

## Did You Know . . .

By Chief Matthew Workman  
Vernonia Police Department



Finally some dry weather to bring people outside for activities. It's nice to see people out walking and bicycling around beautiful Ver-

nonia. Especially without having to use umbrellas. Last week I was approached by a mother asking me if there was a minimum age before a child could be left home alone and asked to write about it in my article.

There is no specific legal age in Oregon to leave a child home alone. There is, however, one law that provides a minimum guideline. Oregon's child neglect laws indicate a child

should be at least 10 years of age or older. This means that good judgment by a parent or guardian is very important.

Variables that need to be considered before leaving a child home alone include maturity of the child, the environment, and how long the child will be unattended. If the child is immature or unskilled at providing for themselves when alone or in an emergency, then

they are not old enough to be left alone no matter what age they are.

There are many issues and potential risks and dangers that parents should consider before a child is left home alone. Some of these issues include age readiness, parental "rules and expectations", how to contact parent or other adults (e.g. phone numbers), potentially unsafe situations, how/when to

answer phone or doorbell (not telling someone they are alone), use of phone, and friends and visitors coming to the house.

Many of these issues and questions also apply to young babysitters. The Vernonia Police Department is offering a "Babysitters Guide" for all prospective and current babysitters. I am also trying to get a  
**See page 24**

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