



Each year, as the days lengthen in the spring and all through the summer and fall months, Cape Codders receive daily radio and newspaper reports of increasing numbers of accidents.

At the risk of repeating warnings about summer safety, let's take seriously some of the dangers surrounding us, here on the Cape, even though the weather is heavenly, the temperatures delightfully mild, and the skies and seas sparkling clear and blue.

We recognize the higher summer population makes for a greater incidence of death and injury on our highways, more drownings, more disasters on the water, more people hurt, maimed, killed.

And we recognize, too, in many cases the causes of accidents are ignorance or carelessness.

Automobiles take the heaviest toll and accidents involving cars are more apt to be serious than those involving other methods of transportation common to the Cape: bicycles, motorcycles, boats, horses and pedestrian traffic.

While we sorrow with the families of victims, we often feel the accidents might have been avoided, were not Acts of God, came about because people didn't know the danger or didn't respect it.

Those are the accidents we would most like to prevent, for the waste in human life and suffering seems needless and preventable.

While our roads are carrying more than twice as many cars as they do during the winter, careful driving saves lives and considerate driving saves lost tempers, another cause of accidents.

Thoughtful parking -- only in places designated for parking -- permits traffic to flow normally and safely. There is always a reason No Parking signs are placed, and even though it may be more convenient for you to leave your car in a No parking zone, please go a bit further along the street, or even around the block a couple of times until a place opens up near where you want to stop.

Your car, in a No Parking zone, can obstruct the vision of a driver of a moving vehicle; accident can result. It could mean the life of a child. You wouldn't be involved; another driver would be held responsible; but please care enough to be willing to walk a few extra yards to do your errand.

Only if you have sent a child out to play, and he's been seriously hurt or worse, can you appreciate fully what your carefulness means to the child's family.

This is but one example. Speed limits, no passing stripes (double or solid lines on the pavement), stop and yield signs, and the law prohibiting driving while under the influence of alcohol must, if we are to send you safely home again, be observed.

Lack of knowledge about the water can bring sorrow too. And does, week after week, all summer long to families of summer visitors. Swimming where there is no life guard or when there is none on duty can put your life on the line.

Calm water doesn't necessarily mean safety, since depths often change suddenly, and people who are unfamiliar with the bottom of ponds and lakes sometimes are lost when they step into deep water.

Surf on any beach creates strong currents, sometimes powerful enough to carry a swimmer into the tumbling waves where he cannot regain his footing. Tidal currents, river currents, especially in places where water is moving rapidly through a narrow channel, may sweep seaward even a strong and able swimmer.

Don't dive from anything, into any water, unless you know for certain there are no submerged rocks or pilings, and that the water is at least eight feet deep. You can break your neck if you dive into shallow water.

Boats of all kinds take lives on Cape Cod each year. Fishermen embark -- never to return -- repeatedly, all summer long. Seldom do we hear the reason, but those of us who've grown up surrounded the the ocean, living near the hundreds of fresh water ponds on the Cape believe we know.

The fisherman didn't realize how fast weather conditions can

change, or he overestimated his own endurance, or he slipped, lost his footing, went overboard, and couldn't reach his boat again.

It only takes a little wind to push an empty boat faster than a man can swim.

Boats with motors leave a wake behind them that can swamp smaller boats or put swimmers in jeopardy. A careless motorboater, swinging close to a beach, can take the life -- or the limb -- of some innocent person frolicking in the waves.

Please care enough to cut your speed and watch carefully for other people enjoying the ocean or bay or lake, while you are out on the water.

Remember the tide comes and goes in Cape Cod waters, and what may look like a lovely cove, where you can pull your boat up on the sand or marsh to explore an island, may be under six feet of water in a few hours, and your boat may drift away long before you return to where you left it.

Fog comes suddenly, silently, and landmarks disappear in seconds. If you get into trouble on the water, stay with your boat. Don't try to swim for shore. Distances are very deceiving on the water. Someone will miss you and come looking for you.

Never swim or sail or go out on a boat alone.

If you stay ashore and enjoy the water from a distance, protect yourself from too much sunburn. A severe burn may land you in the hospital, at worst; it can painfully spoil your holiday, at best.

If you bicycle, please follow the same rules cars must obey. Ride with traffic, observe one-way street signs, signal for turns and look both ways before changing lanes. The drivers of cars sharing the road with you aren't mindreaders.

Bicycles at night, like hitchhikers, are almost invisible to motorists meeting oncoming cars. If you ride or walk at night, please equip yourself with reflectors, lights, and light-colored clothing. No one wants to run into you, but if you can't be seen, someone is apt to do it.

Remember, there are a great many older people driving on your Cape highways; some of them may not see as well at night as in daylight. Their reactions to emergencies are slower than those of younger people. Light yourself up like a beacon. It's better than being a statistic.

Pedestrians, please be careful crossing busy streets. Don't jay walk, and don't step out from between parked cars. It's as much as your life's worth. Walking to the nearest corner or pedestrian crossing will take only another few minutes. Live a little -- longer.

Broken glass is a serious hazard. Increasingly, the roadsides and the sands of the beaches are littered with the accumulation of years of carelessly thrown bottles. Glass doesn't deteriorate. It remains where it falls, sharp edges ready to penetrate soft tissues of bodies.

Please wear shoes. Even a sandal sole can protect your foot from a shard of broken glass. Though the glass may cut through the sole, the resulting wound will be less serious.

Sand dunes appear to be ideal "jumping off places", but the bases of many of them have been for years favorite picnicking spots, and there, buried beneath the wind-blown grains of sand, remain pieces of broken bottles and jars. Don't jump into sand when you don't know what's beneath the surface.

Cape Codders welcome our summer visitors, and want them to enjoy their holiday, and to return home with happy memories and glorious tans. We are sad when you get hurt while here, when you're injured or killed.

We ask you to be careful of yourselves and others, to be thoughtful and considerate, and to use good judgement about the roads, the beaches, and the water.

It's beautiful, yes; but it can also be deadly. Please, be smart. Be careful.