

## Poison Prevention Week is March 16-22, 1986

PORTLAND — In 1985, more than 30,000 Oregonians who had been exposed to a poisonous substance were treated at home with close follow-up by the Oregon Poison Control and Drug Information Center.

"This translates into more than \$2 million in hospital emergency room costs saved in 1985 through the successful use of home telephone management of emergency poison cases by the center's personnel," according to Dr. Marc Bayer, director of the Poison Center.

"Assuming that these people would otherwise have been seen in an emergency department where the minimum cost for a visit is about \$75," he explained, "the savings in health care costs to Oregonians has been about \$2.25 million." These cost cuts translate directly into savings for the citizens of Oregon, hospitals and insurance companies.

Statistics for 1985, the Poison Center's 8th year of operation, have just been released by the center, located at the Oregon Health Sciences University.

During 1985, the number of calls handled reached more than 42,000 — as compared to 16,853 calls during the first year of operation in 1978. Approximately 33,430 of these calls involved emergencies in which someone — usually a child under 5 years of age — had already ingested a poisonous substance, requiring immediate action.

Prior to the center's establishment, these cases would have been seen and treated in a hospital emergency room, or by a private physician. However, by using the specially trained "round-the-clock" physicians, nurses and pharmacists of the Poison Center, 90 percent of these patients were treated successfully at home, eliminating the need for an emergency department or physician visit for these patients.

The center refers approximately 10 percent of the poison calls to the nearest local hospital for immediate treatment. Last year referrals were made to 77 of Oregon's 84 hospitals.

Oregonians from throughout the state use the services offered by the Poison Center. In 1985, calls were received from every county in the state. (See page 4 of Annual Report.) More than three-fourths of the calls were made by private citizens, with the remaining one-fourth coming from health care professionals.

Through the center's poison reference system, the center's staff can quickly diagnose and determine the proper treatment for almost any toxic substance. After the initial treatment or referral, the Poison Center staff

monitors the patient's condition with follow-up calls at one, four, and 24 hours after initial contact. An important part of the Poison Center's follow-up is a "poison prevention interview" with the patient's family.

Prescription and over-the-counter drugs continue to be the most frequent cause of poisonings reported to the center. The next most common exposure is to household products. These include cosmetics, deodorants, bath soap, dental products, cigarettes, matches and household cleaners. Plants, which are often ingested by small children, account for the third largest category of calls.

The operational expenses of the Oregon Poison Control and Drug Information Center are provided by the State of Oregon, the Oregon Health Sciences

University, the Oregon State University School of Pharmacy, and a number of small, private donations and grants.

Future plans for the Poison Center include more research into the effects of all toxic substances, ranging from drugs and household products to toxic industrial and environmental chemicals.

"Poison prevention is the key," Bayer concludes. "With activities such as National Poison Prevention Week in March and our close interaction with the public and health care professionals, we hope to reduce the incidences of accidental poisonings in Oregon."

Pay Less Drug Stores have become partners in promoting poison prevention since 1983. The stores help provide support for a yearly education conference for emergency health care provid-

ers and also distribute poison prevention packets in their pharmacies located in all major Oregon cities.

The Poison Center's Oregon toll-free telephone number is 1-800-452-7165. In the Portland area, call 225-8968.

### Poison Hazards that Spring Upon Us

The advent of spring and summer brings an increase in the incidence of poisonings in children. This problem is of great concern to the staff of the Oregon Poison Center, and they wish to caution parents to some of the potential hazards.

1. Decreased supervision: With the warm weather, children are drawn outdoors where supervision becomes more difficult. When chil-

dren are on spring and summer vacation, more parental supervision is required.

2. Pesticides: All pesticides are poisonous and can have serious effects on people, pets and wildlife. Use proper safety methods when storing, applying or disposing of pesticides and their containers.

3. Plants and mushrooms: Many outdoors and indoor plants are poisonous. Know the plants and mushrooms in your area, and learn their scientific names to ensure proper identification. If a child is poisoned, bring the plant to your physician or the emergency room with your child. Be aware that many of the bulb and berry plants that are out now are poisonous. Never eat a wild plant or mushroom unless you are

positive of its identity. Do not rely on cooking to destroy toxic chemicals or assume a plant is non-toxic because wildlife eat it.

4. Solvents that are used in spring cleaning can be poisonous. Be aware to use them carefully; do not leave cleaning supplies where little ones can drink or splash.

5. With the warm weather upon us, be aware that hydrocarbons in the form of gasoline, kerosene and charcoal lighter fluid will make their appearance. Paints, thinners, and motor oils can be harmful as well, even if ingested in small amounts.

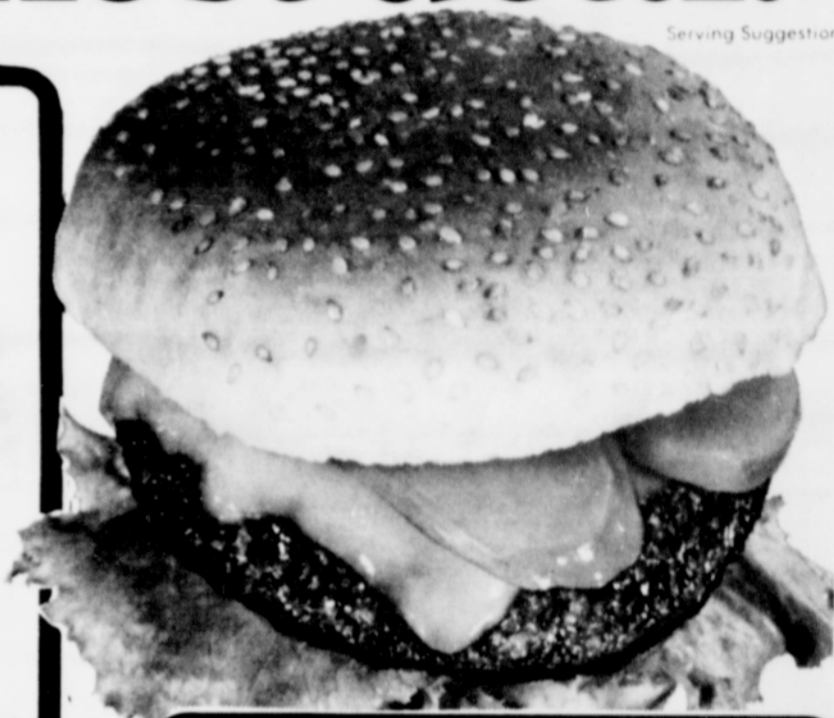
No matter how careful, accidents can occur. Keep the Oregon Poison Center number handy, in case of emergency. In the Portland area, call 225-8968. Outside Portland, call 1-800-452-7165.

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### PGE Files for Rate Reduction

Portland General Electric Company has filed for a rate reduction with the Oregon Public Utility Commissioner. It is PGE's first rate filing in two years.

On the average, residential prices will decrease 1 percent while commercial and industrial prices will fall by 2 percent. "By reducing staff, expenses, and better managing our resources we are able to lower the cost of electricity, even though general inflation continues," says Charles L. Heinrich, PGE Senior Vice President.

A recent PUC hearing concluded residential rates should be modified at the earliest opportunity to better reflect the fixed costs of distribution equipment used for residential customers, as well as billing and meter reading. PGE will therefore increase the customer charge from \$3 to \$5 per month.

The price for residential electricity will be reduced about 6 percent. The sum of the increased customer charge and the decrease in price for electricity is the overall average residential price decrease of 1 percent.

Most individual residential customers' bills will go down. Some residential customers using small amounts of electricity will see a modest increase. Most customers heating with electricity will have reduced winter heating bills. The majority of PGE customers receiving low-income energy assistance will be helped by the change in rate design.

Reductions will be effective with meter readings beginning May 1.

### Outstanding Achievement Awards Banquet

The Oregon Alliance of Black School Educators proudly presents the fourth annual OABSE Outstanding Student Achievement Awards Banquet on Friday, April 11, 1986 at Maranatha Church, 4222 NE 12th Ave. at 7:30 p.m. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Patricia Ackerman, President, National Alliance of Black School Educators. All Portland middle schools and high schools will be represented by student nominees. Please come and support your school's candidates! All students, staff, parents and friends are welcome! For ticket information and more details, please contact your school integration services coordinator or your school counselor. Donation: \$17.50.