

Child death rate declines

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of children dying in car wrecks, bike crashes and other accidents has fallen 26 percent in the past decade, with the increased use of seat belts and bike helmets getting a lot of the credit.

Injury rates for sports-related activities such as basketball, football and in-line skating are up, the National Safe Kids Campaign reported as it marked its 10th anniversary.

"We know that prevention works," said Dr. C. Everett Koop, the former surgeon general and current chairman of the campaign. "We can make our world a safer place for future generations to grow up unharmed by the dangers that surround us."

The report coincided with the appearance on Capitol Hill of 21 children who have been designated "safety stars." One, 13-year-old Drew Bartlett of Valley Falls, Kan., took himself and his sister out of their home when he heard a basement smoke alarm. Drew also called 911, although the fire eventually burned down the house.

In 1987, the overall death rate from accidental injuries was 15.56 per 100,000 children 14 and under. By 1995, that figure had fallen to 11.45 per 100,000, a decrease of 26.4 percent, the campaign reported. It based its study on data from the National Center for Health Statistics, the Consumer Product Safety Council, the Transportation

Department and other government and private groups.

Despite the overall decline, accidents remain the No. 1 threat to children, killing at four times the rate of either cancer, birth defects or homicide. In 1995, accidents claimed 6,600 children ages 14 and under. Motor vehicle deaths account for the greatest accidental loss of life, killing about 1,800 children a year and injuring 290,000.

In 1987, the death rate for motor vehicle occupants 14 and under was 3.37 per 100,000. By 1995, it had fallen to 3.06 per 100,000, a drop of 9.06 percent. Deaths from bicycle accidents showed the greatest decline in the study, falling from 0.75 per 100,000 to 0.44 per 100,000 — a drop of 41 percent.

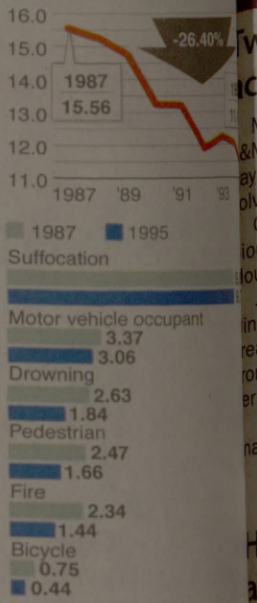
Safe Kids said seat belts and bicycle helmets accounted for most of the saved lives. In New Jersey, for example, 41 children ages 13 and younger died in bicycle accidents between 1987 and 1991. The state passed a bicycle helmet law in 1992 and over the next three years, a total of 16 children were killed in bicycle crashes. Fourteen states now have mandatory bicycle helmet laws for children.

The study also found a sharp increase in sports-related injuries. Analysts attributed the growth to the number of children, particularly girls, playing sports.

Childhood death

Increased use of seat belts, bike helmets and other safety measures has contributed to a decrease in the number of childhood deaths.

A look at unintentional injury-related deaths from 1987 to 1995 (per 100,000 children 14 and under)



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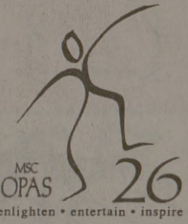
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Judge posts rulings on Web page

CONROE (AP) — Justice can now be found online, thanks to state District Judge Mike Mayes.

Mayes has constructed his own Internet page and is now operating it daily in his 410th District Court in Conroe. The site includes his latest rulings and allows lawyers to e-mail their requests for court appearances to the judge's court coordinator.

"It just speeds up things, and it helps me better control my docket," Mayes said.

The judge began tinkering with the idea of setting up a Web page before he took the bench in January 1997. Working with the county data processing department and the county judge's office, Mayes was able to get the project up and running.

Now, instead of attorneys making repeated phone calls to the court to find out if Mayes has ruled on a certain matter or what that ruling is, they can simply log

onto the Montgomery County, Texas, page on the Internet, click onto the courts page and zero in on the 410th District Court.

With a mere click, the attorneys will find the judge's page and can easily retrieve the information they seek. He is the only judge of the district that has an individual Web site.

"The goal of the Web site is to make our court user-friendly, not just for attorneys, but for the public and for our jurors," Mayes said.

The page includes an introduction of Mayes from his coordinator and bailiff to his court reporter, and detailed maps directing a party to Mayes' court. And as soon as Mayes rules on a motion of motions from discovery to summary judgment, placed on the page under the style and cause number so that anyone can see almost instantly how the

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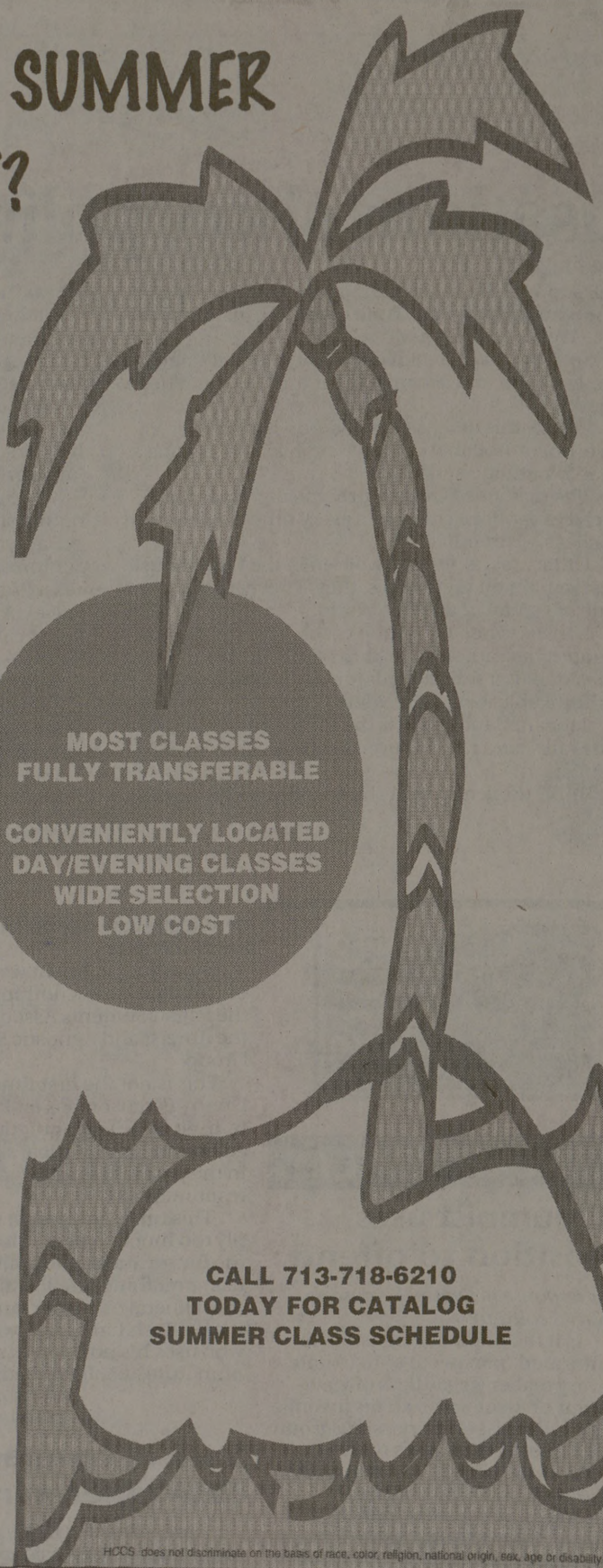
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