

Back to School Safety

As kids head back to school, let's keep them safe

The end of summer means many things, such as cooler weather, shorter days and ... the start of football here in Tri-States!

But most important, it means kids are headed back to school. And that means we all should be extra careful on the roads, in school zones and around buses. Remember to watch for bikes, too! Here are some tips for both parents and kids to make sure everyone stays safe.

Use caution on the roads

- There are going to be a lot more kids on the sidewalks and streets when school starts, so take it slow and always be aware of your surroundings. That's good advice for all situations, of course, but be extra cautious around the times when school starts and ends for the day.
- Watch out for school zones! They're usually easy to spot, as many have flashing signs indicating a slower speed limit.
- Remember to follow school-bus rules. You aren't allowed to pass the bus on either side of the road when the red lights are flashing. Even when the lights stop, make sure the coast is clear before moving on. Kids can move quickly and erratically.
- Leave yourself extra time to make it to your destination. Whether you're headed to work or dropping your child off at school, rushing is a recipe for disaster.
- Be especially careful in school or child-care parking lots and loading zones!

Teach kids to be safe while walking

Just a few minutes spent explaining some basic safety rules to your child can help keep them safe when they're walking to or from school. Young children should never cross streets alone, but if your child is old enough to walk with others, remind them to do the following:

- Always use marked crosswalks when crossing streets and look both ways twice.
- Do not assume that drivers can see you. Try to make eye contact with them, if possible, when crossing the street.
- Watch for driveways when walking on the sidewalk.
- Be aware of cars that are turning or backing up.
- Never move into the street from behind a car or other obstacle. Don't chase a ball, pet or anything else into the street.
- Always use sidewalks and paths. If there is no sidewalk or path, walk facing traffic and as far to the left as possible.

Help them stay safe on their bikes

Just as it's important to help your children learn safety tips for walking to and from school, it's important to teach bike safety, especially by setting good examples yourself.

- Make sure your child wears a properly fitted helmet every time he or she rides a bike.

- Before the bicycle is ridden, do a quick inspection to ensure it is working properly and reflectors are in place.
- Show your kids how to ride on the right side of the road with traffic and to stay as far to the right as possible.
- Encourage your child to walk his or her bike across busy intersections. Or better yet, choose a route without any busy crossroads.
- Explain to your child why no one should ride on the handlebars.
- Demonstrate the rules of the road by using proper hand signals and obeying traffic signs when you ride bikes together with your child.
- Set curfews so your child is not riding a bicycle at dusk or in the dark.
- Most importantly, supervise your children **every** time they ride until you are certain they have good judgment.

We know you're probably familiar with all of these good ideas, but everyone needs reminders. So take it slow, and let's have a happy and safe school year!