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*Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.*

## Childproofing Outdoor Areas<sup>1</sup>

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Although we hear a good deal about childproofing our homes, less attention is given to the potential hazards of the outdoor areas where our children play. Yards, garages, work areas, barns and stables, whether on a farm or in a suburb, can present dangerous, even deadly situations to children.

Barns and garages are both places where children can easily find stored items that, from their view, can be great play places. Children climbing in shipping crates and on stacks of logs and utility trailers have been killed when these makeshift toys shifted or toppled and crushed them. Broken equipment and stored chemicals can also lead to tragedy. How can you protect your children from harm at home and on the farm?

(Lehtola, Brown, & Eversole, 2002)

Extension safety experts recommend that you increase your family's awareness of dangers and reduce risk by starting with a safety audit. Walk through your garages, barns, and shops with your children to identify potential dangers. Explain to them why things are off limits, rather than just telling them "Don't" (Lehtola, Brown, & Eversole, 2002).

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Once you've completed your safety audit, consider what actions need to be taken. For example, lock sheds and barns and remove all keys from machinery and equipment not in use. Fence off hazardous areas, including retention ponds, and cap wells. And of course, store hand tools, power tools and toxic chemicals out of reach. Teaching your children about safety and taking the time to secure unsafe places can be the difference between life and death (Lehtola, Brown, & Eversole, 2002).

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## **References**

Lehtola, C., Brown, C., & Eversole, C. (2002). Childproofing your yard or farmstead. Retrieved June 12, 2006, from <http://www.nasdonline.org/document/183/d001586/039-childproofing-039-your-yard-or-farmstead.html>