

# JIF NEWS

A Quarterly Newsletter from the Somerset County Joint Insurance Fund featuring Safety, Health & Wellness



## FALL DRIVING TIPS SOURCE: WWW.LOVETOKNOW.COM

As weather and road conditions change with the season, following fall driving safety tips will help keep you safe as you enjoy the cool crisp air and the beautiful colors of the autumn leaves.

### Dangers of Leaves on the Road

When leaves accumulate on the roadway and become wet, they can get extremely slippery, making the driving conditions similar to driving on ice. If the temperature drops below freezing, the wet leaves will freeze and turn into dangerous icy leaves on the roadway. Besides reducing the car's traction, causing skidding and the possibility of losing control of the vehicle, leaves often cover the painted road markings, making it difficult to know the locations of the lanes.

- Slow down if you are driving on a road covered with leaves, especially when driving around turns.
- Allow yourself plenty of room to stop in an emergency. Keep a greater distance between you and the car in front of you.
- Leaves make it difficult to see potholes and bumps in the road.
- A pile of leaves raked to the side of the road is an inviting place to a child. Children enjoy jumping into the leaf piles or burrowing down into them and hiding. Never drive through a leaf pile. Use caution going around turns and where children are playing.
  - In order to avoid the possibility of a fire hazard from the exhaust system or catalytic converter, never park your vehicle over a pile of leaves .

### Change in Weather Condition

In many areas, autumn is a damp, wet season. There are many rainy or foggy days and nights. As the temperatures drop, frost often coats the ground at night.

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## BACKPACK SAFETY... IT'S TIME TO LIGHTEN THE LOAD

When you move your child's backpack after he or she drops it at the door, does it feel like it contains 40 pounds of rocks? Maybe you've noticed your child struggling to put it on, bending forward while carrying it, or complaining of tingling or numbness. If you've been concerned about the effects that extra weight might have on your child's still-growing body, your instincts are correct.

Backpacks that are too heavy can cause a lot of problems for kids, like back and shoulder pain, and poor posture. The problem has grabbed the attention of lawmakers in some states, who have pushed for legislation requiring school districts to lighten the load.

While we wait for solutions like digital textbooks to become wide-spread, there are things you can do to help prevent injury. While it's common these days to see children carrying as much as a quarter of their body weight, the American Chiropractic Association recommends a backpack weigh no more than 10 percent of a child's weight.

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# WHAT YOU CAN DO TO AVOID THE FLU

Fever, headache, fatigue, dry cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, nausea: If these symptoms hit, you may have been bitten by the flu bug.

## Who is Most Vulnerable?

During the 2014–15 flu season, people over age 65 comprised 60% of all cases of flu in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In February, the CDC reported that the number of people over age 65 hospitalized for flu was at the highest level since the CDC began recording those numbers in 2005. Children from birth to age 4 represented the second-highest hospitalization rate this season.

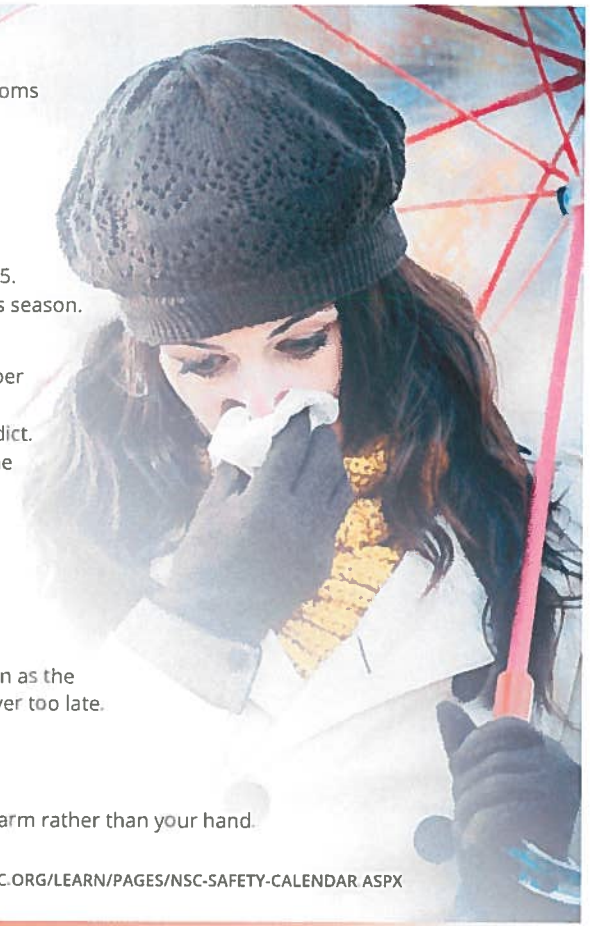
## U.S. Experiences a Flu Epidemic Every Year

- Flu season occurs in the fall and winter, peaking some time between late November and early March, and it's an epidemic every year.
- The makeup of flu viruses can change from year to year, making it difficult to predict. This flu season, "mismatched H3N2 flu viruses" were working their way around the country, producing widespread cases with high severity, the CDC reported.
- Flu spreads through droplets when people sneeze or cough, and on surfaces. People are contagious one day before symptoms appear and up to a week after becoming sick. When you don't feel well, it's best to take care of yourself and co-workers by staying home until your fever is gone for at least 24 hours.

## What Can You do to Stay Healthy?

- CDC recommends everyone older than 6 months get an annual flu vaccine as soon as the vaccine becomes available; October is the ideal time to get vaccinated, but it's never too late.
- If you don't like needles, ask your doctor if a nasal flu spray is available.
- Avoid being around sick people if possible.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer.
- Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing, preferably with the inside of your arm rather than your hand.
- Avoid touching your face.
- Disinfect surfaces that may be contaminated.

SOURCE: [WWW.NSC.ORG/LEARN/PAGES/NSC-SAFETY-CALENDAR ASPX](http://WWW.NSC.ORG/LEARN/PAGES/NSC-SAFETY-CALENDAR ASPX)



## FALL DRIVING TIPS CONT.

- When driving in fog, set your headlight to low beam. This setting aims the beam of light down toward the roadway.
- In the fall as temperatures drop, frost often forms on the roadway, causing hazardous driving conditions. Drive slowly and break gently at overpasses and bridges as these areas frost over more quickly than other roadway surfaces.
- Be aware of areas where black ice forms on the roadway.

### Adjust for Fewer Hours of Daylight

In the fall there are fewer hours of daylight. In the earlier darkness it is common to see children outside playing or riding their bicycles. People are walking their dogs, jogging or taking late afternoon or evening walks. In the fading light of dusk it is more difficult to see the children and pedestrians.

- Watch out for children at their bus stops in the morning and as they return home in the afternoon.
- Halloween is a fun fall holiday. Children are out trick or treating and may be wearing masks or costumes that limit their visibility.
- Always drive defensively.

### Additional Fall Safety Driving Tips

- Always keep a pair of sunglasses in your vehicle. Fall sunrises and sunsets can often create a large amount of glare, making it difficult to see other vehicles. Wearing sunglasses reduces this danger.
- Deer are more apt to run into the roadway especially at dawn and dusk since the fall is an active breeding time. If you see a deer cross the roadway, proceed very slowly as they often travel in groups.

## BACKPACK SAFETY CONT.

When selecting a backpack, look for:

- An ergonomic design
- The correct size: never wider or longer than your child's torso and never hanging more than 4 inches below the waist
- Padded back and shoulder straps
- Hip and chest belts to help transfer some of the weight to the hips and torso
- Multiple compartments to better distribute the weight
- Compression straps on the sides or bottom to stabilize the contents
- Reflective material

Remember: A roomy backpack may seem like a good idea, but the more space there is to fill, the more likely your child will fill it. Make sure your child uses both straps when carrying the backpack. Using one strap shifts the weight to one side and causes muscle pain and posture problems.

### What About Backpacks on Wheels?

They are so common these days, they're almost cool. But, the ACA is not giving them a strong endorsement.

Rolling backpacks should be used "cautiously and on a limited basis by only those students who are not physically able to carry a backpack," the ACA website reads. The reason? They clutter school corridors, replacing a potential back injury hazard with a tripping hazard.