

Lead Toys—Lead Paint— Lead Poisoning

The death of six Chicago children from lead poisoning in a two-week period calls attention to a problem which must be met now—before Christmas toys are purchased. The Chicago coroner's office said that the poisonings were caused by putting into the mouth toys made of lead or painted with lead paints.

The seriousness of this problem should not be minimized. In one large Chicago hospital—Cook County Hospital—55 deaths from lead poisoning have taken place during the past five years. At the Children's Hospital in Philadelphia 74 children suffering from lead poisoning were admitted during an eight-year period.

The menace of lead poisoning is more serious and more widespread now than it has been in many years, because of the military character of children's toys. The counters of department stores and variety stores bristle with toy soldiers, cannons, tanks, jeeps, battleships and the like, many of them fabricated of lead, and many of them colored with lead-base paints.

When such toys have been placed

in a child's mouth repeatedly, the lead gets into the blood and then into the bones. In some cases it may reach the brain, causing lead encephalitis, a form of sleeping sickness.

According to the Chicago coroner's office it is difficult to diagnose lead poisoning in children. X-rays of the bones and skull, as well as blood tests, must be made. Some symptoms may be present, however, such as irritability, apathy, changes of behavior, persistent vomiting and, eventually, convulsions. Children seem to be more susceptible to small quantities of lead than adults. Yet the poisoning is more quickly recognized in adults, for a blue line on the gums will reveal it.

While it may seem that furniture and woodwork about the house, coated with lead-content lacquers, enamels or paints, may constitute a greater hazard than toys, actually it has been found that this is not true. The greatest hazard lies in toys small enough to be placed in the mouth or at least light enough to be picked up and licked. Painted surfaces such as those of cribs, cradles, play pens and beds also

may constitute a hazard in this respect.

Reputable manufacturers of toys and children's equipment use only non-poisonous coloring and label their products accordingly.

Students who purchase toys for younger children in the family should watch carefully for such labels or certifications. They should avoid the purchase of any toys made of lead or painted with substances containing white lead, lead chromate or other lead compounds. They should help teach younger brothers and sisters that toys and similar objects should not be placed in the mouth.

Junior safety councils might undertake the education of their fellow students in this respect, and they might even prepare bulletins on the subject to be taken into the home. The school paper might also call attention to the danger.

Not only should new toys be purchased with care, but toys already in the home should be inspected to make sure they are safe.

The best thing to do with lead toys is to throw them into the neighborhood scrap salvage heap.

October Brings Accident Increase

Many teachers returning to class room work last month found considerable changes involving new teaching problems. Increases in enrollments occurred in war production areas. Currently there is much greater interest in vocational classes in nearly all high schools. These, and other shifts accompanying the nation's change-over to war work, increase the need for effective safety education work and double the need for up-to-date, accurate information on accidents.

Problems will vary greatly from one community to another. This

document records in planning accident prevention activities.

October Accidents

It may be helpful at this time to summarize the principal facts about student accidents in October, as shown by reports for past years. This will provide a background of "normal" experience against which to view the current month's records.

October has usually been the peak month for student accidents.

School building accidents occur half again more frequently than in September. A large share of this increase is in vocational shop and in gymnasium accidents. Vocational shop accidents are important only in the junior and senior high school

curriculum with greatest frequency from the sixth through the eleventh grades.

On school grounds, football accidents ordinarily make up more than a third of the total and are particularly important in the high school grades.

Home accidents account for about a third of the accidents in each grade up to the fifth. From the fifth grade through high school they are of decreasing importance.

Accidents away from school or home increase in frequency throughout the elementary grades, then decrease in the high school grades. Motor vehicles or bicycles are involved in about a third of these

and climbing, in addition to those mentioned above in "other home." Attention should next be given to the dangers of "other" accidents in going-to-and-from-school—primarily scuffling with companions, and falls at home. Next in importance are those indicated as "3," and then those listed as fourth in frequency.

Similarly, the danger zones of school buildings and playgrounds can be methodically reduced. Instructors and supervisors of various departments and activities can deal first with the greatest incidence (school grade) of accidents within their jurisdiction.

October Fatalities

Not necessarily typical of student fatalities that may occur during the Hallowe'en month, but a grim reminder that death took no holiday during October of 1942, are the fatalities reported by cooperating school systems.

A 10-year-old girl got off a school bus and ran around behind it into the path of a truck. Two boys died from falls from trees. One, a sixth-grader, fractured his skull; a third-grade lad cut his arm and succumbed from the resulting tetanus infection. After school one day a boy, age 9, was handling a gun at home. It accidentally discharged. Hurrying to school the day before Hallowe'en, two high-school girls were killed by a train while crossing railroad tracks.

These six student fatalities present a silent challenge to every teacher. They are illustrative of the manner in which, by national estimate, about 500 children 5 to 14 years of age met accidental death in October, 1942.

November Trend

The 1942 Thanksgiving-month accident rate was appropriately down from October and slightly below the annual average. With a rate of 11.63 accidents per 100,000 student-days, the decrease for November was 13 per cent.

Mostly because of seasonal weather conditions that resulted in less exposure, most outdoor activities showed declines, with only home accidents reflecting an increase. School buildings and going-to-and-from-school rates remained the same as in October.

November Danger Zones

Frequency group ratings of student accident danger zones for November reflect the seasonal trend toward the indoors. Unusual variations from this movement are sometimes discernible. Note the accident gradings on school ground apparatus for first through the fourth-grade pupils as compared with the absence of danger gradings in the same portion of the table for October.

November Fatalities

Student fatalities in November last year meant little Thanksgiving for at least three homes in the jurisdiction of school systems reporting to the National Safety Council. The circumstances of these deaths differed entirely from those reported in October.

A second-grade boy was playing behind a car in a private driveway. The car backed out, and the boy was fatally crushed. A kindergarten four-year-old received fatal burns when her dress caught fire at home one evening. Some boys hitch-hiked a ride, with one of them—a high-school freshman—riding on the running board. He was thrown off and fractured his skull on the pavement.

To eliminate serious accidents we must direct our efforts toward preventing all accidents. The near accidents and the minor injuries might be fatal next time. The national estimate of accidental deaths in the 5-14 age group for November is again about 500.

Civilian Defense Driver's Course

"Civilian Defense Drivers Instructor's Manual" is the title of a 152-page mimeographed publication prepared by the Office of War Training Programs, New York State War Council. The manual has been published and is being distributed by the Bureau of Public Service Training, State Education Department, 353 Broadway, Albany, New York.

The manual contains four main sections: (1) Suggestions for starting the class; (2) lesson reference texts; (3) home study outlines and guides; and (4) suggestions for a

field test and comments to accompany lantern slides.

Further information about the manual may be obtained by writing to the Bureau of Public Service Training at the above address.

Error in Report on Lead Poisoning

Last October, under the heading, "Lead Toys—Lead Paint—Lead Poisoning," SAFETY EDUCATION quoted the Chicago coroner's office as saying that six Chicago children had died of lead poisoning within a two-week period and that in Cook County Hospital a total of 55 deaths from lead poisoning had taken place in a five-year period.

The report on which this article was based was erroneous. SAFETY EDUCATION regrets the error and is glad to make this correction.

The six deaths actually occurred over a five-year period, one of them from sucking on a lead toy soldier, and the other five from inhaling the fumes of storage battery cases which were being burned as fuel. During the same five-year period 55 cases of children suffering from lead poisoning were reported in Cook County.

This is not intended to imply that there is no danger of lead poisoning when children repeatedly place in their mouths objects made of lead or coated with lead-base paints, but simply to point out that the incidence of fatalities is not as great as originally reported and that most of the fatal cases in the Chicago area resulted from the inhalation of fumes from burning battery cases, rather than from the ingestion of paint. Complete data on the causes of the non-fatal cases are not available.

Parochial School Safety

Safety was included in the 34th Annual Teachers Institute of the Parochial Schools, Archdiocese of Boston, held at Boston College High School August 23 to 27. Miss Ruth E. Le Doux, Director of Home and School Safety, Massachusetts Safety Council, spoke on "Safety Education During War-time."

N22101.01

KE 03636