

***Risk Watch*® Overview Script**

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Opening Slide

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In the United States, unintentional injuries are more fatal to children than drugs and disease combined, annually killing nearly 6,000 kids and permanently disabling nearly 120,000. In Canada, injuries are the leading cause of death for children over one year of age. For children ages 14 and under, the #1 health risk isn't kidnapping, drugs, or disease. It's injuries.

However, NFPA firmly believes that the traffic injuries, drownings, fires, scald burns, poisonings, and falls suffered by children each year are not random "accidents;" they are predictable and preventable. With education, motivation, and the support of caring adults, children can learn to be much safer.

Risk Watch focuses on the eight leading risk areas affecting the health of children. They are motor vehicle safety; fire and burn prevention; choking, suffocation and strangulation prevention; poisoning prevention; falls prevention; firearm injury prevention; bike and pedestrian safety; and water safety. *Risk Watch* teaches children what to do to prevent injuries, how to protect themselves and others from injuries and how to persuade others to be safety conscious.

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Risk Watch: Natural Disasters builds on the lessons in *Risk Watch: Unintentional Injuries*. Together these programs offer schools the first comprehensive curriculum dealing with disaster preparedness and personal safety. For communities that have already implemented the original *Risk Watch* program, the natural disaster curriculum follows the same format making it easy to incorporate it into your existing *Risk Watch* implementation strategy.

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NFPA has more than 20 years of success with school-based curriculum materials and has long known what a powerful weapon education can be. The *Learn Not to Burn*® *Curriculum*, *Resource Books* and *Preschool Program* have been well received by classroom teachers, students and parents throughout North America. NFPA programs are based on the philosophy of teaching positive safety messages.

Building on its success with other fire and life safety education programs, NFPA expanded its scope to target the eight areas children are at greatest risk to injury, including fires and burns.

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Schools provide a unique opportunity to reach children with injury prevention messages. *Risk Watch* creates a “Link” between the classroom and the child’s home. Since children are limited in their ability to change their home environment, the child’s parent or caregiver must understand the injury problem and prevention measures. Head Start programs have used this approach successfully since the early 1960s.

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A majority of young children in North America attend a preschool at least part of each week. For older children, school is the one place where they are readily accessible to injury prevention education. In addition, school provides an environment that is conducive to learning.

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Teachers are role models for children. They are involved in the child’s learning experience almost every day and are in a unique position to model and influence appropriate behaviors. In addition, teachers have been trained to engage children in the learning process using developmentally appropriate instructional methods. This means teachers can present lessons in a manner in which children can best understand.

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Risk Watch was developed by NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) with input from a technical advisory group (TAG) comprised of North America’s most authoritative injury prevention professionals. These experts have helped ensure that all information in the *Risk Watch* program is of the highest quality.

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Risk Watch is the first comprehensive injury prevention program designed for use in classrooms. Linking teachers with community safety experts and parents, *Risk Watch* effectively teaches kids and their families the skills and knowledge they need to be safe from the areas they’re at greatest risk to unintentional injuries.

The *Risk Watch* curriculum is divided into five teaching modules (Pre-K/Kindergarten, Grades One and Two, Grades Three and Four, Grades Five and Six, and Grades Seven and Eight).

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Risk Watch helps kids beat the odds of suffering the effects of unintentional childhood injuries. It gives them the experience to analyze situations and weigh the consequences. Kids learn to make safe decisions. And, it instills positive values and healthy self-esteem. Our basic attitudes and personal values are developed by the time we reach 10 years old – or by 5th or 6th grade. By engaging children in a comprehensive injury prevention program at an early age and keeping them involved throughout their formative years, it is possible to help shape their attitudes and values about safety and wellness. *Risk Watch* can make that happen in every community in North America.

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And *Risk Watch* is fun for both the child and teacher. When injury prevention education is fun, the teacher is more likely to use the curriculum and the child is more likely to internalize its message values. *Risk Watch* uses experiential learning to get children actively involved in safety education.

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Let's take a closer look at *Risk Watch*. Each module of *Risk Watch* features a character role that gives students the opportunity to practice the age-appropriate safety skills included in each lesson. The preschool/kindergarten module uses the "Storyteller" character role. Young children love to tell and listen to stories. Students in these grade levels are encouraged to share their thoughts and experiences as they learn new injury prevention skills.

The character role for students in grades one and two is "Detective." Students at this age are a bit more sophisticated and better understand the relationship between cause and effect. As detectives, students will be on the lookout for risks and how they can be prevented.

The character role for students in grades three and four is "Reporter." Students at this age can practice their language and writing skills, using the "Five Ws" and can document events in their daily lives. They are encouraged to write and share stories about which situations are safe and which are not.

The character role for students in grades five and six is "Promoter." Students at this age typically don't like being told what to do. This module encourages them to apply leadership and advanced communication skills to research and promote injury prevention practices to their peers, family members, and the community.

The character role for students in grades seven and eight is "Coach." In this tough-to-reach age group, students become role models and advocates for safety at home and throughout society. Many students in this age group work as babysitters and may have younger siblings at home. While they sometimes feel invincible, they may adopt safer practices for the sake of younger children who are watching.

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There are eight *Risk Watch* lesson cards. One for each risk area. Each card includes key messages students need to learn. There is a section called "Know the Facts" that gives some statistical information on why it is important to address this safety issue. Information on the risk area is included to provide the teacher with background information to present the lesson. On the back of each lesson card is a detailed lesson plan, including behavioral objectives. Step-by-step procedures are included as well as additional activities to expand the lesson, such as journal writing and suggestions for getting family and community members involved in the learning process.

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“*Risk Watch* in Action” includes fun activities that actively involve students in learning about all eight risk areas. Activities include developing a safety fair, creating a newsletter, performing skits and analyzing risky situations.

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The “*Risk Watch* Caregiver Letters” section includes letters that can be sent home to families. It includes an introduction letter describing the *Risk Watch* program, letters to send home around the December holidays and in the spring, and a letter reminding families to plan and practice a home escape plan.

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“*Risk Watch* Evaluation Instruments” include a knowledge test used as a pre- and post-test to measure student knowledge gain.

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A “*Risk Watch* Success Incident Report” form is included in the evaluation instruments. This form is used by the teacher to report students who have applied *Risk Watch* knowledge in a potentially risky situation. *Risk Watch* “Saves” and “Successes” are case histories of actual incidents in which the knowledge gained from *Risk Watch* has been put into action.

- A “Save” occurs when an individual's actions, learned from *Risk Watch*, result in the preservation of human life, or whose positive intervention has prevented or minimized a potentially harmful situation.
- A “Success” occurs when an individual's actions, learned from *Risk Watch*, reduce the dangers of a potentially harmful situation.

Visit www.riskwatch.org for a complete listing of lives saved as a result of *Risk Watch*.

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The final section is called “Accessing Resources for *Risk Watch*.” *Risk Watch* is designed to be enhanced by safety experts from the community such as the local fire department, law enforcement agency, health officials and others. The section includes suggested resources to help support *Risk Watch* activities in the classroom.

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NFPA has identified several fundamental qualities that appear to correlate with long-term success in implementing public education programs. Together, they form NFPA’s “Cs to Success” in implementing *Risk Watch*. These “Cs to Success” make up the “NFPA Champion Model.”

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Coalition: The most effective way to reduce unintentional injuries is to work through a community coalition. This means organizing individuals and organizations with an interest in solving the childhood injury problem. Working together makes sense – few organizations have the resources or expertise to do it alone. A *Risk Watch* coalition

should include (at a minimum) a representative from each of the following organizations – the fire department, police department or local law enforcement agency, a health organization, a school administrator and a classroom teacher.

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Champion: Every coalition needs to select a leader (or Champion) who will be responsible for the coalition's efforts, from planning and implementation, to evaluation and expansion of the public education project.

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Careful Planning: Successful coalitions need to develop a written strategic plan outlining a clear set of written goals, measurements, and timeframes.

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Compelling Case: It makes sense to focus your injury prevention efforts in areas that need it most. Start small. By analyzing the incidence of preventable injuries in the community and focusing first on those neighborhoods or areas at highest risk, you can achieve dramatic results early in the program and use that momentum to build the case for further expansion.

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Credentials: Your programmatic reputation will be determined by the quality of the materials you use and the manner in which they are delivered. *Risk Watch* has benefited from input from leading safety experts and from years of field testing and actual classroom experience.

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Collaboration: Successful public education initiatives enjoy a high level of commitment from the entire community but the most important partnership is between the local advocates serving on the *Risk Watch* coalition and the classroom teachers who are the key to creating a successful learning experience for the students.

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Continuity: Because children learn best through repetition and practice; the most effective way to teach injury prevention skills is through repeated, age appropriate learning opportunities extended over a period of years. *Risk Watch* is designed to build on student's prior knowledge, increasing the level of challenge as students mature.

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Creativity: Supplement public education programs with elements designed to showcase local talents such as the use of safety trailers, clowns and puppets, coloring and comic books, etc.

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Camaraderie: Have fun with your *Risk Watch* team. Share meals, attend a one-day retreat together, play an “ice-breaker” game before meetings, etc. It will help build strong, trusting relationships...and keep everyone on your team coming back for more.

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Commitment: Successfully implementing a public education program is a major initiative for any community, regardless of its size or available resources. It requires hard work, the commitment of individuals and community organizations, and most importantly, persistence.

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In response to the fast-growing number of local Champion communities that have been established over the past several years, NFPA developed the NFPA *Risk Watch* Champion Management Team (CMT) program. This program works to expand *Risk Watch* in local communities through management teams, which are coordinated, multi-agency coalitions at the state and provincial levels. These teams support the introduction and expansion of *Risk Watch* in local communities.

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The Apple Corps is the Public Education Division's newsletter for [Risk Watch Champions](#) and other safety educators dedicated to NFPA's public education mission. The newsletter can be downloaded on www.riskwatch.org. The newsletter can be printed, copied and shared with coalition members, teachers, and educators using *Risk Watch* in your community.

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Risk Watch has its own Web site providing information for parents, children, teachers, advocates and Champions. The site includes steps for getting started, fundraising ideas, technical information, state-level correlations to health and language arts learning standards, state/provincial level contacts for *Risk Watch* and more! Visit riskwatch.org for the latest information.

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Why *Risk Watch*? Changing the social or physical environment is a critical part of the overall childhood injury prevention formula. However, most environmental changes require human action. Many times, this includes action on the part of the child, i.e. wearing a bike helmet or a personal flotation device. Learning to make the right choices is the result of educational efforts. While the process of preventing childhood injuries has many parts, the effective use of education is the fabric that brings it all together. Because of that, it deserves special attention from injury prevention coalitions, schoolteachers, medical professionals, and other community members.