

## Back To School Cautions

Rural Crime Watch (RCW) reminds children, parents and drivers to be particularly alert and cautious during the school year, particularly the first few days of the new school year.

Children have been away from a vigilant routine for two months and drivers have had the same time to disregard school zones.

Time to crank up awareness and make sure the school year begins with joy and enthusiasm, not tragedy.

Driving near schools whether within the "School Zone" signs or not, requires hyper alertness at any time of the day.

Children walking to and from school, running, playing and otherwise disregarding their safety is what drivers need to expect, even though that behavior is not what you want to see in children.

They are children, and drivers are supposed to be responsible adults.

- Know your school's location and drive as though a child is going to bounce from between parked cars.
- Be ready to stop immediately.
- Look at the child attempting to cross so they know you see them and motion that you are allowing them to cross.

Last school year a teacher observed a child

attempting to cross at an intersection at the corner of the child's school. A driver slowed to allow his passage, then sped up, forcing the child to retreat in terror. The teacher reported the incident to local Mounties who attended the driver's nearby home. The driver's response?

"What's the problem, I didn't hit the little sh\*\*."

Let's hope that female driver is an isolated moron and not what our children will encounter.

Here are timely reminders from the Canadian Safety Council for a safe school start-up:

### Getting to and on the school bus:

1. Arrive at the bus stop at least five minutes before the scheduled pick up time. Children should never run after the school bus to try to catch it. If you miss the bus, go back home or if you are at school, report to a teacher.
2. Stay on the sidewalk, well away from the roadway and stay back until the bus has come to a full stop and the door opens.
3. If your child needs to cross the street, teach them to look to the left, then to the right, and to the left once more before crossing the street.
4. Use the handrail when boarding or exiting the bus.

### Riding on the school bus:

1. Take a seat as quickly as possible, put

belongings under the seat and stay seated.

2. Never stick anything out of the window, including arms or heads.
3. Save food for snack time at school or until you get home. There is a danger of choking and the driver may not be able to immediately help you in an emergency.
4. Wait until the school bus comes to a complete stop before getting off.

### After riding on the school bus:

1. When getting off the bus: take two large steps away from bus. If you must walk in front of the bus, walk ahead at least three metres (10 giant steps).
2. The driver must be able to see you and will give a signal when it is safe to cross. Cross in a single file.
3. If a child drops something near or under the school bus, they should never attempt to retrieve it without the driver's permission.

### Travel by Car

Parents and guardians must respect their child's school safety measures for dropping off and picking up their children at school.

Every effort must be made to avoid collision and injury by refraining to create hazardous situations of traffic congestion and unsafe driving practices within the school zone.

Respect posted speed limits, and designated drop-off and pick-up areas.

### Travel by Bicycle

To ride a bicycle to and from school, children must be mature enough (minimum 9 – 12 years old), and must have enough experience.

The rider should be able to scan ahead and check behind without swerving.

To ensure safe cycling, young cyclists must:

- Wear a properly-fitted helmet, and have clothes that are suited for cycling (e.g. their pants tucked in).
- Have their bikes fitted properly and in good working order. The bike should have a regular maintenance check-up and should have a bell. It is also a good idea to have a safety flag.
- Know and obey all traffic rules, signs and signals.
- They must signal turns and stops.
- Ride in a straight line in the same direction as traffic and stop at every stop sign.
- Be predictable to other road users by riding with the traffic usually on the right hand side of the roadway.

- Never ride in the dark. If an older child must ride in the dark, make sure that reflective clothing and night-accessories (e.g. reflectors and lights) are used.

### Walking to school

Many children use roadways to make their way to and from school.

Parents and guardians must review road safety rules with their children and the importance of not accepting rides or any invitations from strangers.

It is best to walk with a buddy and keep focused on getting straight home.

To keep safe on roads, children pedestrians must:

- Find a safe and direct route to school with the help of their parents.
- Hazards should be identified (train tracks, busy intersections, etc.) and a designated route with safety rules should be established.
- Stay on sidewalks whenever possible.
- If there is no sidewalk, use the left side of the road facing traffic.
- Cross streets only at crosswalks and learn to look to the left, the right and then left again before proceeding, even at intersections with pedestrian walk signs.

- Wait until traffic comes to a stop before crossing.
- Make sure drivers see you before you cross.

Remember the adage that it takes a village to raise a child and make sure their trip to and from school is safe.