

Safe Communities Initiative

Re-Designation Vorarlberg 2012



A. Structure of the community

Injuries from accidents (statistics)

In Austria injuries from accidents have a significant impact on public health. About 10% of all in-patient hospital treatment is related to accidents. Three quarters of all accidents take place in the private sector (leisure time, domestic work and play, and sports activities). Decreasing the frequency of these types of injuries is an effective way of promoting health consciousness, reducing health costs, preventing human suffering and preserving a better quality of life.

The following commentaries on accident risks in Austria - specifically in the province of Vorarlberg - are made based on researches within the framework of the IDB (Injury Database). This database has been compiled annually by the Austrian Traffic Safety Board (KfV) since 1992, using interviews made in hospitals about accidents. The current information refers to the publication of leisure time statistics from the year 2009 (Source: Austrian Traffic Safety Board, 2009):

- Two thirds of all leisure time accidents treated in hospitals took place in the home and garden, or while doing leisure time activities; the remaining accidents happened during sports activities. Among the under-60 age group, men generally were involved more than women in all types of accidents. However, in accidents at home or during leisure time activities the opposite is the case. Here female senior citizens, beginning at the age of 60, were significantly more at risk than their male counterparts.
- From the age of 80 the risk of home and leisure time accidents increases. At home or during leisure time activities more than 100 out of 1,000 persons over 80 years of age are injured to such a degree that they need hospital attention. In the over-90 age group the number rises to 200 injured per 1,000 persons. Above all, falls - for example, slipping in the bath or tripping over stairs - are the major causes of injuries among senior citizens.
- The second largest group of persons injured at home or in leisure time activities includes small children up to the age of four years, with about 98 accidents per 1,000 persons in this age group. The most frequent accidents result from falls from heights or from a nappy changing table.
- The age group 15 to 19 years had the greatest risk of accidents doing sports, with 59 accidents per 1,000 persons. Young men are more apt to take risks than young women - two thirds of the injuries in this age group occurred among men.

Political decisions regarding sustainable injury prevention and safety promotion

The political decision to pursue a sustainable policy of injury prevention was made by founding the independently funded Safe Communities. Below the Foundation's official declaration is reproduced.

Fondserklärung - Fonds - Entwurf 0.6 / Stand 26.6.1997

Fonds „SICHERE GEMEINDEN“

Fondserklärung

Die nachstehend angeführten Fondsgründer

Land Vorarlberg
vertreten durch
Herrn Landesstatthalter
Dr. Hans-Peter Bischof
Römerstraße
6900 Bregenz

Vorarlberger Gebietskrankenkasse
vertreten durch
Herrn Obmann
Dipl. Vw. Wieland Reiner
Jahrstraße 4
6850 Dornbirn

Vorarlberger Gemeindeverband
vertreten durch
Herrn Präsidenten
Mag. Wilfried Berchtold
Rathaus
6850 Dornbirn

errichten einen Fonds mit dem Namen

Fonds „SICHERE GEMEINDEN“

und widmen hierfür ein Gründungskapital von S 1.000.000,--

Dieser Fonds ist eine Einrichtung mit Rechtspersönlichkeit i.S. des Gesetzes über Stiftungen und Fonds im Lande Vorarlberg, LGBl.Nr. 10/1947, i.d.g.F.

Der Fonds dient der gemeinschaftlichen Finanzierung und Durchführung des landesweiten Projektes "SICHERE GEMEINDEN". Das Projekt „SICHERE GEMEINDEN“ verfolgt das Ziel der Reduktion von Unfallzahlen im Bereich aller Unfallrisiken (v.a. im Haushalt-, Sport- und Freizeitbereich) und damit die Reduktion von menschlichem Leid sowie von Unfallfolgekosten. Das Projekt baut auf einer bürgernahen, subsidiären Umsetzung von Aktionen, Maßnahmen und Projekten im Nahraum auf und verfolgt die Schaffung einer landesweiten lokal getragenen Unfallverhütungsstruktur (Details sind dem „Rahmenkonzept“ des Projektes zu entnehmen).


Die Tätigkeit des Fonds ist gemeinnützig und nicht auf die Erzielung von Gewinn ausgerichtet.

Die Verwaltung und Vertretung des Fonds soll durch folgende Organe erfolgen:

- a) der/die Vorsitzende,
- b) das Kuratorium,
- c) die Vollversammlung,
- d) die Geschäftsführung (Projektleitung),
- e) der Fachbeirat.

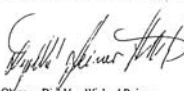
Bregenz, am 26.6.1997

Für das Land Vorarlberg:



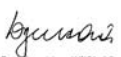
Landesstatthalter Dr. Hans-Peter Bischof

Für die Vorarlberger Gebietskrankenkasse:



Obmann Dipl. Vw. Wieland Reiner

Für den Vorarlberger Gemeindeverband:



Präsident Mag. Wilfried Berchtold

Political responsibility and administrative organisation of the programme

The Safe Communities Initiative is situated politically in the Department of Health of the Province of Vorarlberg and has been organised since 1997 as an independent foundation, with its headquarters located in the town of Dornbirn (one of 96 Vorarlberg townships). Its primary political goal for the entire region is to reduce the numbers of accidents, thereby reducing or preventing human suffering and the resulting costs. The Foundation partners defined and established this goal within the conceptual framework of Safe Communities, under the aegis of the Province of Vorarlberg.

The strategic programme on safety promotion and injury prevention

The Foundation's declaration, which was approved for an indefinite period of time, makes it possible to continuously implement a large number of activities dealing with the most varied topics related to accident prevention within the framework of sustainable health promotion. In addition to implementing standardised programmes on accident prevention and health promotion, more and more topics can be focused on for periods of several years. Examples of strategic programmes already implemented include:

- "Child-oriented. A Child's Game": Protecting children is a special concern within the scope of the Safe Communities' activities. For this reason the initiative "Children in the Middle" was given priority within the larger framework of a province-wide focal initiative entitled "Child-oriented. A Child's Game". [www](#)
- "Keeping in Balance": Because of demographic developments and the increased potential of risks among senior citizens, a cooperative agreement was reached with the support of the Vorarlberg Provincial Government to carry out a long-term programme emphasising fall prevention among the elderly. The approach takes into account medical issues, an emphasis on tapping personal resources, and the improvement of construction design in living areas. [www](#)
- Bicycle training programmes: At the kindergarten, in schools, among persons from abroad and in senior citizens' groups programmes on topics dealing with bike helmets and biking skills have been offered for many years now. [www](#)
- Forestry work: By taking part in educational events and chainsaw courses leisure-time forestry enthusiasts and woodsmen are trained in the basics of safe forestry practices. One goal of this focal topic is to introduce a chainsaw-licence. [www](#)

Economic stimuli are also used to promote the use of safety products and to enhance the awareness of accident prevention among the populace in general. For example, thanks to school promotional activities bike and winter sports helmets have enjoyed increased popularity. In addition, reflectors and reflecting materials have been offered at reasonable prices through schools, companies, senior citizens' clubs and community centres. With free lectures target groups such as young parents, caregivers or senior citizens can be reached. Inexpensive courses are being offered to effectively train sports persons and hobby

foresters in the awareness and avoidance of risky behaviour. On free winter sports days for schools equipment can be checked and serviced inexpensively. Teaching materials are available free to kindergartens and schools, or can be downloaded as .pdf-files (for example *hiking*: [www](#)).

Local regulations for improved security

In Austria there are a large variety of safety regulations, depending on the areas of life concerned:

Traffic:

Road traffic regulations. [www](#)

Occupation:

Occupational health and safety guidelines. [www](#)

Home, leisure time and sports activities:

The Safe Communities Initiative functions according to the Safe Community Indicators of the WHO, using the conceptual framework of the Safe Communities Foundation derived from it [www](#). In addition to the promotion of the autonomous risk-consciousness of each individual citizen, corresponding laws, guidelines and recommendations have evolved which regulate a safe living environment. Examples:

- Vorarlberg building code: the Austrian Institute of Construction Engineering (OIB) guidelines (height and design of railings, accessibility issues in home building, fire protection measures...) [www](#). The topic "accessibility" is also influenced by funding guidelines from provincial housing subsidies [www](#).
- Vorarlberg ski slope seal of approval: This seal of approval ensures that the quality and safety of ski slopes is guaranteed. A commission inspects slopes regularly, using a prescribed catalogue of criteria. [www](#)
- Vorarlberg playground concept: With the corresponding funding concepts, communities are guided towards high-quality, safe and well-engineered concepts in designing and building children's play areas. [www](#)
- Vorarlberg sports laws: To improve the quality of popular sports and promote health consciousness, criteria for the subsidy guidelines for sports clubs and associations are closely linked to the training and qualifications of the trainers.

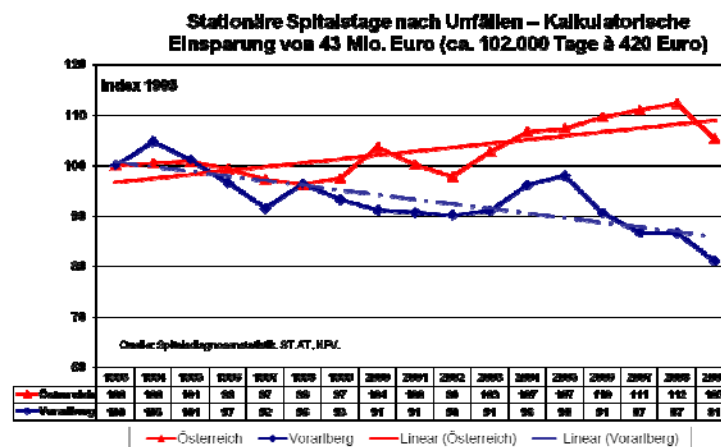
Evaluation and reporting

In the period between 1997 and 2004 a total evaluation and scientific monitoring was carried out by the Institute for Safe Living (Traffic Safety Board, Dr. Rupert Kisser). In the following years, up till the present, special attention has been paid to partial evaluations of the different programmes. Scientific expertise is

provided by the Traffic Safety Board and the University of Applied Sciences, Vorarlberg. In the course of the special programme "Staying in Balance" Dr. Clemens Becker from the Robert-Bosch Hospital in Stuttgart and Dr. Reto Kressig from the Geriatric Clinic in Basel were also involved in the programme evaluation. In addition, feedback surveys are used in an on-going internal evaluation procedure of the programmes being offered. The results are then reported to the Foundation members, those politically responsible, the expert consultants and project partners. Economic data is also accessed to help complete the reporting procedures. The graphics below provide an overview.

1. Hospital stays Austria / Vorarlberg

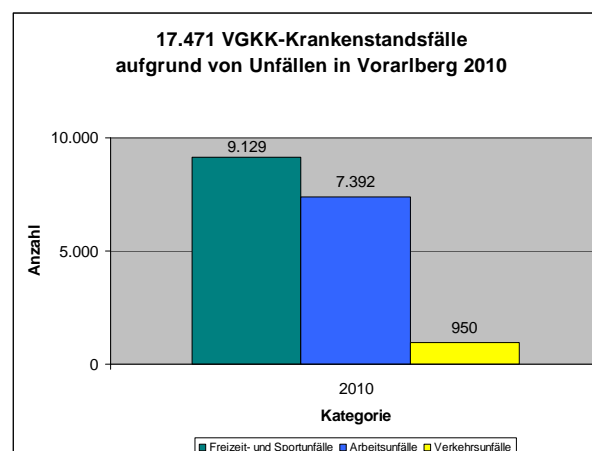
Illustrated using an index starting in 1993, this graphic shows a trend towards a decrease in post-accident stationary treatment in Vorarlberg. Overall in Austria, however, an increase is apparent.



Source: Austrian Traffic Safety Board, 2010

2. Sick leave cases due to accidents, according to areas of life (workers and employees)

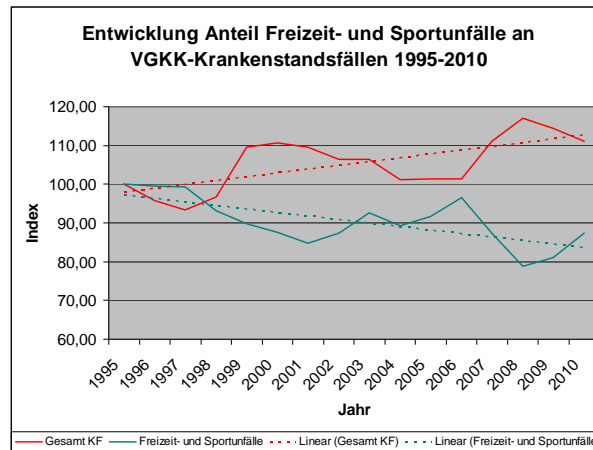
In the year 2010 the Vorarlberg Regional Health Insurance Fund registered 17,471 accident-related sick leave cases. A large part of these were leisure time and sports accidents (9,129).



Source: Graphics - Safe Communities Initiative / Data - Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions, 2010

3. Proportion of leisure time and sports accidents related to the total sick leave cases 1995-2010 (workers and employees)

The graph, with an index starting in 1995, shows trends toward a decrease in the share of leisure time and sports accidents relating to absenteeism.



Source: Graphics - Safe Communities Initiative / Data - Association of Austrian Social Security Institutions, 1995-2010

B. Injury prevention work following the six indicators

Indicator 1

Safe Communities has an infrastructure based on partnership and collaborations, and is governed by a selected group of experts responsible for safety promotion in their community.

Organisation and structure of the Safe Communities Initiative Vorarlberg

Vorarlberg is the westernmost federal province of Austria and the region in which the Safe Communities Initiative operates. Vorarlberg has about 370,000 inhabitants and consists of 96 municipalities or townships. The smallest township has about 150 inhabitants, the largest about 40,000. Every year 42,000 persons suffer accidental injuries that have to be treated in hospital. The Safe Communities Initiative is a team of four employees, one of whom is employed part-time. Its mission is primarily leisure time, domestic and sports accident and injury prevention at the community level. Since 1998, the Safe Communities Initiative Vorarlberg has been designated an international model organisation by the World Health Organization Centre on Community Safety Promotion.

The Safe Communities Initiative uses a broad range of information resources and attractive programmes with people-oriented, subsidiary implementation. Its main goal is to achieve a socially acceptable degree of safety through awareness building and incentives for strengthening personal responsibility. Every year approximately 30,000 persons take active part in about 500 events carried out in cooperation with the Safe Communities Initiative.

Foundation partner €453,000 – basic structure

Province/Communities - Social Funds: [www](#)

Social Insurance Carrier: [www](#)

General Accident Insurance Office: [www](#)

Traffic Safety Board: [www](#)

For special projects additional funds are granted, for example, by the Province of Vorarlberg, the General Accident Insurance Office and the banking and insurance sectors.

Involvement of the local government and health sector

The Vorarlberg Provincial Government and the Department of Health are integrated at various levels into the organisational structure and work procedures of the Safe Communities Initiative.

- Organisation and strategic coordination: Executive members of the Vorarlberg Provincial Government and the social and health services departments are represented in the Board of Trustees and the plenum.
- Implementation of prevention programmes: Hospitals are involved in the ascertainment of accident data (IDB - Injury Database) as well as in the implementation of prevention programmes (example: International Symposium on Accident Prevention for Pediatricians at the hospital in Feldkirch).
- For special prevention programmes the Safe Communities Initiative receives additional subsidies (example: Prevention of accidents among children, winter sports accidents and senior citizens' accidents from heavy falls).
- Nationally and internationally coordinated preventative work (Germany, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Austria): Integration of prevention programmes into events and meetings of the International Conference of Lake Constance (IBK).

Working groups

The Safe Communities Initiative has implemented working groups and is part of several external working groups operating in different topic areas. The working groups deal with, for example, child safety, winter sports safety, hiking and climbing safety and traffic safety.

Example: Work group Winter Sports Safety

In the area of winter sports the Safe Communities Initiative regularly invites representatives of many different organisations to discuss and lecture on current topics, and to develop accident prevention programmes. One such very effective example of this was the cooperative efforts on winter sports helmets. Only several years ago helmets were scarcely used on skiing slopes – today almost 80% of all winter sports enthusiasts use them. This success story was only possible through the cooperation of all partners concerned. The Advisory Council also developed a programme of courses dealing specifically with avalanche awareness and accident prevention, which enjoyed a great degree of acceptance within the populace. The annual campaigns for winter sports safety and accident prevention are supported by the Department of Sports of the Vorarlberg Provincial Government, along with the Safe Communities Initiative, the Alpine Police, the General Accident Insurance Institution, the Professional Association of Cable Car Operators, the Doppelmayr Company, OMICRON, the Superintendent of Schools, the Avalanche Warning Services, the Regional Hospital in Hospital, the Austrian Mountain Rescue Service in Vorarlberg, the Vorarlberg Mountain Guide Association, the Vorarlberg Ski School Association, the Professional Association of Sports Dealers, the Association of Sports Article Producers and Suppliers, and various winter sports clubs and associations. Depending on the scope of the programme, further partners may also be integrated into these efforts. We are also supported by the Vorarlberg media.

Example: Working group Traffic Safety

A prime concern of the traffic safety group is the coordination and networking of traffic safety education in Vorarlberg, from kindergarten to graduation from secondary school. To accomplish these goals a traffic safety advisory committee has been formed which meets approximately every three months to exchange ideas and experiences, to coordinate up-coming activities and to discuss new concepts. Members include the Department of Traffic of the Province of Vorarlberg, the Superintendent of Kindergartens, the Superintendent of Schools, the Head of Traffic Safety Education of the Provincial Superintendent of Schools, together with district consultants, the Provincial Association of PTAs, the Teacher Training College, police, Board of Road Safety, the Austrian Automobile Club, the Austrian Automobile, Motorcycle and Bikers Association, the General Accident Insurance Prevention Office and the Safe Communities Initiative.

Sustainability (organisation and structure)

Since the Safe Communities Initiative was established as an independent foundation with a self-contained structure and permanent financial support through a foundation partnership, long-term planning and implementation of prevention programmes is possible.

In the course of many years a close cooperation has developed with the Zukunftsbüro of the Province of Vorarlberg. One very important declared goal of this regional organisation is the development and implementation of principles of sustainability on as many levels as possible (social, political, economic). Since it is a partner of the Zukunftsbüro, Safe Communities Initiative makes sure its programmes orient themselves as much as possible around these guidelines. [www](#)

Sustainability (programmes)

One essential goal of the Safe Communities Initiative is the training of dissemination personnel. Disseminators are, for example, midwives, kindergarten teachers, educators, community employees and security personnel in companies. These trained persons pass on their experiences and knowledge to those around them. On the one hand, knowledge is spread during the training of disseminators, and on the other hand accident prevention principles and health promotion guidelines are firmly and lastingly anchored in the consciousness of those concerned.

Is everything safe for children?

Many parents ask themselves this question. In 2005, for the first time, we had the opportunity to organise an afternoon on this topic at the Midwives Academy in Innsbruck. Making midwives more aware of child safety concerns and accident prevention among small children is, as a consequence, becoming an integral part of their training and education. The lecture and discussions also found a very positive echo at the Home Economics Academy of the Institute St. Josef in Feldkirch.

Safety experts training

Within the training programme for safety experts on workers' protection laws course participants, in two instructional blocks, received an overview of the accident risks outside of company work hours. An expert of the Safe Communities Initiative used practical examples to show how best to combat leisure time accidents among employees, thereby reducing employee absenteeism. The prevention of sports and free time accidents is to become a set module in the total concept of a company health promotion programme.

Indicator 2

Safe Communities has long-term, sustainable programmes for both genders and all ages, environments and situations.

1. Examples: Mobility and transportation safety

Bike skills training

Courses with different age-groups have been carried out during recent years. Bike check-ups and the use and proper adjustment of helmets were stressed at the beginning of these presentations. In addition, braking, steering and negotiating curves were practiced, and dexterity and balancing exercises were trained using an obstacle course.

Child car seats

Several information presentation events on the topic "Child Car Seats" have taken place in recent years. Peter Jahn, advisory expert for matters dealing with child safety in automobiles at the Austrian Ministry of Traffic Safety, Innovation and Technology, provided information about the newest guidelines.

"Trixi" and the blind spot

In a stationary lorry the participants are shown and informed about the dangers of blind spots from the point of view or "non-view" of the driver. Instruction materials are provided to the teachers so that the pupils are already prepared in class on the subject.

Seeing and being seen

In a practical experiment in the dark, pupils, parents and other interested persons can find out for themselves just how effective reflective materials can be. In a short bus ride they become aware of the importance of light-coloured clothing for personal safety. The risk of a pedestrian or a bike rider being involved in an accident is three times greater at night than by day. This has a lot to do with poorer visibility and perception. If it is rainy or foggy, the risk increases considerably. This makes it even more important to wear clothing with reflective materials during the darker seasons. In order to reinforce this message among pupils it has proven effective to provide instructional materials before and after the presentation. In cooperation with "Info-Film" and the Teacher Training College in Feldkirch an instructional package has been developed for teachers.

2. Examples: Home and leisure-time safety

Barbeques

The world champion in barbequeing, Ueli Bernold from Switzerland, offered his expert advice and services as an attractive photo model for the conceptual design of a new folder. The colourful information folder was a hit, particularly with retail buyers, but also with specialty barbeque businesses, hobby barbequers and "Ländle Marketing". The Fire Protection Centre in Vorarlberg proved to be a competent partner in dealing with the topic of fire protection and prevention.

Forestry courses

Thanks to the Vorarlberg Chamber of Agriculture and the Agrarian Educational Institution, every hobby forester can choose from a broad range of inexpensive forestry course modules tailored to his or her own needs. The course programme was presented at a press conference.

Fruit Growers and Gardening Society

At different markets, interested persons were invited to special information events with the Fruit Growers and Gardening Society. Attractive special exhibits were organised on the themes of ladder safety, chain saws and wood splitting machines. Visitors were also offered interesting information on the correct use and handling of chemicals in orchards and gardens. Competent expert instructors were available for questions.

Mountain bike courses

The mountain bike is by no means comparable to the traditional bicycle. In courses the most effective turning and braking techniques are trained under the supervision of a professional biker. Only those who have intensively examined and determined their fitness and coordinative skills on a mountain bike will really be able to enjoy the biking experience. A specially trained mountain bike instructor provides the participants with all the necessary theoretical and practical information.

Football fairness awards

Those who play fairly are rewarded here. The Safe Communities Initiative sponsors the awarding of fairness prizes at amateur and minor league matches as well as at amateur championships. The awards are presented to the fairest teams by the organiser of the amateur matches or championship games.

Freeride safety camps

Since 1997 attractive educational training packages have been offered for freeride snowboarders and freeride skiers aged 14 to 30. An average of 170 freeriders take part annually. The camp coordinator, Tom Kuster, and his team, together with the Safe Communities Initiative, were also represented in the special exhibit "Winter Wonderland" at the 57th Dornbirn Autumn Trade Fair. The stand was a very attractive contact point for information about "Freeride Safety Camps". To ensure that the stand would appeal to all visitors there was a prize contest with a sensational main prize: A snowboard set with bindings and six free tickets to participate in the Freeride Safety Camp.

Off the Beaten Slope - courses

For several years now, in the context of training courses, interested touring skiers in Alpine organisations have been introduced to the basics of danger awareness on Alpine terrains. In a three-stage model this type of training has been professionalised, and it has met with increasing interest in this target group. The willingness of these course participants to properly equip themselves (avalanche transceiver, position sensor, shovel) has increased over the past few years. A new folder was created for use in courses this season. Together with a poster offering information on course registration, it will be distributed by the regional offices of the mountain rescue teams and other organisations.

Winter sports helmets

This campaign, initiated by the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation, has aroused lively interest during winter seasons. There is a marked trend towards the use of protective headgear. This trend is noticeable in sales figures as well as the statistics in skiing regions. Within a wide range of programmes the Safe Communities organised events dealing with the topic of winter sports helmets, including a prize contest. The winter sports helmets for children, adolescents and adults were offered exclusively under the auspices of the Austrian Automobile Club in Vorarlberg, and skiing stars such as Anita Wachter and Hubert Strolz helped support the effective activities.

3. Examples: Children's safety

Child-Oriented. A Children's Game.

In order to provide the broadest possible thematic content a brochure was published. Using graphic illustrations and simple texts, information about preventive safety measures is presented to parents with babies and small children. For example, safety precautions should already be taken for the drive home from the hospital delivery. Further tips on preventing injuries while children are growing up include the proper use of baby carriages, highchairs, changing tables, bathtubs, etc. In addition, in cooperation with the local initiative "Focus on Children", useful tips on the correct safeguarding of cooking areas, staircases, balconies, railings, windows, plants, electric plugs and ponds have also been integrated into the brochure. A final roundup includes a checklist which parents can use to find out just how safe their household is for children, or they can learn about measures which should be taken to improve household safety. The brochure is distributed by pediatricians, gynecologists, hospitals, mid-wives, parent advisory centres, counselling centres of the Taskforce for Preventive Medicine, as well as by communities (maternity presents), which ensures that it reliably reaches its target group – young parents. The brochure is also available as a table flipchart for mid-wives who give childbirth classes, and for parental advisory centres. This flipchart has the text and pictures printed on A4-size pages and can be used as a practical aid for courses or other counselling activities.

Children's CD "SIGE knows what's up – in leisure time and sports, and at home"

A children's CD was produced focused around "SIGE" – the Safe Communities Initiative mascot - as a central symbol. Stefan Schlenker, alias "Dido the Clown", wrote the texts and composed the songs and stories on safety themes. Each song has its own "character" - for example, one of the songs deals specifically with the wearing of protective equipment. In the text- and music-booklet the user will find

various suggestions for possible dance variations. In one of the songs the children are asked to take note of certain objects and then to list them at the end of each verse. Of course, there is also a song for SIGE - since each child should be aware that "whether in leisure time, during sports or at home – SIGE knows what's up!". In cooperation with the Superintendent of Kindergartens a workshop dealing with the CD's major points was held within the framework of a continuing education programme. The songs were introduced, as well as texts and motives behind the texts. In work groups the kindergarten teachers worked on implementing the concepts, and a discussion round followed.

Who's Afraid of the Big Dog?

In this programme, developed by educators and dog experts, children learn to understand and respect how dogs "think". Exaggerated fears are reduced and self-confident behaviour bolstered. In the forefront the children deal extensively with topics related to dogs and the basic rules which must be respected if people and dogs are to get along together. At the end of the main programme the children watch a performance with specially schooled dog trainers and dogs. In addition, each child receives the little book "Who's afraid of the big dog?", which contains tips on how to interact with dogs.

Giant kitchen

As an adult, seeing the world through the eyes of a small child is a special experience and makes people aware of the diverse household dangers present in our world. Especially small children find so many interesting things in the world of adults. It is possible to reserve our "giant kitchen" to serve as a demonstration model for educating small children on these topics.

Playground seminar

Due to the huge demand, the Schloss Hofen Educational Centre, in cooperation with playground educators and the Safe Communities Initiative, offered seminars on the theme "Safety on the Playground". Participants from communities, real estate agents and social insurance agencies informed themselves about issues of responsibility as well as the installation, servicing and care of public playgrounds.

4. Examples: Safety among the elderly

Quality Living - Getting More Out of Life

In a series of talks Hermann Mayer (Institute for Social Services – Building with People in Mind) and Johannes Peterlunger (Safe Communities Initiative) pointed out the enormous importance of the topic "Accidental Falls in Senior Citizens' Households". Using concrete examples, the participants experienced positive and negative situations on stairways, in sanitary areas, with carpets and poor lighting. The practical information about everyday situations met with intense interest. The topic was also covered in connection with disseminator training, for example at nursing and care-giver schools.

Keeping in Balance

The socio-demographic changes in our society, along with the correlation between the risk of accidental falls and their consequences among older citizens, were the chief factors which motivated our branch

office, in cooperation with the Provincial Senior Citizens' Office and the Institute for Social Services, to conceive of and implement the project "Keeping in Balance". With this programme an attempt has been made to utilise and network existing courses in order to ensure their lasting and sustainable effectiveness. In 2005 we began our first course for trainees who are particularly involved with the promotion and preservation of mobility and the minimising of the risks of accidental falls. In their own organisations the participants are in charge of many groups in the areas of senior citizens' dance, Kneipp, anti-osteoporosis treatment and the Red Cross. Within the scope of the holistic approach of the project "Keeping in Balance", the following modules were also realised:

- Sight and hearing tests in the mobility groups. Optimal sight and hearing capabilities are important factors in minimising the risks of accidental falls. These on-the-spot checks are more convenient for the participants than making appointments with specialist businesses.
- Training for physiotherapists in the area of accidental fall prevention. Providing information and raising awareness levels will lead to a networking of training course offers. Upon finishing their physiotherapy sessions senior citizens are given recommendations about regular course offers suitable for them.
- Training sessions for interior decorators in furniture businesses, on the topic of "Senior Citizens' Residences". In their sales talks these advisors offer information about the special needs of elderly customers and point out the opportunities and advantages of living quarters tailored especially to the needs of the elderly.
- Training plumbers and architects on the topic of "barrier-free sanitary facilities". An expert consultant, as planner and advisor, discusses in his talks the advantages of barrier-free sanitary rooms.
- Evaluation of the risk potential of accidental falls among the participants of the mobility awareness groups. By means of a project model developed over a two-year period by Dr. Becker from Ulm/Stuttgart and Mrs. Geser-Engleitner (University of Applied Sciences, Dornbirn), a standardised motoric assessment test was used to observe and evaluate the risk of accidental falls in mobility groups.

Uf da Füass blieba – Staying on Your Feet

As a further development within the programme "Keeping in Balance" the physiotherapy centre Aa in Götzis initiated a very successful project on preventing accidental falls, tailored especially for people over 65 who had already suffered injuries from falls. According to clearly prescribed criteria, and under the supervision of a practical physician, groups of 10 persons were formed. Under expert supervision they trained in 10 practice units how to negotiate an obstacle course with increasing levels of difficulty, as well as how to fall properly. There were also fixed programme points consisting of sight and hearing checkups. The programme was rounded off with an individualized home check-up to determine possible stumbling points or missing hand-rails. After finishing the 10 units the participants had the opportunity to continue with the mobility practice group "Keeping in Balance".

5. Examples: Occupational safety

In Austria the Employee Safety Act regulates work safety internally within companies by means of safety experts and safety officers. Smaller companies of up to 50 employees receive additional support through the General Accident Insurance Office (AUVA), for example in areas of accident prevention and health promotion. Information on the AUVA: [www](#)

In the individual Austrian federal provinces, the Occupational Safety Authority is also active in an advisory and supervisory capacity in the areas of health and work safety. Information about the Occupational Safety Authority: [www](#)

Due to the fact that the number of employee days lost results to a large extent from accidents at home, as well as in leisure time and sports activities, the Safe Communities Initiative also makes use of company structures to carry out its accident prevention programmes in these topic areas. Examples of programmes implemented in companies:

Inline skating courses

During recent years inline skating courses have been offered to the employees of several companies located in Vorarlberg. The participants learn, step by step, proper skating techniques, how to brake, take curves, turn and fall. In addition, they are informed about servicing and care of equipment. And, of course, learning and refreshing their knowledge of the current traffic laws are an integral part of the courses.

Company stresses visibility

The Lauterach packaging and styrofoam producer Flatz sponsored a bus with 25 employees who drove out into the Lauteracher Ried to demonstrate the importance and usefulness of reflective materials in the dark. Many of the participants had never been aware of the dangers in the dark and they were quite surprised how poorly people are seen in the darkness, and how effective even a small strip of reflecting material on each leg can be. As a gesture of thanks for their participation the employees were each presented with a pair of reflecting strips.

Skiing safety days

Different companies (for example, Getzner in Bludenz, Hilti in Thüringen and Alpla in Hard) took part in skiing safety days. Mountain guides discussed with them many of the mistakes people make in the mountains and gave succinct, informative presentations on possible dangers. Using films and follow-up discussions, as well as a demonstration of safety equipment in the outdoors, strategies for reducing risks were pointed out.

SUVA visits the Safe Communities Initiative

As part of his project work abroad a Swiss specialist for the prevention of leisure time accidents paid a four-day visit Vorarlberg in 2010. With the cooperative efforts of the Safe Communities team, events were held at the packaging company Flatz in Lauterach and at the event centre of the TECNO-Plast company in Höchst. Panel discussions with experts dealt primarily with the significance of leisure time accidents and the personal and economic effects of accidents on the company. There was an interesting

comparison between the situations in Switzerland and in Austria. During various events Mark Langenegger himself was also able to form a picture of the practical implementation work on programme modules of the Safe Communities Initiative.

6. Examples: Proactive injury prevention

In Vorarlberg the prevention of violence is of primary interest not only at the Safe Communities Initiative, but is also a significant part of prevention work at other institutions. Cooperative efforts between the Safe Communities Initiative and other health institutions is taken for granted when the need presents itself. Some of these organisations in Vorarlberg:

- Province of Vorarlberg: [www](#)
- Institute for Social Services: [www](#)
- Task Force for Social Medicine: [www](#)

7. Examples: Suicide prevention

Suicide prevention is not specifically an area emphasis of the Safe Communities Initiative in Vorarlberg, but rather a significant part of the preventative work of other institutions. Of course, there are cooperative efforts between the Safe Communities Initiative and other health institutions if such efforts prove necessary. These other institutions in Vorarlberg are:

- Task Force for Social Medicine: [www](#)

8. Examples: Disaster preparedness and procedures

Civil protection and disaster prevention are organised through provincial offices and provincial institutions (for example, the Provincial Warning and Alarm Centre, the Avalanche Warning Services, the Catastrophe Centre).

Indicator 3

Safe Communities has programmes that target high-risk persons and groups living in unsafe or insecure environments and promote their safety.

High-risk groups and environments, especially groups of persons deserving support and protection, again and again are targeted by Safe Communities Initiative programmes. Cooperation partners - such as the Social Service Institute, Caritas, the Social Medicine Research Group, Kinderdorf, Integra and Lebenshilfe - are examples of organisations in Vorarlberg which offer and implement programmes for

these groups and their surroundings. Following are some examples of specific programmes carried out in recent years:

Example: Child safety lecture for immigrant workers

In 2006, for the first time and in cooperation with the City of Dornbirn, a child safety lecture entitled "Growing up safely" was offered for immigrant workers, mainly Turkish women. The interest shown was very encouraging and the participants offered very positive comments on the event. The language barrier was easily overcome using an interpreter.

Example: Bicycle courses for immigrant workers

For different reasons, many adults from foreign countries have never learned to ride a bike in their native countries. In Vorarlberg, however, riding a bike is a natural part of everyday life. The project "Bike Riding for Immigrant Workers" was not only able to provide especially women with new opportunities of environmentally friendly mobility, but it also strengthened their independence and feeling of safety. In various communities in Vorarlberg courses on learning how to ride a bike, particularly for women, have been given during recent years. Together with other institutions the Safe Communities Initiative has been instrumental in promoting these courses. In addition to learning how to ride a bike, the participants also were introduced to traffic laws and the use of bike helmets.

Example: Chainsaw course for women

In 2008 a first-ever course on the use of chainsaws was offered for women. Six ladies made use of this special further education opportunity within the framework of the educational programme of the Rural Further Education Institute (LFI), in cooperation with the Department of Forestry of the Chamber of Agriculture in Vorarlberg. All participants were extremely interested and repeatedly acknowledged the improvement of their skills during the progression of the course. "Women have a different relationship to forestry work these days" the course instructor DI Johannes Enzenhofer observed. Men are usually more interested in learning about action-filled, exceptional situations like felling problematic trees in difficult areas. Women are considerably more practical. They want to practice techniques which they can then use more often (for example, cutting firewood, cutting back bushes, or lopping off branches).

Example: Barrier-free Bregenz

According to established criteria of the Institute of Social Services ("People-friendly Building") and the Safe Communities Initiative, companies in Bregenz (for example, sales rooms, public buildings, physicians' offices) can be awarded the certificate "Barrier-free Bregenz". Certain construction and organisational prerequisites must be met, and also employees must be trained in interacting with people with various disabilities. There are now six companies which bear the distinction "Barrier-free Bregenz".

Indicator 4

Safe Communities has programmes that document the frequency and causes of injuries.

Experience has taught the Safe Communities Initiative Vorarlberg that data are needed for two reasons:

- First of all, data are needed for setting priorities in injury prevention. It is necessary to know how many accidental injuries happen. Further questions are: Where? Why? When? With what? How serious? Which population group?
- Secondly, data are needed to convince those responsible for finances of the profitability of such injury prevention programmes. Experience shows that a positive attitude by the financially responsible towards injury prevention and safety promotion is necessary because not everything can be proven by data. Data help to establish this positive attitude.

Our data source is the IDB (Injury Database) survey in Austria and Vorarlberg, compiled by the Austrian Traffic Safety Board. Since 1992 the Austrian Traffic Safety Board, active throughout Austria, has been carrying out interviews in hospitals concerning the causes and effects of accidents. These data are collected for the IDB and analysed, then presented to the Safe Communities Initiative. In addition to the standard data surveys done for the IDB, in future special programmes will be carried out in which certain aspects of the accident conditions can be analysed more precisely by expanding the IDB questionnaire, or by including further hospitals. In the coming years such specialised surveys will be implemented concerning the topics "Injured children in Vorarlberg" and "Skiing and snowboarding in Vorarlberg".

Indicator 5

Safe Communities has developed evaluation procedures to assess their programmes, processes and the effects of change.

In an earlier section of this document the evaluation steps taken since 1997 were mentioned in the section "A. Structure of the community". In recent years more focus has been placed on the effectiveness of such individual programmes. Here are a few examples:

Example: Regional hospital Bregenz

For more than ten years now weekly short talks have been given in the mother-child station of the Provincial Hospital in Bregenz on the topic "Child safety for small children". Since the stays of "neo-mommies" at the mother-child station are becoming shorter and shorter, the decision was made to integrate the lecture series into the delivery room tours, which take place every two weeks. In these tours parents-to-be can visit and become acquainted with the delivery rooms and the mother-child stations, and get information about delivery procedures. Afterwards there is a child safety lecture "Hello, here I am" To determine the quality standards and efficiency of the lectures an evaluation project was begun, in

cooperation with the Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences. Partners in this evaluation process are the Provincial Hospital in Bregenz, the Social Medicine Research Group (aks), the experts group of pediatricians and "Children in the Middle".

Example: Staying in Balance

The project "Staying in Balance" concentrates on the prevention of accidents from falls by senior citizens in domestic areas. This project has been carried out in Vorarlberg since October, 2005. Preventing falls can be approached in several ways. Recognising the internal causes of falls, such as a lack of physical coordination and skill, weakness, a poor sense of balance, or failing sight and hearing are just as important factors as eliminating external causes for falls such as tripping obstacles and an improperly designed home setting. The project begins here and depends heavily on the empowerment approach: Persons in the endangered target groups should be enabled, strengthened and motivated to do as much as possible for their own health. In addition, the project emphasises the networking of existing structures dealing with the prevention of falls.

In cooperation with Dr. Clemens Becker (Robert-Bosch-Krankenhaus, Stuttgart) evaluations of motoric assessments affecting fall and risk factors were carried out under the scientific supervision of Mag. Erika Geser-Engleitner from the Vorarlberg University of Applied Sciences. The series of tests with 15 groups extended throughout the period between spring, 2006 and November, 2007. A total of 737 persons were interviewed, 48% of them once, 22% twice and 30% three times. Persons, who were interviewed more often within the framework of the motoric assessment were also active for a longer period of time in gymnastics groups. Between 78% and 86% of the persons said that they had not suffered a fall within the previous year. The survey showed that persons who spend more time in gymnastics groups suffered fewer falls in the recent year. In comparison with the first measurements significant improvements were achieved. There was a significant and distinct increase of safe behaviour with respect to "walking on slippery surfaces", "walking on uneven ground", "walking up and down the stairs", "doing housecleaning", "walking up and down slopes" and "reaching something which is above one's head or on the floor." These results show clearly that gymnastics training is effective in stabilising bodily performance, and that it significantly reduces the subjectively experienced danger of falls. It should not be forgotten that, apart from the benefits of gymnastics training and exercises mentioned above, the positive accompanying factors of regular social contacts and information exchange are also extremely important. [www](#)

Example: Gait analysis - Basel

Responding to an invitation by Dr. Reto Kressig, at the University Hospital in Basel, 40 women from the gymnastics groups underwent a gait analysis. This screening provided information about individual fall risks that each individual test person (all around 75 years old) were subjected to. The results showed very positive results for all of the participants. This confirms the long-term experience of Prof. Kressig that, on the whole, movement is of particular significance for older persons in preserving their healthy functions.

[www](#)

Indicator 6

Safe Communities participates consistently in national and international Safe Communities networks.

Knowledge transfer and cooperation with other organisations provides important and valuable opportunities for the team at Safe Communities to exchange ideas and receive new impulses for their own activities.

2005

- Two representatives from the Safe Communities team took part in a workshop dealing with the National Plan of Action of Federal Minister Maria Rauch-Kallat, on themes and strategies related to accident prevention among children and youths in Austria.
- On March 17th members of the branch office attended a symposium hosted by Professor Nikolaus and Dr. Becker at the Geriatrics Centre in Ulm. The interesting analytical work and final report dealt with the model project "Improving Mobility and Prevention of Accidental Falls Among Ambulant Senior Citizens in Need of Care." Important international findings and insights from two European Union projects were presented.
- On April 18th the project manager and the managing team responsible for the educational programme "Keeping in Balance", from the Studio Drehpunkt, took the opportunity to discuss the details about the project on preventing accidental falls with Dr. Becker, Dr. Lindemann and Dr. Hauer in Ulm/Stuttgart. The team of experts welcomed the basic conceptual approach of the planned Vorarlberg model project "Keeping in Balance". The projected method of motoric assessment was also given a trial run. Dr. Becker is quite enthusiastic about cooperative efforts using the Vorarlberg model.

2006

- Participation at the Austrian Health Convention in Vorarlberg
- Participation at the European Health Convention in Vienna
- Sharing and exchange of know-how and experiences with Dr. Gabriele Elsässer (Department of Health, Brandenburg) in Berlin
- Participation at the Healthy Austria Foundation (FGÖ) Prevention Conference in Vienna

2007

- Participation at the Sports Congress, sharing ideas, know-how and experiences with the work group "Vorarlberg bewegt" in Karlsruhe
- Participation at the international symposium Prevention of Falls in Salzburg
- Participation at the Workshop on Sustainable Development in Vorarlberg
- Participation at the National Conference of Competence in Health Promotion and in Accident Prevention in Bregenz

2008

- Participation at the symposium "Children in the Middle" in Feldkirch
- Participation at the International Lake of Constance Conference in Bregenz
- Participation at the Geriatrics Congress in St. Gallen
- Participation at the symposium "25 Years of Children's Safety in Austria" in the pediatric clinic, Graz
- Participation at the congress "Aging Actively" in Innsbruck

2009

- Participation at the Sports Congress in Magglingen
- Sharing ideas, know-how and experiences – with Styria Vitalis and "Große schützen Kleine (Big Ones Protect Little Ones)" in Graz/Deutschlandsberg
- Exchange of ideas, know-how and experiences with the board members of the Safe Tyrol Organisation, in Vorarlberg
- Exchange of ideas, know-how and experiences with the Provincial Health Department of Berlin/Brandenburg, Germany within the framework of the WHO certification as a Safe Region

2010

- At the invitation of the pediatrics and youth medicine expert group an information and experience exchange for Vorarlberg pediatricians took place in the Martinspark Hotel in Dornbirn, with special guest Dr. Gabriele Ellsäcker, the head of the Health Department Berlin/Brandenburg. The

focal topic of the event was accidents among children and youths, including experiences from Berlin/Brandenburg

- Project abroad - "Safe Communities" of the SUVA team-member Mark Langenegger
- Participation at the Sixth Austrian LA 21 summit meeting in Dornbirn
- Participation at Playgrounds and Recreation Areas Symposium in Dornbirn
- Participation at the international networking conference "Borderless" in Zurich

2011

- Participation at the 3rd European Conference on Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion in Budapest, Hungary (B-speaker in the session "Hospitals for a safer community")
- Participation at the bfu-symposium "Suisse Public" in Bern as speaker on the topic "From delegating risks to individual responsibility"

Impressions



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