

STURBRIDGE POLICE - HINTS FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Page 1 of 3

A Special Message for Parents and Child Caregivers

With the hints of better weather and summer fast approaching, the Sturbridge Police Department wants to help parents keep their kids safe, police in Sturbridge are announcing an expansion of their safe kids programs. The Sturbridge Police have a variety of programs to help teach children about personal safety, our safe kids program includes measures such as:

- Stranger Danger Story Hours, where children are read age appropriate books on a variety of subjects including strangers, being home alone, personal safety and a selection of age appropriate videos are shown.
- RAD Kids, a personal empowerment program consisting of over 15 hours of classroom instruction, demonstration and participation designed to increase personal protective measures in youth on a variety of topics.
- Law Enforcement Education Partnerships with our elementary school on topics such as drug awareness, anti bullying efforts, positive self esteem improvement.
- Safe Schools, a critical incident response plan to designed to assist first responders when dealing with crisis incidents at our schools.
- Perfect Passenger Program, Sturbridge Police have sponsored efforts by our Elementary Health Educator and the Town Buses to decrease bullying issues on School Buses while making positive role models of those who display positive behaviors on the busing system.
- Child Passenger safety, Infant/toddler car seat inspections, installations and seat replacements.
- Cops and Kids Nights, Friday nights throughout the summer, a safe place for families and youth that is alcohol and drug free. Food, fun, and DJ music for entertainment

Programs may be modified to meet the request of any daycare, parent group, or individual, wanting police to instruct on any of the above programs to a target audience.

Sturbridge Police want to offer to parents a simple tool to help locate and keep children safe, police have purchased a limited supply of whistles on wrist bands to distribute to parents. Children may wear these whistles when they are playing outside, hiking, while at the beach, at a park, or any situation where parents may lose sight of their child.

Last year, in New England we were saddened by the loss of a small child who while on vacation hiking in New Hampshire with family wandered off becoming lost in the woods and ultimately succumbing to the elements. Many more such stories occur each year. We hope that this small effort may be helpful in locating a lost child or in preventing the abduction of another. Parents after receiving their free whistle should instruct their children on out and about safety and when

STURBRIDGE POLICE - HINTS FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Page 2 of 3

such whistles should be used. To that effort we have compiled the following to assist parents and care givers:

Vanishing Acts

Teaching Your Kids What to Do if Lost

One minute your children are next to you, then you look away for a second and they're gone.

It could be at the mall, an amusement park or the beach. But wherever it is, the next few minutes will seem like the longest of your life.

"That's every parent's nightmare," says Sgt. Alan Curboy. "I think the first thing I would do would be to try to contact the authorities, the police, security, whoever is in charge. Then I would start searching frantically."

Experts say the first thing to do is to take a deep breath, then act fast, because your child probably did not get very far. Retrace your steps, and don't be afraid to break some rules. For example, a mother with a missing child can look in the employees' only area of a store or check out a men's room.

Freeze Right There

As for your children, teach them to freeze right where they are when they get lost, and that they can be assured that mom or dad will be looking for them.

One idea is to give your family whistles that you can hear above the noise of a crowded park. Remember to teach your kids that if they are lost in the woods to "hug a tree" if they stay in one place searchers will locate them more easily, if a child wanders about in the woods he/she may go into an area where searchers have already looked for them and thus increase the time they will be missed.

Feel free to yell your child's name as loudly as you want, and while you continue searching, have another adult contact security if you are in a public place.

It is easy to lose your child in the mall, where the displays often distract them, just as they distract adults.

Don't waste time looking around at your eye-level. Instead, get down low where you're more likely to spot your child's legs and feet, perhaps under a clothing rack.

Note Your Child's Clothing

Before you head to the mall, make a mental note of what your child is wearing, and make it something colorful. If she is too young to know her address and phone number, tuck a piece of paper with that information into her shoe or pocket.

Again, do not be polite. Yell your child's name, and if he or she is not found in a few minutes, insist that management make an announcement and that mall or store security monitors all exits.

When your child is near the water at a lake or the beach, remember that it takes only a few minutes for a child to drown.

STURBRIDGE POLICE - HINTS FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

Page 3 of 3

Notify a lifeguard and make sure that he radios his superiors so that all the lifeguards are along the water and on the lookout. And remember to get loud, Sgt. Curboy says don't be afraid to shout loud when your trying to find your child.

Stay Away from Water

Your child should be told repeatedly that there is a rule that they should never go near the water without an adult.

Show your child where your beach blanket is relative to a clear landmark, a numbered lifeguard stand or a flagpole. Or tie a balloon to your chair to make it easier for your child to spot.

Remember for every stranger that might harm your child, there are millions who won't. Don't over sensitize your kids to fear all Strangers, some strangers are good; the police, firemen, etc. Teach your child to recognize "low-risk" adults, like women with children, cashiers and vendors. Also make sure your children know that they can seek help from people at information booths and lifeguards.

Your Child Is Lost

Children under 3 are too young to remember what to do if they get lost, so always keep them within touching distance when you are out in public.

Here are some other tips from the Sturbridge Police.

- Keep on hand a recent photograph of your child with height and weight information on the back.
- Practice a separation plan with your child using action figures or stuffed animals at home.
- Beginning at age 3, teach children their name, phone number and parent's name.
- Show your child how to dial 911 from a public phone.
- Avoid putting your child in clothes and jewelry with their name on them. A stranger can call that child by their name, and take them away.
- Teach your child that if someone grabs him or her, they should yell, "You're not my dad!" or "Stranger! Stranger!" And if someone tries to move them from their spot, teach them to say, "No, I'm supposed to stay here."