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Protecting Health, Saving Lives—*Millions at a Time*

## **National Public Health Week Calls Attention to Injury Prevention**

***Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy and APHA Host Kick-off Event to Highlight Safety is No Accident: Live Injury-Free Theme***

The Center for Injury Research and Policy at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHSPH) is joining with the American Public Health Association (APHA) to bring awareness to the importance of injury and violence prevention during National Public Health Week (NPHW). Unintentional injuries, including those from motor vehicle traffic crashes, falls, poisonings, suffocations, drowning, and fires/burns, are the leading cause of death in the U.S. for people ages 1 to 44 and the fifth-leading cause of death for all ages. This year's kick-off event, taking place at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Md., marks the first time in the history of National Public Health Week that the two institutions have come together to launch the annual public health awareness week.

Public health students, staff and faculty will join community members to hear remarks from Dr. Georges Benjamin, Executive Director of APHA, Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Secretary of Health for the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and Dr. Andrea Gielen, Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy. As part of their visit to the Bloomberg School, Drs. Benjamin and Sharfstein will also tour the CARES Mobile Safety Center, a forty-foot vehicle built as a house on wheels that features interactive educational exhibits on injury prevention and low-cost safety products that is run by the Injury Center in partnership with the Baltimore City Fire Department.

The American Public Health Association (APHA) serves as the organizer of National Public Health Week and develops a national campaign to educate the public, policy makers and practitioners about issues related to the theme. This year's theme, Safety is No Accident: Live Injury Free, was selected because injury is a major public health problem and a leading cause of death and disability for Americans. Each year, nearly 150,000 people die from injuries, and almost 30 million people are hurt seriously enough to go to the emergency room.

“Creating a healthier nation starts with creating a safer nation, and that means everyone needs to take small steps to improve the safety of their own communities,” said Dr. Benjamin, the APHA’s executive director. “The CARES Mobile Safety Center is an excellent model of community education and engagement around safety and injury prevention.” Throughout the year, the CARES Safety Center visits neighborhoods and community events; trained health education specialists use interactive exhibits to teach parents and children how to prevent burns, falls, strangulation, poisoning and other unintended injuries in their homes and neighborhoods.

“Injury is a risk for all age groups and often can be prevented,” according to Joshua M. Sharfstein, MD, Secretary of Health for the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. “Simple actions like buckling up and not using a cell phone while driving, and wearing a helmet while biking, can reduce one’s risk of serious injury.” In 2008, there were 514,603 injury-related hospital emergency department visits, 60,139 injury-related hospitalizations and 3,551 injury-related deaths in Maryland, costing the state over \$217 million in emergency department charges and \$855 million in hospitalization charges.

Andrea Gielen, ScD, ScM, director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and president of the Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research (SAVIR), emphasized the Center’s commitment to translating injury prevention research into practice.

“Research and its application to programs and policies has helped reduce the toll of injuries. A big challenge now is getting the lifesaving information and proven effective safety products like smoke alarms and car seats to those who need them most. National Public Health Week is an ideal time to call attention to this need and the many ways dedicated public health professionals are addressing it,” said Gielen.

In addition to the seminar and tour of the mobile safety center, the Johns Hopkins Center for Injury Research and Policy is asking the community to share how injury has impacted their lives by posting to the Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/HopkinsInjuryStories> during National Public Health Week. Initiated by public health students committed to injury prevention as a field of study, this effort is a first of its kind for the Injury Center.

“By collecting these stories, we will demonstrate that injury impacts everyone, regardless of age, race or gender,” said Alicia Samuels, MPH, director of communications for the Center for Injury Research and Policy who is overseeing the Center’s NPHW effort. “We are

enthusiastic about using social media to engage public health students and the larger community. Together we can bring awareness to this critically important public health issue.”

For more information on National Public Health Week, please visit  
<http://www.nphw.org/nphw11>

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