

Prairie Doc® Perspectives

By Andrew Ellsworth, MD

Accidents Happen, but Being Prepared Saves Lives

Many of us have been there before—near the top of a ladder, stretching just a little farther to finish the job. Maybe we are cleaning a gutter, hanging Christmas lights, or rescuing a cat from a tree. There is always the temptation to climb one rung higher to reach that final spot.

According to CDC data from 2022, accidents are the third leading cause of death in the United States, behind heart disease and cancer. For those ages 1–44, accidents are the leading cause of death. These unintentional injuries include poisonings and overdoses, falls, and motor vehicle crashes. The leading causes vary by age. Motor vehicle crashes have historically been the most common cause for teenagers and young adults, though firearms became the leading cause of death for children and teens ages 1–19 in 2020. Poisonings are a major cause of death in both very young children and middle-aged adults.

For adults over age 65, falls are the leading cause of fatal injury. A common and devastating scenario occurs when an older adult falls and breaks a hip, setting off a cascade of complications that can lead to hospitalization, loss of in-

dependence, nursing home placement, and even death.

So what can we do to reduce the risk of accidents? Some of the advice may sound like common sense—or like something a responsible parent would say—but it matters. To prevent motor vehicle crashes, avoid driving while impaired, overly tired, or distracted by your phone. Always wear a seatbelt. Drive defensively, obey traffic laws, and adjust your speed for weather and road conditions. If conditions are poor, the safest choice may be to stay home.

Firearms should be locked securely, stored separately from ammunition, and kept out of reach of children and individuals at risk of harming themselves. Education, proper training, and safety courses are essential.

To reduce poisonings, store medications, cleaning products, and chemicals in their original containers and out of sight and reach. Dispose of expired medications properly, and always read and follow labels carefully. Avoid illegal substances altogether.

Finally, falls can sometimes be prevented. Avoid ladders if you have balance issues, and never stand on the top steps. Make sure ladders are

secure and have someone assist when possible. To prevent ground-level falls, especially in older adults, remove clutter, improve lighting, install grab bars and handrails, use non-slip mats, wear proper footwear, and address vision, hearing, and balance issues.

Accidents are not always random. Many are preventable with awareness, preparation, and a willingness to slow down. The lesson is simple: don't take the extra step on the ladder, but do take the extra step to prepare and protect yourself and others from injury.

Dr. Andrew Ellsworth is a Family Medicine Physician at Avera Medical Group Brookings in Brookings, SD. He serves as one of the Prairie Doc Volunteer Hosts during its 24th Season providing Health Education Based on Science, Built on Trust. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).

Legals

Legals from page 7

ND, for year 2026, seconded by County Commissioner Schilling. Upon roll call vote – Felchle – yes, Schilling – yes, Dieterle – yes Motion carried.

Connie Werth, County Treasurer, met with the board to review the annual letter that goes out with the Tax Statement. It was moved by County Commissioner Felchle to include applying for the Primary Residence Credit with the state and calling the Auditor's office when moving or constructing buildings within the County, seconded by County Commissioner Schilling. Upon roll call vote – Felchle – yes, Schilling – yes, Dieterle – yes Motion carried.

Jon Martin and Mike Rivinus, with Wold Engineering, met with the board to discuss some grants for road maintenance and present calendars for the new year.

The time being 10:00 a.m. the County Commission meeting recessed for the Water board/Organized Twp. culvert hydrology study meeting.

At this time a meeting with Barr Engineering, the County Water Board and organized twp. officers met in the Community Room of the Courthouse with the County Commissioners to discuss and present maps on the culverts that have been included in the County hydrology study and receive any input on including more culverts in the County hydrology study. Kevin Vietz, Water Board member stated that the water board members will be attending the March organized township meetings to receive input on culverts to be included in the hydrology study. Damon Tessmann, Water Board member reported that 91% of the culverts in Sheridan County are undersized according to the culvert hydrology study done so far.

The County Commission meeting reconvened at 11:00 a.m.

Byron Belile, Road Foreman, met with the board to discuss weed mowing bills. It was moved by County Commissioner Schilling to cancel weed

mowing bills from Patricia Schon and Terry Strobel that were billed in error and bill Richard Tripp for driveway to his residence, seconded by County Commissioner Felchle.

Upon roll call vote – Schilling – yes, Felchle – yes, Dieterle – yes Motion carried. Belile reported he contacted Kevin Vietz to do training on CDL licensing for after the 1st of year. The new JD motorgrader is still scheduled to arrive around December 15th. All bales have been removed from right of way in the ditches. Belile reported the road to the GDOD water treatment plant will be 30 ft. wide and located north of John Laib in McClusky Twp. Construction of the GDOD water treatment plant will start in 2026 but the water pipeline will start in July of 2027.

At this time the County Water Board met with the County Commissioners. Kevin Vietz County Water Board member reported that the Upper Sheyenne River Joint Water Resources Board has no bylaws that Sheridan County Water Board pays annual dues to and does have taxing authority if a water project is in another County then taxes could be assessed in Sheridan County also. The County Water Board would like input from the County Commission if County Water Board should still belong to Upper Sheyenne River Joint Water Resource Board or wait and see after next week when the State Water board conference is in Bismarck and bylaws will be discussed etc. and go from there. The board agreed to see what comes out of Water Board conference.

Terry & Heidi Strobel, Denhoff, met with the board to discuss the weed mowing billing they received. Strobel has an easement owning the driveway being they own the land on both sides of the driveway. The board stated the weed mowing bill will be sent to Richard Tripp from now on. Strobel suggested when blading the driveway to blade off the rocks, etc. A motorgrader will not

go on the driveway now until Strobel contacts the Road Foreman to do so.

Sheriff, Trent Naser, met with the board to present the last Axon Enterprise bill on equipment in the newest patrol car to pay out of the budget for this year instead of adding onto the vehicle loan. Naser also discussed hours worked by Chief Deputy Olson and his employee classification. Vacation and sick time benefits were in question if Chief Deputy Olson should receive if he was a part time employee classification or casual employee classification. It was moved by County Commissioner Felchle to have a waiver signed by Chief Deputy Olson to classify him as regular part time employee and waiving Health Insurance and Retirement benefits, however; he will be eligible for a percentage of vacation and sick benefits and life insurance, seconded by County Commissioner Schilling. Upon roll call vote – Felchle – yes, Schilling – yes, Dieterle – yes Motion carried.

Kristy Jensen, County Nurse, met with the board to notify that 1st District Health Unit is conducting a survey for input to complete.

The County Auditor presented the County Agent narrative that reported on the 4-H awards banquet was held with 100 attendees. A 4-H food drive was done with the government shut down. A new staff orientation meeting was held in Bismarck that Lea Mittleider attended.

It was moved by County Commissioner Felchle to rescind the November motion appointing Lisa Heitzmann as delegate to the State Fair Board and appoint Aaron Galbreath, Butte to be the delegate for the State Fair Board, seconded by County Commissioner Schilling. Upon roll call vote – Felchle – yes, Schilling – yes, Dieterle – yes Motion carried.

Chairman Dieterle adjourned the meeting.

(Jan. 15, 2025)

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