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## **Protecting Our Most Precious Gift**

Thanksgiving week is a great time to give thanks for our most precious gifts – our children. One of the reasons Arizona requires every child's death to be thoroughly investigated is to try to prevent the death of another child. In 2008, 1,038 children died in the state and 33% of those were preventable. The Annual Child Fatality Review Report brings together reports from across the state, analyzes trends and recommends changes to prevent child deaths in the future.

One of the most astounding facts in this year's report is 90 infant deaths occurred in unsafe sleep environments. Some of the children were sleeping on couches, in car seats, strollers, or adult beds. In 25 cases, the adults in bed with the children had been using illegal drugs, prescription drugs or alcohol.

"Infants need a safe place to sleep. Babies should be in their own crib with a firm mattress, sleeping on their backs," said Jeanette Shea, Assistant Director for Public Health Prevention. "If a mother wants to breastfeed in bed, the mattress needs to be firm and all material needs to be kept away from the baby's face so it can easily breathe."

The preventable 343 deaths in 2008 include 80 motor vehicle crashes, 60 homicides, 49 deaths from maltreatment and 29 drownings. Lack of supervision, inadequate barriers between children and water and abuse of drugs or alcohol by the child or caregiver were factors in many of these preventable deaths.

The report makes several recommendations this year to protect children: pool fencing legislation, reinstate child maltreatment prevention programs and booster seat legislation.

"In the end, it is up to the people of Arizona to protect the children," said Assistant Director Shea. "We can only do so much by tracking and recommending. The real difference will be made in our homes and on our streets."

To see the entire report and find out more about unsafe sleep environments, visit [AZDHS.GOV](http://AZDHS.GOV).

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