

LET'S TALK



"A PARTNERSHIP OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS"

800-560-5060 X5340
or
858-569-5340

SCHOOL SAFETY

LOSS CONTROL

Vol. 11, No. 8

February 2006

STUDENT ACCIDENT REPORTS (SAR)

From time to time it is necessary to revisit issues that affect all of our members, and recently several districts have asked what to do when a parent or guardian requests a copy of a Student Accident Report.

Since the SAR is a confidential document, districts are **not** obligated to release it to **anyone** outside the district. There are three areas that serve to protect confidentiality:

1. The report is an internal work product of the district/JPA.

2. The report is prepared in anticipation of litigation, i.e., it is an internal investigation.

3. No injury diagnosis is given; it is neither a medical report nor a medical record.



Therefore, our position is that reports not be released to anyone outside the district.

As you can expect, this will not be a popular policy with some parents. If individuals persist in demanding a copy of a report, refer them to Diane Crosier, Senior Director of the JPA, at 858-569-5320.

E-Waste

As of February 9, 2006, it will be illegal to send electronic waste-e-waste-to California landfills. Instead, batteries and consumer electronics, among others, will have to go to a recycler or hazardous waste collection center.

Similar regulations have banned TV sets and computer monitors from state landfills since 2001. Among the products covered by the new rules are:

- ★ Consumer batteries such as "button" batteries, size AA, AAA, C and D cells.
- ★ Electronic items including VCRs, cell phones, radios and microwave ovens.
- ★ Novelty items such as greeting cards that play music when opened and sneakers with flashing lights in their soles.

Check with your local authorities or the trash service provider to see if there is a recycling program for "universal waste." Also check with retailers as they may set up collection points. You can obtain additional information from the California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) on their website www.dtsc.ca.gov.

Driven to Distraction

Several recent studies have shown that cell phone use while driving leads to a sharply increased risk of accident. One study found that drivers using cell phones had braking reaction time 3 times longer than drivers under the influence of alcohol. Also, drivers on cell phones are 4 times more likely to have an accident than drivers not using cell phones.

And there is no statistically-significant difference between the accident rate involving hands-on cell phones and hands-free cell phones. This indicates that the primary problem is not the physical distraction, it's the mental distraction and lack of focus on the task at hand.



HAZARDOUS HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

You can reduce your use of hazardous household products by choosing safer, less-toxic alternatives. Avoid products with hazardous ingredients, or handle them with extreme care. For instance, many toxic ingredients in paint thinners and drain cleaners can contaminate water sources.

- * Use only enough of the product to get the job done.
- * Never dump hazardous products down drains, toilets, or near flowing water, ponds or lakes.
- * Do not dump them on the ground.
- * Use natural and/or nontoxic household products whenever possible.

Here are a few examples:

- * Instead of air freshener, use a small dish of vinegar or lemon juice set out in a warm area.
- * Instead of chlorine scouring powder, use baking soda.
- * Instead of glass cleaner, use 2 tablespoons of vinegar to 1 quart of water.

For more information on minimizing hazardous products, visit the Natural Resource Conservation Service at www.usda.gov.

Wacky Warning Labels

The Wacky Warning Label Contest, now in its ninth year, is conducted by Michigan Lawsuit Abuse Watch (M-LAW) as part of its campaign to reveal how lawsuits, and concern about lawsuits, have resulted in warnings on products.

Here are this year's winning labels:

- ☛ **First Place**-A heat gun and paint remover that produces temperatures of 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit warns: "Do not use this tool as a hair dryer."
- ☛ **Second place**-Went to a label on a kitchen knife that warns: "Never try to catch a falling knife."
- ☛ **Third place**-Won by the following warning on a cocktail napkin with a map of the waterways around Hilton Head, South Carolina printed on it: "Not to be used for navigation."
- ☛ **Honorable mention I**-A warning on a bottle of dried bobcat urine used to keep pests away from garden plants: "Not for human consumption."
- ☛ **Honorable mention II**-For this warning on a baking pan: "Ovenware will get hot when used in oven."

According to M-LAW, warning labels are a sign of our lawsuit-plagued times. An unpredictable legal system in which many judges allow anyone to file a lawsuit on almost any theory has created a need for product makers to plaster wacky warnings on everything. When judges see it as their job to dismiss cases that are rooted in frivolous theories, we'll see fewer wacky labels and more fairness in the courts.

For more on wacky warnings, visit www.wackywarnings.com.