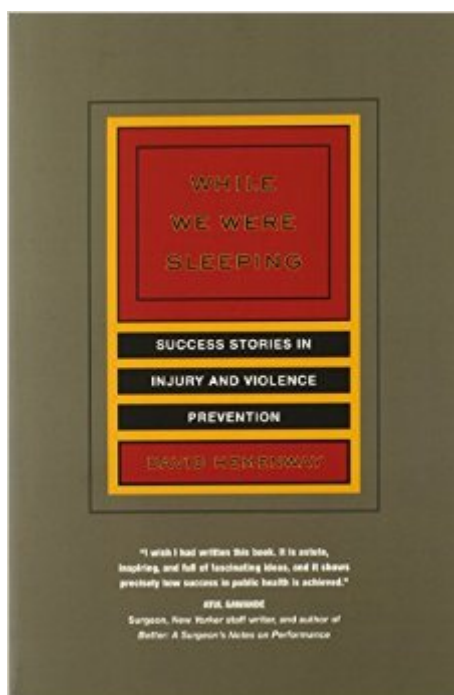


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# While We Were Sleeping: Success Stories In Injury And Violence Prevention



## Synopsis

Public health has made our lives safer; but it often works behind the scenes, without our knowledge, that is, "while we are sleeping." This book powerfully illuminates how public health works with more than sixty success stories drawn from the area of injury and violence prevention. It also profiles dozens of individuals who have made important contributions to safety and health in a range of social arenas. Highlighting examples from the United States as well as from other countries, *While We Were Sleeping* will inform a wide audience of readers about what public health actually does and at the same time inspire a new generation to make the world a safer place.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Dr. Hemenway, a professor of health policy at the Harvard School of Public Health, has done the field a real service with this book. The title comes from his favorite fairy tale, in which elves help a poor shoemaker by stitching beautiful pairs of shoes while he sleeps so that he may sell them by day and earn enough money to feed his family (and buy more leather for more shoes). The idea is that public health workers have been those unseen helpers who have assisted us all, without credit, without personal gain. Injuries have been reduced dramatically over the past century, but not by magic. Real people have labored hard to make it happen. Faculty teaching courses in injury prevention will find this a useful addition to their syllabi. If you work in public health, this book is also perfect to help your parent, partner or offspring understand what you do--and why you do it. It also may help inspire the next generation of researchers and practitioners so that we may all enjoy future gains in reducing the toll that injuries take.

This book is an excellent read for anyone who is searching for reasons to believe that public health activism can make a meaningful difference in our world. It is well-written, carefully researched, and has an intimate, accessible tone. I am going to recommend this book to all of my public health students and to my colleagues. I can easily imagine that I will be drawing information from it and referring to it time and time again for my own work. This is a much-needed contribution from an academic perspective, but also simply a fun read.

*While We Were Sleeping* is one of those books that delivers far more than it promises, and it continues to surprise all the way through. It's more than a history of injury and violence prevention, it's a history of nearly every useful item in our houses and our lives. Hemenway writes in an accessible storytelling style that matches Malcolm Gladwell on his best days. And because Hemenway has dedicated his life to the subject, the details in his stories resonate more deeply than Gladwell's, as Gladwell sometimes seems as if he's just passing through. From helicopter fires to building the Golden Gate Bridge to avalanche transceivers to Benjamin Franklin's lightning rod, and about 56 more fascinating entries, Hemenway tells us in concise yet richly entertaining passages just how the most important things in our lives became the way they are. Whether you're a history buff, an engineering geek, or just someone who loves an inspiring, well-told tale, this book is hard to put down. A fascinating read.

*While We Were Sleeping* is an interesting book full of information that everyone should be aware of. Before reading this book, I was completely unaware of all the changes that had been made in products, roads, work places, homes, medical care practices, athletics, subway stations and more that have made our lives so much safer. Like another book that Hemenway wrote (*Prices and Choices*), this book examines so many different areas and gives so many varied examples of success in injury prevention that it should be appealing to anyone. From the few that we may know about to the many that we do not, Hemenway provides numerous examples of how our lives have been made safer. Each chapter provides specific examples of changes that have made us safer that we rarely think about (e.g., reducing the number of tap water burns in homes, reducing numbers and severity of injuries in football, lowering the odds of dying while anesthetized). He closes each chapter by discussing the people who have made the world safer -- those whose changes we benefit from daily but have never thought about let alone given credit for. This book is fascinating from the perspective of a lay person yet would be an excellent teaching tool, as well. In addition to highlighting all the changes that have kept us safer, it also provides models that can be

studied and used as a basis for future change in a variety of fields. This interesting look at injury prevention effectively exemplifies the very goals of public health as a whole -- prevention at a population level. Fascinating and hopeful, *While We Were Sleeping* is a well written book with widespread appeal.

David Hemenway has written a gem! As a public health professor specializing in injury prevention, I LOVED this book -- for multiple reasons. First, despite more than 20 years in the field, I learned a lot. Second, though it might seem that this is just a book for injury professionals, it is much more than that. It is a wonderful primer on the principles of public health that every public health student and professional should read -- as should anyone interested in understanding the approach of public health to problem solving. Third, this is also an important and excellent introduction to the problems and progress in injury control -- a grossly under-recognized and poorly understood aspect of public health. Students of injury control should read this to gain greater familiarity with many of the accomplishments that have been made over the years through incremental changes developed via multiple innovative and determined people addressing a wide range of issues. Fourth, the book is incredibly inspirational in demonstrating how seemingly small or unrelated discoveries can create major change. Fifth, Hemenway's writing is clear, sharp and engaging. As a result, the book is very accessible and suitable to all readers, regardless of their scientific backgrounds or familiarity with public health, yet the messages contained within it are far from simplistic. Finally, it is one of the most inspirational books I have read in a long time and will take a place on my shelf with another of my favorites -- *How to Change the World*. I have recommended this book to all my colleagues and plan to use it as a teaching tool.

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