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No “Break” from Safety

Students are famous for it during the spring and many families have long standing traditions of it during the summer. Everyone enjoys a break! However, this common thread is a pastime where many partakers may tend to err a little too lightly on the side of caution. No trip regardless of location or amount of group members is ever safe-proof. Usual planning and trip tasks consisting of destination, transportation, lodging, dates, and shopping concerns are ever complete without the element of safety logged into the list of “need to do’s” as well.

Countless youth trips and family vacations have encountered peril and mishap while numerous others have resulted in tragedies. Of the most common causes are those relating to predators, transportation accidents as well as weather and activity preparedness issues. No one wants to even fathom an expectant happy occasion ending with a tragedy of any form; thus, it is pertinent for parents to impart rules of thumb to their children regarding travels on (un-chaperoned or chaperoned) youth trips as well as establish some precautionary guidelines for their family trip time. Focus and repetition regarding this issue can prove to be an integral part of prevention. Many families may establish family sit-downs to review things to be watchful for or prepared for before each trip while others choose to elect to give out-the-door reminders upon each child’s trip. Preparation not paranoia can be a powerful and effective tool in reduction of many of the dangers associated with travel.

Spending a little time to access the safety concerns that are signature to specific trips is key; however, the following are some general traveling safety tips to be considered as you begin your own list:

- Try to limit cash carried on you to that needed for the day and one credit card whenever possible (maybe consider traveler checks).
- Research on internet or call ahead to resolve many, if not all, hotel related concerns regarding room and hotel location or even issues maybe deemed small as in room key inquiries (standard keys, which should accompany deadbolt door/peep holes versus electronic ones that are reprogrammed upon each new occupant) and similar security issues. No question or issue may ever be too small when it comes to peace of mind.
- Be aware of passersby when out as well as your surroundings always.
- Bring appropriate gear and protective wear to suit the weather and activities you plan to engage in.

- Remember seat belt usage for all passengers including proper seating/restraints for infants and small children.
- Be mindful that predators are looking for those who look like tourists: Research your destination. Utilize “buddy system.”
Be watchful of scam artists.
- Carry updated pictures of children/family members. Badges can be created that include appropriate information for helping to reunite children with parents in case of becoming lost or similar case.
- Always have emergency plans of actions.

Many possible other specific tips can be added to personalize your particular family list. So as you prepare to depart for the next trip, for family’s sake, don’t let your rules of safety depart from you!

For more information on this or related topics, contact Synithia Williams, Regional Extension Agent in Family and Child Development for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at (205) 338- 9416 or email at willisl@aces.edu.

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