Driving on the Right Side of the Road
Skateboarding Safety

JUST THE FACTS

- In 2009, there were approximately 74,841 injuries to children involving skateboards.1
  - Of those 74,841 injuries, an estimated 3,054 were serious injuries.2
- 60% of skateboard injuries involve children under age 15; most of those injured are boys.
- At highest risk are:
  - Inexperienced skateboarders. Those who have been skating for less than one week suffer one-third of injuries, usually caused by falls.
  - Skateboarders who do not wear protective equipment. Every skateboarder should wear standard safety gear. This includes a helmet, wrist guards, elbow and knee pads, and appropriate shoes. Skateboarders who perform tricks should use heavy duty gear.
  - Skateboarders who go near traffic or use homemade skateboard ramps. Both activities are particularly dangerous.
  - Experienced skateboarders who encounter unexpected surfaces or try risky stunts. Irregular riding surfaces, rocks, or other debris can cause you to fall. You can stumble over twigs or fall down slopes. Wet pavements and rough or uneven surfaces can cause a wipeout. Avoid risky behavior. Don't skateboard too fast or in dangerous or crowded locations.
- Skateboarders who have been skating for less than a week suffer one-third of all skateboarding injuries; riders with a year or more of experience have the next highest number of injuries.3
- Injuries to first-time skateboarders are mainly due to falls.4
- Experienced riders mainly suffer injuries when they fall after their skateboards strike rocks and other irregularities in the riding surface or when they attempt difficult stunts.5
- Skateboarding is a special risk for young children6 because:
  - Children have a higher center of gravity, less development and poor balance. These factors make children more likely to fall and hurt their heads.
  - Children are less able to break their falls since they have slower reactions and less coordination than adults.
  - Children overestimate their skills and abilities and are inexperienced in judging speed, traffic, and other risks.
- Serious skateboarding injuries happen when you lose control and fall or run into a motor vehicle, road hazard, pedestrian, another skateboarder or bicyclist.7

Adapted from Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet8, Skateboarding Safety9, and Skateboards Fact Sheet10

IT’S THE LAW

- Eight states and the District of Columbia require children to wear a helmet while participating in other wheeled sports, such as riding on scooters, inline skates, or skateboards.11
- Texas laws do not specifically address skateboarding. Laws that apply to pedestrians and bicycling may apply. A number of cities have specific ordinances that govern skateboarding. Check your city's website or http://www.municode.com for ordinances that apply to your town or city. Below are several examples of the types of local laws that have been adopted by cities across the state:
- Many cities have made it against the law to ride a skateboard on any public street except when crossing a street in a crosswalk. For instance, the City of San Marcos has the following ordinance:

DRSR, Information Sheet: Skateboarding Safety, Page 1 of 3
Last revised on August 31, 2012
- It is unlawful for a person upon roller skates, inline skates, a skateboard, or riding in or by means of any coaster, toy vehicle, or similar device to go upon any public street, except while crossing a street in a crosswalk.  
  - Several other cities have nearly identical ordinances.

- It is not uncommon for a city to ban skateboarding in a certain area of the city. For example:
  - San Marcos has made it unlawful to ride a skateboard within the central business area zoning district.
  - Denton has made it unlawful to ride a skateboard within 500 feet of certain intersections as long as signs are posted.
  - A Fort Worth ordinance bans skateboarding in designated parks and recreation areas where signs are posted indicating that skating is prohibited.
  - Galveston does not allow people to ride a skateboard in the entertainment areas of the city unless the person has obtained approval from the city park board of trustees to do so. Galveston also does not allow skateboarding in a specific area “between and including 19th and 25th Streets and between and including Water and Church Streets.” Violating the ordinance is punishable by a fine of up to $500.
  - San Antonio prohibits riding a skateboard on walking and running tracks and trails in two city parks listed in an ordinance.

- Cities are also likely to ban “skitching” or clinging to a vehicle on a roadway. An example is this San Antonio ordinance:
  - Any person riding upon any bicycle, motorcycle, coaster, roller skates, sled, or any toy vehicle shall not attach the same or himself to a moving vehicle upon any roadway.

**KEEP IT SAFE**

- Ride skateboards on smooth, dry surfaces located in a well-lit area.
- Never ride on the street, at night or on any surface that has water, sand, dirt, or gravel.
- Wear a helmet, wrist brace, and protective gear (slip resistant shoes, padding for hips, knees, elbows, and gloves).
- Never hold onto the side or rear of a moving vehicle while riding a skateboard (“skitching”). You could fall or be thrown into oncoming traffic if the vehicle suddenly slows, stops or turns.
- Avoid skateboarding in crowded walkways, in wet weather, or in darkness.
- Always screen the area before you skateboard, inspecting surfaces for rocks and other debris.
- Don’t take chances:
  - Complicated tricks require careful practice and a specially designated area.
  - Only one person per skateboard.
  - Never hitch a ride from a car, truck, bus, bicycle, etc.
- Learning how to fall in case of a crash may help reduce your chances of being seriously injured.
- If you are losing your balance, crouch down on the skateboard so that you will not have so far to fall.
- In a fall, try to land on the fleshy parts of your body.
- In a fall, try to roll rather than absorb the force with your arms.
- Even though it may be difficult during a fall, try to relax your body, rather than stiffen it.

Adapted from *Skateboard Safety for Kids, Skateboarding Safety, and Skateboards Fact Sheet*.

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2 See *Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet* - endnote 1

4. See Skateboards Fact Sheet - endnote 3
5. See Skateboards Fact Sheet - endnote 3
7. See Skateboarding Safety - endnote 5
8. See Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet - endnote 1
9. See Skateboarding Safety - endnote 5
10. See Skateboards Fact Sheet - endnote 3
11. See Bicycling and Skating Safety Fact Sheet - endnote 1
22. See Skateboarding Safety - endnote 5
23. See Skateboards Fact Sheet - endnote 3