



1-800-222-1222

# UPDATE

POISON CONTROL PROGRAM



[www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov](http://www.PoisonHelp.hrsa.gov)

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## WINTER 2009

### Poison Control Program is Reauthorized Through 2014

On October 8, 2008, the President signed into law the "Poison Center Support, Enhancement, and Awareness Act of 2008." The new legislation reauthorizes the Poison Center national toll-free number and the national media campaign to educate the public and health care providers about the toll-free number, poison prevention, and Poison Center resources. The legislation also reauthorizes the grant program for Poison Centers for the purposes of preventing and providing treatment recommendations for poisoning.

### HRSA Partners with the National Safety Council for Community Action

Through a contract with HRSA, the National Safety Council (NSC) will enhance and expand its Poison Prevention Community Action Kit to incorporate Poison Centers as a leading resource for poison prevention activities. The kit currently includes information and outreach materials covering household chemicals and pesticides; medication misuse and abuse; illicit drugs, alcohol, and inhalants; carbon monoxide; lead poisoning; and plants. To maximize efficient use of the kit, the NSC will facilitate a series of training workshops for NSC representatives and Poison Center educators. The workshops will focus on promoting the kit, identifying at-risk populations and establishing partnerships between NSC chapters and Poison Centers. The new kit is expected to be available online in Fall 2009.

### National Poison Prevention Week, March 2009

MARK YOUR CALENDARS! National Poison Prevention Week is March 15-21, 2009. As National Poison Prevention Week approaches, find out what events will occur in your community by calling your Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. Or, plan your own poison prevention activity! Check for the new downloadable Poison Prevention Week Planner from <http://poisonhelp.hrsa.gov> <http://poisonhelp.hrsa.gov> in January 2009 or email [rsanchez-barrett@hrsa.gov](mailto:rsanchez-barrett@hrsa.gov) if you'd like to receive a copy. In the planner, you will find ideas for events and activities, information about how to partner with your local poison center and strategies to promote your events with media and community outreach.

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## Winter Safety Tips

Follow these tips to help keep you and your family healthy and safe this winter season.

- Store salt used on driveways and sidewalks out of reach and in a locked cabinet.
- Keep antifreeze in the container it came in, capped tightly, and in a locked cabinet
- Carbon Monoxide (CO) is the number one cause of poison deaths. All fuel-burning devices make CO. Have at least one CO alarm in your home.
- Avoid using glass mercury thermometers. A glass thermometer can break in a child's mouth.

For more winter poison prevention tips, visit [Poison Help](#) or call your Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

## Dr. Steven Marcus Highlights Poison Centers for the FDA

Dr. Steven Marcus, Executive Director of the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES), was invited to speak at the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) White Oak Campus in Silver Spring, MD this fall as part of a visiting lecture series sponsored by the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. His presentation, "*FDA-Poison Center Partnership*," was prompted by the FDA's interest in pursuing a closer working relationship with Poison Centers. Dr. Marcus discussed the history of Poison Centers, new trends in the surveillance of toxic exposure data, and the possibility of greater data exchange between Poison Centers and the FDA. To highlight the value of sharing data, Dr. Marcus cited several examples of data captured by Poison Centers that could also be of research and regulatory use for the FDA. Examples he shared included an outbreak of contaminated blow fish along the Northeastern Corridor and the recent increase of opioid overdoses in New Jersey. Dr. Marcus concluded by underscoring that a partnership between the FDA and Poison Centers could serve as a model for developing cooperative agreements with other Federal agencies.

## Child Poisoning Remains an Important Health Concern

Despite dramatic decreases in the number of fatal child poisonings over the past several decades, approximately 86,000 U.S. children were treated in hospital emergency departments in 2004 after ingesting drugs, cleaning products, and/or other poisonous substances, according to a new study. In "Unintentional Child Poisonings Treated in United States Hospital Emergency Departments: National Estimates of Incident Cases, Population-Based Poisoning Rates, and Product Involvement," researchers reviewed data from the US Consumer Product Safety Commission National Electronic Injury Surveillance System, related to unintentional poisonings in children, ages 4 and younger, who were treated in hospital emergency rooms. The review found that about 70 percent of the poisonings involved children ages 1 or 2; more than half involved boys; and 13.3 percent resulted in hospital admission. Nearly 60 percent of the poisonings involved oral prescription drugs, nonprescription drugs, or supplements. The study authors state that

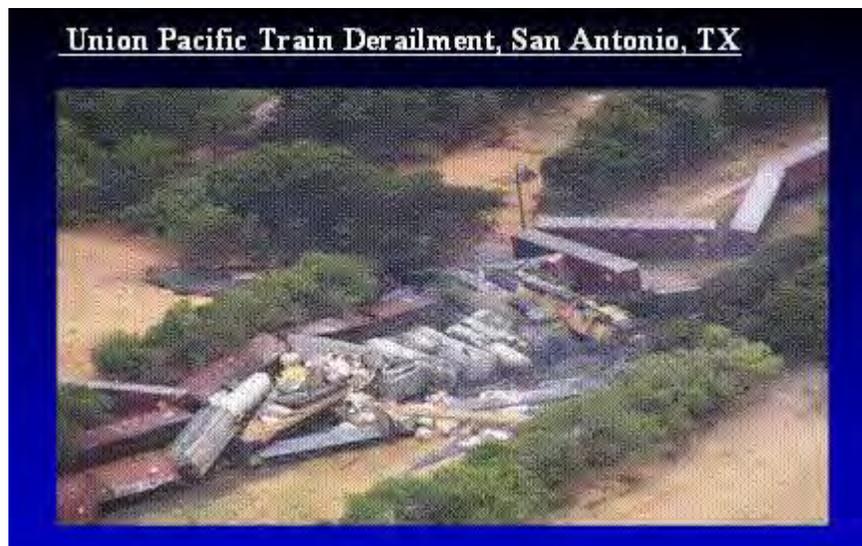
child poisoning remains a "serious health concern," and that additional research is needed to better understand the circumstances surrounding unintentional poisonings, and improvements made to child resistant packaging.

*From the American Academy of Pediatrics December 2008 Media Mailing. For more information, contact Gregory B. Rodgers, PhD, at 301-504-7702 or [grodgers@cpsc.gov](mailto:grodgers@cpsc.gov) or Robert L. Franklin at 301-504-7708 or [rfranklin@cpsc.gov](mailto:rfranklin@cpsc.gov).*

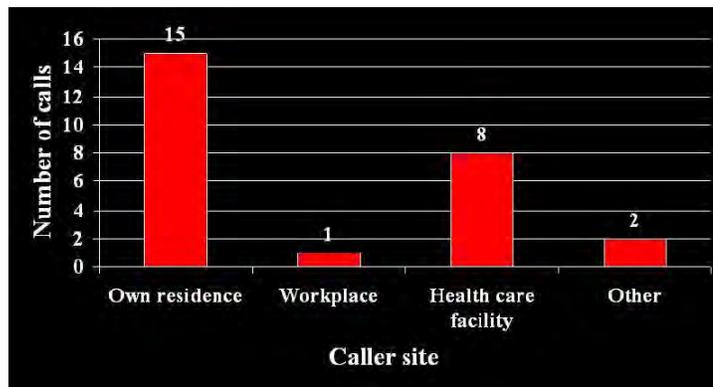
## Environmental Protection Agency Region 6 to Team up with Poison Centers

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Region 6 Regional Response Team (RRT) is seeking to partner with Poison Centers during responses to hazardous materials incidents in Region 6 (Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, and New Mexico). As one of 13 RRTs in the country, the EPA's RRTs are responsible for preparedness planning and training to ensure effective response to the release of hazardous substances. The Region 6 RRT has agreed to draft guidance on the utilization of Poison Centers with the goal of establishing a protocol so that environmental response agencies can quickly and efficiently access the expertise, resources and services provided by Poison Centers in the event of chemical disasters.

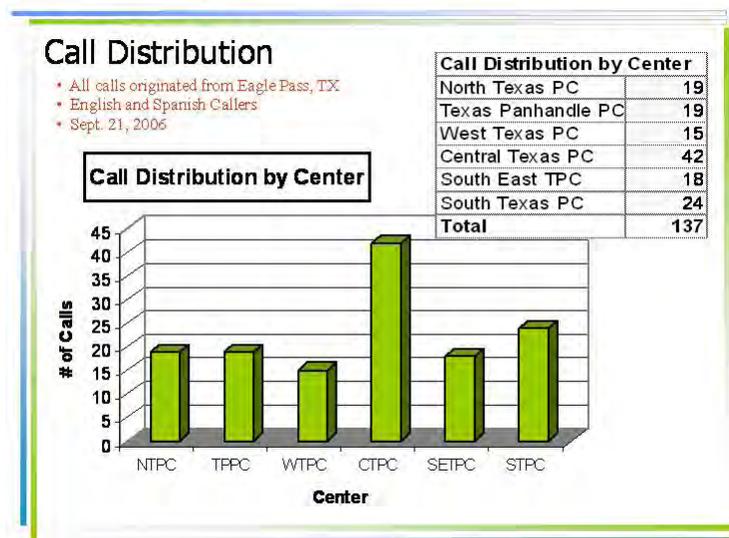
An example of EPA's past interface with Poison Centers includes a chlorine and ammonia spill resulting from a train derailment that occurred outside of San Antonio, TX in 2004. The EPA, working together with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), alerted the network of Poison Centers in Texas to the spill and called on them to triage calls pertaining to inhalation concerns from the public. The graph below illustrates the variety of calls received by the Texas Poison Centers.



*Texas Poison Centers activated nationally to assist EPA address public health*



Another example includes a 2006 HAZMAT Disaster Drill field exercise in Eagle Pass, TX that also incorporated the Texas Poison Center's network call system. The unannounced field exercise simulated a chlorine liquid and gas chemical release from a 2-ton tanker collision on a major highway. Employees of the City of Eagle Pass volunteered to flood the Poison Help number with phone calls. With an interconnected system of 6 centers, the Texas Poison Centers were able to handle more than 137 calls within a 2 hour period of time. The graph below reflects the telephone role over capability as calls were generated from Eagle Pass and distributed across the Texas network.

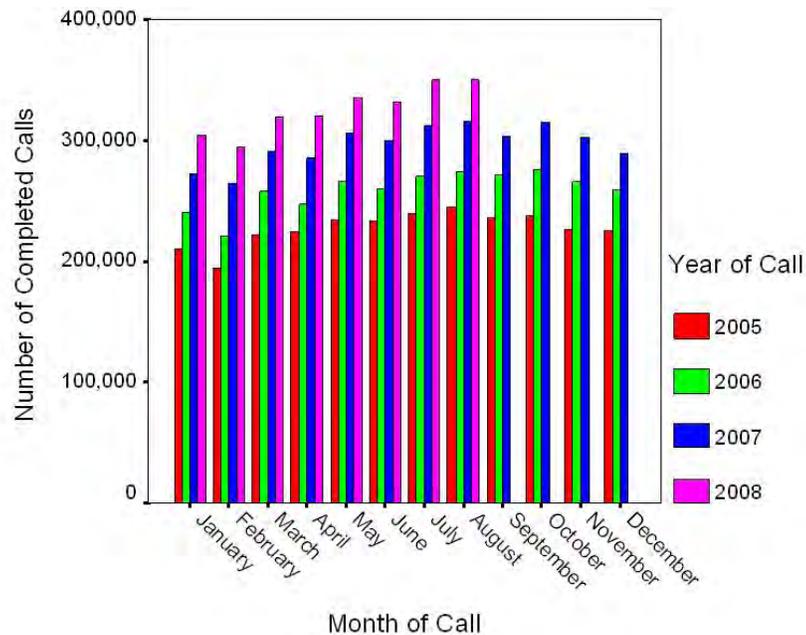


In addition to drafting guidance on utilization of Poison Centers, the Region 6 RRT has also developed recommendations for expansion of partnerships with Poison Centers to other regions. The Region 6 RRT will present their recommendations to the National Response Team (NRT), an interagency group of Federal partners co-chaired by the EPA and U.S. Coast Guard, that serves as a planning, policy and coordinating body for all the RRTs in the country. If you would like more information, please contact CDR Patrick Young at [Young.Patrick@epamail.epa.gov](mailto:Young.Patrick@epamail.epa.gov).

## 1-800-222-1222 Toll-Free Number Usage Statistics, 2005-2008

The HRSA Poison Control Program operates a national 1-800 number that connects callers directly to their local Poison Center where nurses, pharmacists, and other poison experts assist the caller. Poison Centers handle calls 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. The graphic and table below present the number of completed toll-free calls by year and month since 2005.

*Number of Completed Toll-Free Calls as Function of Year and Month of Call*



The graph illustrates that the total number of completed toll-free calls increased by 30 percent with 2,731,469 calls in 2005 to 3,556,256 calls in 2007. The lowest number of completed calls were recorded in February 2005 ( $n = 193,946$ ), while the highest number of completed calls were recorded in July 2008 ( $n = 350,204$ ). Calls from September - December 2008 are not presented due to the unavailability of these data at the time of newsletter publication.

*Number of Completed Toll-Free Calls as a Function of Year and Month of Call*

		YEAR			
		2005	2006	2007	2008
M O N T H	January	210,550	240,590	271,990	304,481
	February	193,946	221,219	264,133	294,625
	March	222,026	257,921	291,094	319,458
	April	224,966	247,370	285,337	320,208
	May	234,807	266,044	305,732	335,339
	June	233,564	259,576	299,685	331,987
	July	239,673	270,179	312,379	350,204
	August	245,560	273,395	316,291	349,571
	September	236,432	271,164	303,495	----
	October	238,423	275,720	314,710	----
	November	226,445	265,331	302,581	----
	December	225,077	258,172	288,829	----
Total Annual		2,731,469	3,106,681	3,556,256	2,605,873

## Public Education Efforts Lead to Increase in Poison Center Call Volume in Wyoming

The Nebraska Regional Poison Center (NRPC) has provided Poison Center services to the State of Wyoming since 1992. However, resources to support public education were minimal until 2002 when funds became available through HRSA's Poison Control Program's Incentive Grant Program. With HRSA's support from 2002 to 2004, the NRPC initiated an ambitious education plan that led the NRPC's educator to journey throughout Wyoming to raise awareness about poison prevention. The educator logged thousands of miles with media interviews and visits to hospitals, health departments, schools and pharmacies to make presentations, distribute materials and develop relationships. Since then the number of calls to the NRPC from Wyoming has significantly increased. This was the conclusion reached by the NRPC and the University of Nebraska Medical Center in a review of population trends and human exposure calls received by NRPC and as reported to the American Association of Poison Control Centers from 1998 to 2007. The review revealed that the number of human exposure calls was significantly higher in 2007 compared with all previous years. The NRPC believes that a multi-faceted approach to public education, including on-site visits by a Poison Center educator, led to the statistically significant increase in human exposure calls from Wyoming.

## Poison Center Technical Assistance Spotlight

HRSA's Poison Center Technical Assistance Resource Center (PC TARC) facilitated the September 2008 gathering of the Poison Workgroup in Crystal City, VA. The Workgroup, originally formed in 2006, includes members from government, academia and public health with an interest in poison prevention and surveillance. The latest meeting focused on reducing morbidity and mortality from prescription pain medication use and abuse, particularly among middle-aged adult males. PC TARC facilitated strategic working sessions where members began to develop action plans to target consumers, prescribers and policy makers about this issue. The draft action plans should be finalized by the end of 2008. If you would like more information about the Poison Workgroup please contact Monique Sheppard at [sheppard@pire.org](mailto:sheppard@pire.org) or 301-755-2728.

The PC TARC has also provided technical assistance to the Connecticut Poison Control Center (CPCC) on the layout and design of their [2006 and 2007 Biennial Report on Poisoning in Connecticut](#). Regarding the experience, Buddy Sangalli, Director of the CPCC said, "Working with the PC TARC was easy and they were responsive to our needs. We provided all the material (data, text, and images) and their team did the rest. The result was a polished report in both Web-friendly and print-friendly formats.

## Poison Help Web Site and Digital Advertising Campaign Update

Following the launch of the new Poison Help Campaign, the <http://poisonhelp.hrsa.gov> site continues to have, on average, more than 1,500 unique visitors per week. Visitors to the site consistently view the digital advertising page (ranging from 70-90 percent of views

in any given week), followed by the [Home page](#), [Campaign FAQ](#), and [Find Your Poison Center](#). The average visitor spends more than 5 minutes on the site and views two to three pages. Visitors often come to the site to download information. The top downloads include:

- Newsletters
- FAQ
- Seasonal tip sheets
- Poison Help brochure
- Radio jingle

The [Poison Help digital advertising campaign](#) continues to see success both on the *USA Today* and Web MD Web sites with almost 50 percent of the visitors viewing the entire ad.