

SAFETY EDUCATION

By

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Guest Editor

The importance of safety education cannot be emphasized too strongly, since accidents have become one of the leading causes of death in Kansas and in the nation.

Safety experts divide the means for accident prevention into the three E's -- Engineering, Enforcement and Education. Of these, in my opinion, Education is the most important. Engineering may be employed to eliminate all the physical hazards of the highway, and, although the removal of natural hazards will reduce accidents, there will always be injuries and deaths due to human carelessness, so long as motorists persist in dangerous speed, in passing cars on hills and curves, and other foolhardy driving practices. Enforcement of traffic laws, designed to protect us from our own folly, will tend to reduce accidents -- but, it is impossible to provide sufficient police officers to watch us all, all the time, on the highways. As for passing and enforcing laws for home safety -- that, obviously, is impossible; and it is in our homes... that the majority of fatal accidents occur. It is apparent, then, that we must depend mainly upon education, as a means of accident prevention.

The logical and most fertile field for safety education is in our schools. The ancient adage, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks", applies very well to the education of adults in accident prevention. We are creatures of habit -- good or bad. A few adults will be alert enough to correct careless habits in driving, walking and other activities of everyday life. The majority of adults, however, will go on doing the same old careless things which invite disaster. Then, when the tragedy occurs, many friends of the victim, instead of learning a lesson by his example may say, "Well, that is sad, but accidents will happen," and perhaps sustain a similar injury from the same cause.

If we would obtain good results, we must concentrate our efforts in the teaching of safety in our schools. Children learn readily, they are amenable to dis-

cipline, they are forming their habits, they are interested in knowing "why" certain things must be done in a certain way, and are convinced by a reasonable explanation.

If children were taught automobile driving in schools, and restrained from driving cars until they had passed their school courses, regardless of age, we should have many less automobile deaths and injuries in this age group. Parents, unfortunately, are very negligent in giving their sons and daughters proper instruction in safe driving. Parents also fail to make the privilege of driving the family car dependent upon safe driving at all times. Fathers and mothers, instead of upholding the law enforcement agencies, when they are trying to inflict penalties for reckless driving, will usually try to have driving licenses restored to their children, or will try to block the enforcement of some other punishment for dangerously careless driving.

It is evident that we must teach home safety in our schools, in order to reduce this type of accidental injuries. Children can be taught the hazards ordinarily found in homes, and they will search their own homes for these hazards, with the result that many of them will be removed. By such simple methods as this, many painful and fatal injuries will be prevented. The younger generation, who form safe habits of living, will teach their children safety, not only by precept, but by example -- and it is at such a future time only, that we may look forward to a drastic reduction in accidental deaths.

Industry has lighted the way in accident prevention. Every large organization has its safety engineer, who is responsible, not only for the elimination of physical hazards, but in seeing that employes abide by certain safety rules. In farming, however, where no safety supervision is possible, we have more accidental deaths than in any other form of occupation. Teaching safety in the rural schools would undoubtedly