



School's in Session—Back to School Safety

Parents and caregivers across the state have pencils, binders, notebooks and backpacks on their minds as they prepare to send their children back to school after summer break, but what is on your back to school safety list? Send your kids off with not only a fully stocked backpack, but with safety first on their brain by instilling in them these safety rules:

- ◇ Practice the buddy system. Walking to or from school, or even at the bus stop, there is usually better safety in numbers. Identify other children in your neighborhood, or appoint an older sibling (if you have young ones) to stay with your child at all times when they are off school grounds.
- ◇ Caution against taking shortcuts, and traveling in areas away from the public eye.
- ◇ Teach situational awareness and limit your child's use of headphones while they are walking. Explain to them why distracted walking is a hazard.
- ◇ Use "what if" scenarios to train your child to know what to do in unexpected situations such as when a stranger approaches, your child feels sick or is in an accident on the way home from school, if they are attacked, robbed, or simply caught out in the rain. By providing your child these things to think about, they will be better prepared for unexpected events. Safety doesn't happen by accident, and practice will make you and your children more prepared for unpleasant surprises.
- ◇ Become familiar with your children's school Emergency Operations Plan and what drills they practice throughout the school year. Take the lessons they learn at school regarding emergency response, and practice them at home. This helps your child become more familiar with the processes and instills a sense of importance when you as a parent or guardian reinforce the value of the exercises.
- ◇ And finally make sure they know who to go with, and who to stay away from. Strangers are not the only dangers, and by providing your child a family password that will be provided to anyone who is authorized to pick them up, your child can verify if someone is safe to leave with if their parent is not present.



School Bus Safety

FACT: School buses are the safest mode of transportation for getting children to and from school. ~ Source: U.S. Department of Transportation



School buses are designed to safely take your child to school and back, but this is in part reliant on the other drivers the buses share the roads with. That STOP sign that pops out from the side of a bus with red flashing lights; it's a real stop sign. It means stop. This applies to traffic going both directions. Traffic is not to pass the bus until all the passengers are safely unloaded and across the road. More children are killed each year while unloading and loading than while inside the bus. So TREAT THAT YELLOW BUS LIKE GOLD!

Do not tailgate a school bus, and do not block them from merging back into traffic. They have a very important task of transporting your children, please don't put their lives at risk unnecessarily.

As schools open up their doors each morning and afternoon, stay alert for young pedestrians and cyclists who are in a hurry, and may not be thinking about safety. It's time for everyone, motorists, parents, educators, and students alike to improve their traffic safety practices and have a safe, happy school year for the whole community!



Hurricane Awareness

Approximately three hurricanes make landfall each year over the Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, or the Gulf of Mexico between June 1st and November 30th, this period of time is known as hurricane season in the Atlantic. Out of these three hurricanes, one of them may be classified as a major hurricane, averaging winds of 111 mph or greater. The more common hazard during hurricane season are tropical storms bringing heavy rainfall, destructive winds, tornadoes and flooding from the heavy rains. While hurricanes pose the greatest risk to life safety and property, tropical storms and depressions can also be destructive. Be ready for the hurricane season by refreshing your memory on the different terms to listen for during the hurricane season.

- * A hurricane or tropical storm **watch** is issued approximately 48 hours in advance of the onset of tropical /subtropical or post tropical cyclone or tropical-storm-force winds. It is an announcement that hurricane conditions are possible.
- * A hurricane or tropical storm **warning** is issued when a storm is expected to hit within approximately 36 hours.
- * An **extreme wind warning** is issued when wind speeds of 115 mph or greater are expected to begin within an hour.

Be Ready Before the Storm Hits

Before the first gust of wind or rain drop, take the following steps to help protect yourself and your family this season:

- ⇒ Determine safe evacuation routes and be sure the entire family is aware of their role in evacuation. Along your evacuation routes, check on hotels.
- ⇒ Check emergency equipment (flashlights, radios, cordless cell phone chargers and generators).
- ⇒ Purchase non-perishable food and water for you and your family.
- ⇒ Clear clogged rain gutters and downspouts. Additionally, trimming trees and shrubbery mitigates any potential damage to your house or property.
- ⇒ Review your insurance policy. Its always a good idea to check your coverage prior to an emergency, because once it happens, there is no rewind switch.



Hurricane force winds (74 MPH or greater) and tropical storm winds (39 mph or greater), can cause great damage not only to buildings and infrastructure, but to roadways and utilities as well. Use caution while on the road and watch for power lines, tree limbs and debris downed by the wind.

Stay indoors away from windows during high winds, move items off the floor if you are in a flood prone area.

Monitor radio and TV and follow instructions issued by local officials, and leave immediately if ordered.

Have a safe summer!



Additional Resources

PEMA: <http://www.pema.pa.gov>

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/hurricane/resources/hurricane_safety.pdf

National Weather Service, National Hurricane Center: <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/>

American Red Cross: <http://redcross.org>

ReadyPA: www.readypa.org

