



ProHelmet.org

Contact: Ken Dey
(208) 381-2894 (office)
(208) 631-5322 (cell)
Deyke@slrhc.org

PROHelmet contact: Steve Stuebner
(208) 484-0295 (cell)
sstuebner@cableone.net

May 12 is Wear Your Helmet to Work Day

-- St. Luke's Children's Hospital is partnering with Boise-based PROHelmet to raise awareness about the importance of wearing a helmet --

Each day in Idaho, thousands of people put themselves at risk by not wearing a helmet while biking and participating in other activities.

Nationwide, bike related crashes kill approximately 800 people and injure more than 560,000 each year, yet only about half of all bike riders nationwide wear a helmet.

To promote helmet use, St. Luke's Children's Hospital joined with the Boise-based organization PROHelmet to host a Wear Your Helmet to Work Day on May 12.

St. Luke's physicians and staff in the Boise emergency department and St. Luke's Children's Hospital donned helmets of all types during the day to emphasize the importance of wearing helmets not just while biking, but also while participating in other high risk activities.

Research has shown that wearing helmets reduces the risk of serious head and brain injury by 85 percent," said Dr. Jill Beck, a pediatric ear, nose and throat surgeon who practices at St. Luke's and chairs the PROHelmet board of directors.

In Idaho, helmet use lags far behind the national average.

From 2004 to 2008, the number of bicycle crashes involving automobiles in Idaho increased by nearly 25 percent. In 2008, the Idaho Transportation Department reported 344 bicyclists involved in crashes, yet only 58 of those bicyclists were wearing helmets. The crashes caused two deaths and 50 serious injuries.

"As a physician, it's really sad to see patients come into the hospital with severe head injuries that could have been prevented by the use of a helmet," Beck said.

-more-

Children and young people remain the most at risk for crashes. In 2008, just under half of the crashes in Idaho involved riders 19 and younger. Safe Kids USA estimates that nationwide 70 percent of children ages 5 to 14 ride bikes, but less than 25 percent wear helmets.

Some states have mandatory helmet laws, but Idaho isn't one of them and Beck says Idaho has one of the lowest rates of helmet use in the nation.

The goal is to make this an annual event and encourage other businesses and organizations to participate.

"If nothing else, we hope this education campaign will help people realize that they can save their life and their children's lives by making a small investment in a helmet," Beck said.

Raising awareness about the importance of wearing helmets has long been a goal of St. Luke's Children's Hospital. Through its sponsorship of Safe Kids Treasure Valley, St. Luke's has focused on increasing the availability of helmets to children across the region.

Over the last two years, Safe Kids Treasure Valley has distributed more than 1,500 helmets to children free of charge. The donations have been made possible through community donations and grants from organizations such as Kohl's department store.

PRO Helmet is a new not-for-profit organization that seeks to educate and inform Idaho citizens about the importance of wearing helmets when riding bicycles or engaging in high-risk sports such as skate-boarding, skiing and snowboarding. The PROHelmet board of directors includes Dr. Jill Beck; Olympic gold-medalist Kristin Armstrong; Boise attorney Debora Kristensen; and Lynn Johnston, a Boise community activist.

-end-