Discarded refrigerators can kill children

Some 50 million older-style refrigerators with mechanical latches, the kind that can't open from the inside, are still in use. When discarded, they are potential death traps for youngsters.

Each year over one million families store such refrigerators, usually in basements, garages, even on back porches, where children may climb in them, lock themselves in, and suffocate.

Nationwide Insurance reports that the statistics come from the Health Insurance Institute which offers these suggestions for making old refrigerators or feezers safe:

- Remove the door. It can easily be replaced if the box is ever to be used again.
- Chain and padlock the door if it's not removed.
- Remove the latch. Some latches can be replaced with a wooden block screwed flush to the inner door surface, which will prevent the door from closing.

Lastly, children should be taught the hazards of being trapped in any closed box, trunk, or space.

IT CAN STRIKE TWICE BUT ONCE IS TOO MUCH

Nationwide Insurance reports that lightning destroys or damages 18,000 houses in the United States each year. Also, it kills one person and injures four every day, and is more dangerous to country dwellers than city folks.

To protect buildings, safety engineers at Underwriters Laboratories suggest the installation of lightning rods, lightning arresters, and antenna discharge units that carry Underwriters Laboratories labels.

How can people avoid being struck? If you are outdoors, head for a substantial building, or take cover in a ditch, culvert, or ravine. Lie flat on the ground. At the beach, get out of the water, avoid open boats, and seek proper shelter.

If you are in a car - stay there. But drive away from high power lines and trees.

REPAIR ONE CAR? CHEAPER TO BUY FOUR

It can cost more than four times as much to repair a demolished car as to buy a new one, the American Mutual Insurance Alliance reports.

The Alliance had an independent auto repair cost expert figure the repair cost for a 1977 standard auto,

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factory price $4,681, if totally wrecked. The cost for a competent repair shop to rebuild the car: $21,471.

The point isn't that anyone would have this, but that replacing 25 percent of the car's parts could cost more than its price when it was new. Also, it illustrates the force that's pushing up the cost of collision, comprehensive, and property damage insurance.

HIGHWAY HYPNOSIS CAN CAUSE CRASHES

Monotony's the word for long-distance driving on super highways. A frequent result: Too-heavy a foot and misjudging of distances. To avoid such highway hypnosis, Nationwide Insurance suggests:

- Talking or singing;
- Opening the window for fresh air;
- Keep the eyes moving, and / or
- When feeling drowsy, stop for a coffee break.

SAFER THAN A DECADE AGO

The Department of Transportation reports there's strong evidence that motorists on the nation's streets and highways were considerably safer in 1976 than a decade ago.

During that ten-year span, the fatality rate (deaths per 100 million miles driven) declined 5.58 to 3.30. At the same time, the number of licensed drivers increased 32.6 percent, the number of registered vehicles jumped 48.1 percent and the number of travel miles rose 49.1 percent. Continuation of the 55 mph speed limit and auto safety devices, better-driving campaigns, continued research and investigation of vehicle safety problems were cited as having contributed to a safe driving environment.

ECONOMIC LOSSES UP

According to the Insurance Information Institute, economic loss caused by U.S. traffic accidents reached $40.9 billion during 1976 (average loss of over $1600 per accident).

The '76 figure, an all-time high, was a 13.4 percent increase over the 1975 total. The number of traffic accidents rose 2.2 percent, injuries increased 5.8 per cent and fatalities were up 2 per cent. In addition to increased accidents, auto repair costs went up 6.5 per cent, medical care items jumped 10.1 per cent, semi-private hospital room charges rose 13 per cent and physician's fees climbed 9.7 per cent.

INSURANCE LOW IN CAR COST SPIRAL

Nationwide Insurance reports that in "the good old days" of 1951 a motorist got 15 miles to his dollar. By 1972 he got only seven miles and in 1976 just six.

Figures from the U.S. Department of Transportation show the cost per driving mile was 17.9 cents in 1976 if you drove a standard model, and less if you drove a compact or subcompact. That was a money increase of 32 percent over 1972 costs. But insurance on standard vehicles rose only 21 percent, from 1.4 to 1.7 cents per mile since 1972. This was the lowest increase of any other car cost except depreciation, making auto insurance still one of the best bargains for car drivers.

Several classification specifications studied

Studies of several classifications currently are under way by the Executive Department Personnel Division and the Department of Forestry, and the Workers' Compensation Board.

Anyone who works in these classifications who has special concerns or questions should contact OSEA Personnel and Classification Analyst Eleanor Meyers at OSEA headquarters. It is best, she said, if she is contacted by letter with a phone number where you may be contacted.

Classification studies currently under way include:

Fiscal and accounting classes, auditing and examining classes, storekeeping, sales and related.

Audiovisual and reproduction, therapy and related, inspections and investigations including OLCC officers, dental, medical,

Data processing and nutrition.

The Department of Forestry will be considering forestry practice officers first. Later they will examine the classifications of service foresters, state lands, protection, engineers, staff and nursery.

The Workers' Compensation Board will study disability prevention and disability determination specialists classifications.

OSEA will be in touch with members in these classifications when we get the proposed specifications, said Meyers. At that time, we will have 60 days to respond with our objections or corrections.

Election case appealed

The case of OSEA vs. the Department of Commerce has been filed with the state Court of Appeals.

The questions OSEA is asking the court to decide are whether taxpayer funds may be used in a campaign against a labor organization, and whether management's campaign can be based upon a state agency's belief that collective bargaining would add to the agency's costs.

OSEA's position is that the legislature, when enacting the Public Employes Collective Bargaining Law determined that collective bargaining is worth the cost.

The case stems from the anti-union campaign conducted by Commerce Department director Cornelius Bateson during a bargaining unit representation election campaign at the Department of Commerce last year.