



## ***MONROE FIRE DISTRICT #3***

*163 Village Court • Monroe, WA 98272*

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### **NEWS RELEASE**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Poison Related Deaths Now Exceed Automobile Accident Fatalities in Washington State**

Monroe, WA—Last year, according to the Washington Poison Center, poison related deaths surpassed those from automobile accidents. As we observe National Poison Prevention Week, March 15<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup>, we are reminded of the poisoning dangers that surround us and our children every day. More than 23,000 unintentional poisoning deaths occurred in the United States in 2005 with that number rising every year. In 2006, poison control centers reported about 2.4 million incidents where people were exposed to poison. Approximately 85% of these exposures were unintentional with more than 92% occurring in the home. Most poisonings are due to drugs.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, just over half the poison exposures reported to poison control centers affect children younger than six years; exposures in this group commonly involve cosmetics and personal care products, cleaning substances, pain relievers, topical medications, foreign bodies, cough and cold preparations, and plants. Adult exposures often include pain relievers, sedatives, or cleaning substances.

Safety Tips to Prevent Unintentional Poisoning from Safe Kids USA:

- Store medications locked out of children's sight and reach.
- Don't leave medicine in your purse or an unlocked kitchen or bathroom cabinet. Don't put it on a kitchen or bedside table.
- Be aware of medications that may be in your handbag. Store handbags out of the reach of young children.
- Read labels to find out what can be poisonous. Keep those things separate from toothpaste, soap and other things you use every day.
- Never leave medicines or potentially poisonous household products unattended while you are using them.
- Never leave out loose pills.

- Buy child-resistant packages when available. Keep products in their original packages to avoid confusion.
- Be safe when taking or administering medication.
- Always read labels, follow directions and give medicines to children based on their weights and ages. Only use the dispensers packaged with children's medications.
- Avoid confusion by keeping all medicines and potentially poisonous household products in their original packages.
- Don't take medicine or vitamins in front of kids, and don't call them .candy.
- Don't involve children as helpers with your medication. They should not remind you to take medicine or bring you water, for example.
- Tell grandparents and friends about avoiding medication poisoning when your family visits their homes.
- Keep the toll-free nationwide poison control center number **(1-800-222-1222)** and local emergency numbers near every telephone. If you suspect poisoning and a child is choking, collapses, can't breathe, or is having a seizure, call 911. Otherwise, take the product to the phone and call the poison control hotline. The Washington Poison Center is staffed by medical professionals including pharmacists, nurses, and poison experts.
- Poison control centers offer fast, free, confidential help in English and Spanish. Most poisonings are resolved over the phone. The number works from anywhere in the United States 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Follow the operator's instructions.
- Don't make the child vomit or give him anything unless directed.
- Keep activated charcoal on hand to be used only on the advice of a poison control center or a physician. Ipecac syrup should no longer be used as a home treatment strategy.

Along with poisoning, we have an increased and very serious concern about inhalant abuse and huffing. Inhalant abuse refers to the deliberate inhalation or sniffing of fumes, vapors, or gases from common household products for the purpose of "getting high." According to [inhalant.org](http://inhalant.org), one in five children will abuse inhalants by the time they are in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. The scariest fact about inhalant abuse is that it can kill the first time. Many children don't believe these products can hurt them. What they don't realize is that inhaling or "huffing" these products will catch up with them—it could kill the first time or it could kill the 25<sup>th</sup> time. It is a very high stakes gamble that these children are making every time they chose to huff. In 2006, the Coates family of Monroe lost their son Brady due to huffing. He simply passed out after huffing butane and his heart failed. Brady was only 18 years old. If for a second you find yourself reading this and thinking that your child would never do such a thing, think again. The typical profile of an inhalant abuser is wide-spread, covering all socioeconomic groups and races. Many of these kids are exposed to the idea of huffing in elementary or middle school.

Signs of inhalant abuse:

- Chemical odors on breath or clothing
- Paint or other stains on face, hands, or clothes
- Hidden empty spray paint or solvent containers and chemical-soaked rags or clothing
- Drunk or disoriented appearance
- Slurred speech
- Nausea or loss of appetite
- Inattentiveness, lack of coordination, irritability, and depression
- Missing household items

Please visit [www.inhalant.org](http://www.inhalant.org) for more information about inhalant abuse and [www.wapc.org](http://www.wapc.org) for information about poisoning and the Washington Poison Center.