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5. Heating

Have the furnace and chimney inspected by a professional prior to the start of winter. Keep newspapers, rags, and other combustible materials away from the furnace, hot water heater, or space heater. Keep flammable materials, such as curtains or furniture, at least three feet from space heaters. Watch for electrical overload signals such as dimming lights when a heating appliance goes on; call a qualified electrician if this occurs. Stress that the oven should never be used as a heater if the house feels too cold or the furnace goes off.

6. Candles

Candles exude an aura of warmth and coziness — but they are causing more and more house fires. The best policy for those with age-related changes is simply not to have candles in the home. For festive decor, choose CSA approved electric lights. In preparation for an emergency, place flashlights in key locations, for example, beside the bed, favourite chair, and in the kitchen. Δ

Source: Fred P. Baumgartner, Firepoint Technologies Inc. (www.firepoint.cc)

Summer Safety Tips for Kids and Dogs

As the summer sets in, Doggone Safe offers some tips to help keep your family companion safe and comfortable. Dogs that are uncomfortable are more likely to become irritable with young kids.

- **Heartworm and flea prevention:** Research and consult with your vet to find the best option for your dog.
- **Allergies:** If you notice an increase in itching and/or discomfort talk to your vet about some helpful solutions.
- **Ear infections:** Ear infections often lead to grumpy dogs, so be aware of your dog's ears and seek help from your vet for ear cleaning suggestions.
- **Snake and spider bites:** If you notice a sudden change in behavior or lethargic behavior seek the help of your vet immediately. If snakes and biting spiders are common in your area, know the symptoms of such encounters.
- **Emergency preparedness:** Emergency plans for hurricanes and natural disasters should include your pets.

Outings

- When traveling in a car secure your dog with a crate, gate or seatbelt, especially if riding with a child.
- Never leave your dog in a car when the temperature is above 21 C. Even with windows open and in the shade this is a deadly mistake.
- Keep dogs hydrated. There are many products to make water convenient and easy to carry along when hiking or on an adventure with your dog.
- Be aware of hot surfaces. Black concrete can be *hot*, and many outdoor activities are held in parking lots. A dog that is too hot will *not* appreciate being petted and handled.
- Dogs may become irritable if hot and will not appreciate being surrounded by even the most adoring of children. Let your pet rest in a peaceful spot undisturbed if it is an especially warm day.
- Dog parks do not mix with children — no matter what!
- Be aware of your neighborhood and how dogs are secured, so that when your children are playing you are aware of any potential dangers. Chained-up dogs or dogs that are barking and frustrated near fences while children play can become a danger.

Remind children never to approach a tied-up dog even if they know the animal! Δ

Source: Doggone Safe! June 2005 newsletter. (Subscribe to the e-newsletter at www.doggonesafe.com.)



Online Gambling a Hazard for the Young

Research shows that increasing numbers of children and youth are introduced to gambling at very young ages — something as innocuous as a bingo card in their Christmas stocking — and this is having an impact on families.

Children as young as 11 get hooked on betting at Internet sites where “visitors” can play slot machines and blackjack without using real money. When young people gamble beyond their limits, the outcomes can be serious — fraud, theft and even suicide. This does not take into account the social costs of spending hours and hours online alone.

In June 2006, the Vanier Institute of the Family released a paper entitled *Gambling with our (Kids') Futures: Gambling as a Family Policy Issue*. The paper, authored by Arlene Moscovitch, recommends five key strategies:

- A public education campaign to help people understand the potential hazards of gambling, especially for young people, and know the warning signs.
- Governments need to develop guidelines for responsible advertising, especially to vulnerable groups.
- Development of school curricula with a gambling prevention focus.
- Additional research on gambling is required to inform public policy.
- Bringing the issues forward through civic action to drive the impetus for change, since governments “do not want to have to face an angry public on these matters.”

According to the Vanier Institute of the Family, like smoking, drugs and alcohol, talking to your children about gambling needs to become a part of good parenting. The full report *Gambling with our (Kids') Futures* can be downloaded from the Institute's website (www.vifamily.ca/library/cft/gambling.pdf). Δ