

A Safer Naper: Seasonal Safety

June 2024

Summertime is upon us, making this a perfect time to share some seasonal safety tips to make our city “A Safer Naper” for everyone out enjoying the warmer weather and fun family activities.

SECTION 1 – Keep Kids Safe in Crowds

A parent's biggest fear is losing a little one, and keeping track of them while at a crowded venue such as Last Fling or the zoo can definitely be a challenge. Before you head out on your next family outing, set up family guidelines and what-if plans. The amount of freedom you give your children will be influenced by their age and maturity.

Here are a few tips for keeping your family together in a crowd.

Dress in bright colors: Neon green, bright orange or safety yellow are colors that get noticed. Adding other identifiable accessories such as a fun watch, reflective strips or bright hair accessories will help you and/or law enforcement to quickly scan a crowd for your child.

Take a family picture: Before heading out for the day take a family photo. In a panic, some people cannot remember correctly what everyone is wearing that day. A photo of what your family members are wearing that day can be shared with law enforcement, security, or event staff to aid in locating your child.

Child identification: Have your child wear a lanyard under their shirt with important information like their name, your name and immediate contact information. Or put this information on a piece of paper and put it into their pocket. You can even get temporary tattoos that you can write their name and your cell phone number on.

Coach kids on an action plan if they get separated: Ask your children, “*What will you do if you become separated from me?*” Teach your kids to stay where they are and yell out their parent’s name. Ask them, “*Who is the safe adult to ask for help?*” In the ideal world, this would be a police officer, firefighter, security guard or event employee. In a panic, however, have them look for another mom with children. Have you ever met a mom who wouldn’t help a child?

Check the map first: Start the day off by locating the park’s information centers in advance so you can point them out to your children or get to them quickly in case of an emergency. Also, look for the first aid and baby-care centers.

Be stroller-savvy: Do something to distinguish your stroller from all the others, like tying a balloon or a colorful ribbon on it. This is especially important if you rent one at the venue, it will be identical to hundreds of others.

Have a meeting location and time: Besides the challenge of keeping an eye on the little ones, pre-teens and teens are another challenge. Have the older children check in with you throughout the day at a prearranged meeting location and time.

Remember it only takes a moment for a child to become separated from you. If your child does become lost, follow these tips:

- Try to remain calm.
- Do a quick search where you last saw your child. Scan the area for anything that might have attracted their attention.
- Call out their name and listen for him/her calling yours.
- Inform the closest employee. Stores often have set procedures for cases of lost children.
- Call 9-1-1 if you still can't locate your child and be prepared to show responding officers a recent picture of your child and describe what he/she is wearing that day.

Section 2: Prevent Bicycle Theft

In 2023, 38 bicycles were reported stolen to the Naperville Police Department. Protect your property from theft by purchasing a good lock that secures both the frame and wheels to a bike rack or other immovable object. More importantly, remember to use the lock at every stop, even if it's a short one. Here are a few other tips to help protect your bicycle:

- Invest in a good locking system that will secure both wheels and the frame.
- Each bicycle should be locked to an immovable object such as a lamp pole or bicycle rack in an open and well-lit area.
- Don't lock your bicycle to a small tree, aluminum or wooden post or chain link fence. These can be cut or broken.
- Don't lock a bicycle to itself (front wheel locked to the frame). A thief can simply carry it away.
- A recommended bicycle locking device consists of a three-foot length of 1/4-inch hardened chain together with a keyed type of padlock of high quality having at least a 7/16-inch hardened alloy steel shackle. The word "hardened" should be stamped on the shackle.
- Although there is no bicycle lock or chain that cannot be defeated, the "U" shape locks have proven to be effective.

In case of loss or theft, it's helpful to keep the make, model, and serial numbers of all your family's bicycles at a safe place at home.

The Naperville Police Evidence and Property Unit took in 371 found pieces of property (including 55 bicycles and many keys, purses, wallets, and other items) over the last three years. Of those 371 items, only 62 of the items were returned to their owners. Knowing your serial number can go a long way to help reuniting you with your property. The items we cannot return are either destroyed or auctioned through www.propertyroom.com. For a current list of found items, visit www.naperville.il.us/NPDFoundProperty.



SECTION 3: Prevent Child Heatstroke Deaths in Hot Cars

According to the CDC, cars can heat up to dangerous temperatures very quickly, even when it feels cool outside. Leaving a window open is not enough. Temperatures inside the car can rise almost 20 degrees Fahrenheit within the first 10 minutes, even with a window cracked open. A child's body temperature rises three to five times faster than an adult's, making children left in vehicles very vulnerable to heatstroke.

Everyone can play a part in preventing these tragedies:

- Keep vehicles locked at all times when parked to prevent a child climbing in and becoming trapped.
- Teach children that vehicles are not a place to play.
- Never leave a child in a vehicle when running errands, not even for a minute.
- Rolling down a window does little to keep a vehicle cool, and heatstroke deaths have occurred even in vehicles parked in shaded areas.
- Bystanders can also play an important role in saving a life – if you see a child alone in a vehicle, call 911 and get help immediately.

SECTION 4: Summertime Animal Safety

Keep safety in mind as you venture out with your pets this summer, too. Always obey leash laws and consider microchipping your pet so they can be quickly returned to you should they wander off. Naperville Animal Control microchips dogs and cats for \$15 per animal. Call (630) 420-6178 for an appointment.

Also, remember that leaving pets in hot, parked vehicles can be fatal, too. Every year, hundreds of pets die from heat exhaustion because they are left in parked vehicles, which can quickly reach dangerous temperatures, even with the windows cracked.

Finally, Naperville Police Department's Animal Control Unit handles an average of 60 dog bite reports per year. Any dog can bite, big or small, male or female, young or old. Even the cuddliest, fuzziest, sweetest pet can bite if provoked. Remember, it is not a dog's breed that determines whether it will bite, but rather the dog's individual history and behavior. Fortunately, there are several things we can do to prevent dog bites.

Bite Prevention Tips for Pet Owners

- **Carefully select your pet.** Before and after selection, your veterinarian is your best source for information about behavior, health and suitability.
- **Socialize your pet** so he/she feels at ease around people and other animals. Don't put your dog in a position where he/she feels threatened or teased.
- **Take extra care with young children.** Always supervise children's interaction with dogs, including your own dogs.
- **Train your dog.** This builds a bond of obedience and trust between pets and people. Use a leash in public to ensure you are able to control your dog.
- **Keep your dog healthy.** How your dog feels directly affects how it behaves, so have your dog vaccinated against rabies and preventable infectious diseases and address any injuries or painful conditions like arthritis.
- **Be a responsible pet owner.** Obey leash laws. If you have a fenced yard, make sure the gates are secure. Walk and exercise your dog regularly to keep it healthy and provide mental stimulation.
- **Be alert.** Recognize when your dog is stressed, uncomfortable, or showing signs of aggression, and be prepared to prevent escalation of the situation.

Bite Prevention Tips for You and Your Family

- Never leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Be alert for potentially dangerous situations and take measures to prevent or stop them from escalating.
- Teach children—including toddlers—to be careful around and respectful of pets.
- Teach children not to approach strange dogs or try to pet dogs by reaching through fences.
- Teach your children to ask permission from the dog's owner before petting any dog.
- Don't run past a dog. Dogs naturally love to chase and catch things.
- Never disturb a dog that's caring for puppies, sleeping, or eating.
- Never reach through or over a fence to pet a dog. Dogs can be protective of their territory and may interpret your action as a threat.
- If a dog approaches to sniff you, stay still. In most cases, the dog will go away when it determines you are not a threat.
- If you are threatened by a dog, remain calm. Don't scream or yell. If you say anything, speak calmly and firmly. Avoid eye contact. Try to stay still until the dog leaves, or back away slowly until the dog is out of sight. Don't turn and run.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your head and neck. Protect your face.

Remember, we can't predict whether a dog will bite or not based on its size and breed. Always focus on the behavior of the animal and ALWAYS ask the owner's permission before you attempt to pet a dog you don't know.

The Naperville Police Department Animal Control Unit has three Animal Control Officers and one Animal Control Supervisor. In 2023, this unit handled 7,386 calls for service ranging from dangerous animals and wellbeing checks to neighborhood complaints and stray animals.