



September 2026

**2026-2027 GEORGE DIEM SAFETY ESSAY CONTEST**

TO: Post Adjutants (Please give to your Safety Chairperson)  
County Adjutants  
Dept. Safety Committee

This will serve to announce the start of the 83rd Annual American Legion, Department of New Jersey **GEORGE DIEM SAFETY ESSAY CONTEST**. This contest is open to 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in public, private and parochial schools throughout New Jersey.

The deadline dates for the contest at the Post, County and Department levels are as follows:

The contest is to be started in each participating school immediately, as ALL essays must be in the hands of the **POST** Safety Essay Chairperson no later than **January 13, 2027**.

In turn, the Post Chairperson must forward his/her **First Place Winner**, one (1) essay from each **Post** (selected by at least three (3) judges to the **COUNTY** Safety Essay Chairman no later than **FEBRUARY 10, 2027**.

The County Chairperson must send his/her **First Place Winner**, one (1) essay from each county, to the **DEPARTMENT** Safety Chairman. **BUILDING #5, 171 JERSEY STREET TRENTON, NJ 08611. NO LATER THAN MARCH 5, 2027.**

**DEPARTMENT JUDGING WILL BE HELD AT CLARK POST 328, 78 WESTFIELD AVENUE, CLARK, NEW JERSEY 07066, on MARCH 20, 2027 AT 1:00 PM.**

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**THE DEPARTMENT DEADLINE WILL BE STRICTLY ADHERED TO !!!!!**

(Post and County deadlines may be adjusted)

As in the past, the form for use in transmitting the winning essay must be used by the respective Post and County Chairman.

**C O N T E S T   R U L E S**

**At a meeting held on August 13, 2011 in Trenton, the Department Executive Committee approved the Recommendation of the Department Safety Committee to make the following amendment to Rule #4.**

1. The contest must be conducted in the school classroom, under proper supervision of a member of the faculty.
2. The Essay shall be **NO LESS THAN 300 NOR MORE THAN 450 WORDS.**
3. The Essay must touch on the subject "**WHAT SAFETY MEANS TO ME.**"
4. That participants in the contest be allowed to use electronic devices such as word processor, computers or electronic typewriters. Hand written essays shall earn extra credit.
5. Neatness, penmanship and general appearance will be factors in the judging.
6. No name will appear on the contestant's paper. Instead, the writer's name will be placed in an envelope, to be identified by a number. This number **ONLY** will be placed on the essay. All envelopes will be opened after the judging is completed.

**OVER**



7. The following standards, established by the Department Safety Committee, are to be used as a guide by the judges grading an Essay:

|                                                     |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| Understanding & coverage of the subject matter..... | 20% |
| Grammar.....                                        | 20% |
| Spelling and punctuation.....                       | 20% |
| Neatness.....                                       | 15% |
| Originality.....                                    | 25% |

**EXAMPLE ON METHOD OF COUNTING THE WORDS CONTAINED IN AN ESSAY:**

Every year Safety Essays are forwarded to Department Headquarters for/ judging in the Department Contest when some of these essays/ should have been eliminated at the post level because of/ the number of words they contained. These essays, which contain/ too few or too many words, will be counted at/ the Department level and will be disqualified. This is very/ unfortunate for it limits the number of essays entered from/ your county and also prevents another child's essay from being entered.

Please note the manner in which these paragraphs have been counted and do likewise on the post and county levels as it is very important to the children.

(The above paragraphs only contain 109 words---please note that each essay must contain no less than 300 nor more than 450 words,)

**AWARDS FOR DEPARTMENT WINNERS**

**At a meeting held on October 18, 2025 in Trenton, the Department Executive Committee approved the recommendation of the Department Safety Committee to make the following award changes:**

1st place.....\$250.00 Check & Department of New Jersey American Legion Safety Essay Contest Plaque  
2nd place.....\$200.00 Check  
3rd place.....\$200.00 Check

We recommend and encourage the Posts and Counties to make appropriate awards to their local winners and that the county winners receive their awards during the County Convention or Annual Meeting.

Please continue to make The American Legion, Department of New Jersey Safety Essay Contest one of the outstanding Legion programs for our school children. All that is required to accomplish our goal is your cooperation.

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOLLOWING:**

Please advise the school or faculty member to whom the essays should be forwarded when completed. Many chair people fail to do this and the school then only has the address of the Department, which is on this bulletin, and they forward them to Department. Make sure you leave instructions as to the name and address of the person who is to receive the completed essays.

JB/ta

JOSEPH BECKER, Chairman  
Department Safety Committee  
(908) 319-4026