



Back to School Safety

Summer break is over and we will be seeing many students returning to school. Pedestrian-vehicle injuries are a leading cause of death for children ages 5 to 14. Many school buses will be out on the streets which means drivers need to step up safety around school zones, crosswalks, bus stops and wherever children may be playing outside.

Here are some back to school tips:

1. **Be familiar with school zones.** Get in the habit of noticing where school zones and crosswalks are on routes that you normally take. Accidents are far more likely to occur locally on routes with which drivers are more familiar and comfortable.
2. **Stop for school bus lights.** Always stop for school buses with flashing red lights. Drivers approaching the bus must come to a full stop for the duration that the red lights are on. Some school buses have flashing yellow lights also, which means that drivers may proceed with extreme caution. Bus drivers often engage the flashing yellow lights before the flashing red lights, signaling that they are about to stop.
3. **Obey crossing guards.** Remember that driving on major streets where crossing guards and crosswalks are observed is safer than taking "short-cut" side streets where children may be unattended.
4. **Anticipate the worst.** The speed and distance away of oncoming cars is more difficult for young children to judge. Always anticipate the chance that a small child may run in front of you by slowing down and preparing to brake.
5. **Be careful around parked vehicles.** Be especially careful in areas with parked vehicles on the side of the road. Children waiting to cross may be especially difficult to see behind parked sport-utility vehicles.
6. **Turn your headlights on.** Drive with headlights on in areas with children and pedestrians. The AAA says that the use of headlights can reduce pedestrian accidents by about 25 percent.



7. **Avoid using cell phones when driving.** Cell phones are a known distraction. Never use hand-held cell phones while driving, and never use hands-free cell phones while driving in school zones or areas with children. The same goes for activities that distract the driver, such as changing CDs, looking at notes and reading maps.



8. **Avoid reversing.** Try to avoid reversing your vehicle in areas with children. It's more difficult to see short children and attend to your car's blind spots while reversing.
9. **Don't speed.** Remember that the speed limit in most school zones during school times or when children are present is 25 miles per hour. Bad weather, or areas with limited visibility, will require a lower speed. Your visibility to pedestrians, your ability to see them and your stopping distance all may be greatly impaired by weather or road conditions so follow common sense and slow down.
10. **Don't honk at pedestrians or bicyclists.** Honking at a child, whether on foot or on a bicycle, is generally not a good idea. The noise could possibly cause the startled child to trip or fall and be in a dangerous position for other approaching traffic.