



# Highland Park

Community Council

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## Preparing for a Safe and Healthy Summer

*By Lynn M. Banker-Burns, HPCC Safety Committee Chairperson*

Summer has finally arrived! It's time for fresh air, fun in the sun, playing outside and having a ball. It is also time to be more vigilant about personal safety while enjoying the outdoors. Here are some safety tips to make your summer safe, relaxing and pleasurable.

The first thing to remember is if you see a suspicious person or notice an unusual situation around your house or that of a neighbor, call 911. The police prefer that you call and let them determine if there is an issue.

### Pedestrian Safety Tips

- Cross the street at marked crosswalks and intersections. Do not jaywalk.
- Before crossing, look left, right, and left again. Then look over your shoulder for turning vehicles.
- Make eye contact with drivers to make sure they see you.
- Use pedestrian pushbuttons.
- Begin crossing the street on the "Walk" signal.
- Wear light-colored or reflective clothing to be visible after dark and in bad weather.
- Watch out for trucks and buses backing out of parking spaces and driveways.

### Child Vehicle Safety Tips

- Never leave a child unattended in a parked vehicle, even with the windows open.
- Keep vehicle keys out of the reach of children.
- Always walk around your vehicle to confirm no children are in the way.
- Know where the children are prior to moving the vehicle to prevent a "backover" accident.
- Always lock the doors and close the windows in an unattended vehicle.
- If you see a child unattended in a car, CALL 911 and get the child out as quickly as possible.

## Bicycling Safety Tips

- Obey all regulatory signs and traffic lights.
- Never ride against traffic. Ride with traffic to avoid potential accidents.
- Use hand signals to tell motorists what you intend to do.
- Teach your children the hand signals so they become accustomed to using them.
- Ride in a straight line to the right of traffic and about a car door width away from parked cars.
- Always wear a helmet. Helmets dramatically reduce the risk of head injury in a bicycle accident.
- Use lights on your bike at night and when visibility is poor.
- If/when a dog chases you while riding, ignore the dog or firmly yell “NO”. If the dog continues chasing you, stop and dismount, keeping the bicycle between you and the dog at all times.

## Bike Storage Safety Tips

Bike riding and warm weather are a natural combination. But if your bike is stolen, hiking will be more your speed over the next few months. Since this has been an issue in the past, here are a few tips to keep your property secured.

- The Pittsburgh Police suggests all bike owners engrave their bikes. It's very simple to do. Officers say using the ID numbers from a driver's license or Pennsylvania ID card is the best way to mark your bike. **Never use a social security number as an ID number.**
- Another suggestion from officers is when storing a bike in a shed or garage, lock and attach it to a lawn mower or other heavy and bulky equipment. Thieves do break into sheds and garages. Attaching a bike to a piece of heavy equipment makes it more difficult to just walk or ride away from the area.

## Pet Safety Tips

- Obtain the proper license for your pet.
- Keep your pet vaccinations up-to-date.
- Do not allow pets to roam outside your yard or home without being on a proper leash.

## Swimming Pool Safety Tips

- If you're little one already knows how to swim they should still always be supervised. Always provide competent adult supervision when the pool is in use. Knowing how to swim doesn't prevent accidents from happening.
- Caution children against showing off and playing rough and explain the dangers of running and diving recklessly.
- Never push others into the pool.
- Never allow your child to swim in the dark or without the proper pool lighting.
- Pool fences should go around the entire pool and be at least 4 feet tall. There should be a secure latch and/or lock if a child can reach the opening.

## Barbecue Safety Tips

- Before using a grill, check the connection between the propane tank and the fuel line.
- Do not overfill the propane tank.
- Be careful when using lighter fluid. Do not add fluid to an already lit fire because the flames can flashback up into the container and explode.
- Keep all matches and lighters away from children. Teach your children to report any loose matches or lighters to an adult immediately.
- Dispose of hot coals properly – douse them with plenty of water and stir them to ensure that the fire is out. Never place them in plastic, paper or wooden containers.
- Never grill/barbecue in enclosed areas – carbon monoxide could be produced.
- Always keep a fire extinguisher on hand when grilling.
- Never leave a hot BBQ unsupervised.

## Home Safety Tips

This time of year we all like to let the fresh air into our homes. During the warm summer months, we need to remember some summer safety tips to avoid those pesky summer pests: burglars.

Here are a few recommendations from the Pittsburgh Police Department's Burglary Unit:

- Never leave a patio door unlocked while away from home. Security experts recommend a security bar placed between the sliding door and the doorjamb. These bars are often referred to as “Charlie bars.” Don’t assume that the latch on the door is secure enough to ward off a thief. Lock the door at night as well to keep out unwanted guests.
- Always lock windows on the first floor or ground floor. This applies even if there is an enclosed or screened-in porch. It takes so little time and effort to cut through screen mesh and gain access to a home or apartment.
- Always secure windows and doors in the basement. It can be easy to forget about this area of the house during the summer months when we’re running in and out doing chores.
- Don’t forget to lock the windows in the garage too. If there is an entrance to the house through the garage, a thief can enter your residence while you are out tending to the garden or washing your car.

Sgt. Mike Pillit spoke at the January HPCC meeting and offered the following suggestions to help keep your home safe:

- Keep your doors and windows locked. Deadbolts on back and basement doors are suggested.
- Use glass block windows in the basement. They not only add security, they also improve a home’s insulation.
- Keep any shrubs and trees close to the home trimmed as they make a good place to hide.
- Keep your porch lights on all night. Exterior motion detector lighting is very effective.
- If you have sliding doors, use a lock bar to secure them.
- Alarms and dogs make for good deterrents. A criminal is going to look for the easy target.

- Stop your mail and newspapers if you are not going to be home.
- Ask your neighbor to keep an eye on things and offer to return the favor.
- Take your cell phone to bed with you. All a criminal has to do is cut the phone line or simply take one of the receivers off the hook to disable a home phone.
- Hide your valuables if you don't need to use them every day. A criminal wants to get in and out as fast as possible.
- Hide-a-key holders are easy to identify. If you need to hide a key, hide it in the garage or in the back of the home.

## What Are My Reporting Options?

Community safety relies upon the involvement of citizens in protecting their own neighborhood. Remember - if you see a suspicious person or notice an unusual situation around your house or that of a neighbor, call 911.

### **Call 911**

In case of an emergency or if you see something suspicious, call 911. The police prefer that you call and let them determine if there is an issue.

### **Attend Community Meetings:**

The Zone 5 Citizens Public Safety Council meets the second Tuesday of every month (except for August and December) at 7:00 p.m. at the Union Project (801 N. Negley Ave).

### **311 Response Center**

All calls to 311 are answered by a live operator from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. In the City of Pittsburgh, dial 3-1-1. Outside of Pittsburgh, call 412-255-2621.

Or fill out a form online at <http://pittsburghpa.gov/311/form>.

At any time, you may leave a voice or text message for the 311 Response Center by dialing or texting 412-573-9736.