write down the distance in inches. This is the head's circumference.
- Compare the measurement to the corresponding helmet size using the table below.

Head Circumference (inches)	Bicycle Helmet Size (approximate)
Up to 18 ½ inches	X-Small (toddler)
18 1/2 inches to 20 7/8 inches	Small
20 7/8 inches to 22 ¾ inches	Medium
22 3/4 inches to 24 1/8 inches	Large
More than 24 1/8 inches	X-Large

Note: Manufacturers may have different sizing and may combine sizes (e.g., Small/Medium, Medium/Large). Source: Helmets.org

### *Buying a Helmet*

When buying a helmet, let children pick out their own; they will be more likely to wear them for every ride. If buying in the store, be sure to have children try on the helmets according to the steps in the Fit a Helmet Properly section below.

The Indiana University School of Medicine has a Safety Store that offers high-quality, low-cost child safety products and free injury prevention education. Located at the Riley Hospital for Children in Indianapolis, the store sells bicycle helmets, which can also be ordered online.

## FIT A HELMET PROPERLY

In general, helmets should sit snugly and comfortably on the head all the way around, sitting level and stable enough to stay in place during crashes. There should be no spaces between the head and the helmet foam. Buy a helmet that fits the child's head now, not a helmet to “grow into.” Follow the steps below to wear a helmet properly.

### *Steps to Fit a Helmet*

- Make sure the bottom of the helmet is only one or two finger widths above the eyebrows. The helmet should be level and low on the forehead (not tilted), and the back of the helmet should not touch the top of the neck.
- On each side of the helmet, adjust the side straps so the front and back straps form a V shape underneath and slightly in front of the ears. Lock the slider if present. You may find it easier to do this with the helmet off.
- Adjust the chin strap buckle so it is centered below the chin. You may find it easier to do this with the helmet off.
- With the helmet on, make sure the helmet is still low and level, and then buckle the chin strap. Tighten the strap until it is snug enough that only one or two fingers can fit between the chin and the strap.
- Have the child open his or her mouth like yawning. The helmet should pull down on the head. If it does not, then tighten the chin strap.
- Check that the helmet does not rock back and forth or side to side more than an inch. If it does, then shorten the straps and retighten the chin strap and test again.
- Have the child look up and side to side. The child should be able to see the front of the helmet when looking up, and the helmet should not obstruct any vision. If the helmet cannot be seen, then it is not low enough. If it obstructs vision, then the straps should be readjusted.

Ask the child how the helmet feels. It should feel snug but not too tight. If the helmet has removable padding or a universal fit ring, adjust as necessary.