



Back to School Safety

It's that time of year again when parents begin to sigh with relief as their children head back to school. Unfortunately, the beginning of the school year is a time when children are at increased risk of transportation-related injuries from pedestrian, bicycle, school bus, and motor vehicle accidents. Here are some tips to keep your children safe.



Traveling To and From School

Walking to School



- In neighborhoods with higher levels of traffic, consider starting a “walking school bus,” in which an adult accompanies a group of neighborhood children walking to school.
- Make sure your child's walk to a school is a safe route with well-trained adult crossing guards at every intersection.
- Be realistic about your child's pedestrian skills. Because small children are impulsive and less cautious around traffic, carefully consider whether or not your child is ready to walk to school without adult supervision.
- If your child is young or is walking to new school, walk with them the first week to make sure they know the route and can do it safely.
- Bright colored clothing will make your child more visible to drivers.

Riding a Bike

- Always wear a bicycle helmet, no matter how short or long the ride.
- Ride on the right, in the same direction as auto traffic.
- Use appropriate hand signals.
- Respect traffic lights and stop signs.
- Wear bright color clothing or reflective vest to increase visibility.
- Know the "rules of the road."



School Bus



- If your child's school bus has lap/shoulder seat belts, make sure your child uses one at all times when in the bus.
- Wait for the bus to stop before approaching it from the curb.
- Do not move around on the bus.
- Check to see that no other traffic is coming before crossing the street.
- Make sure to always remain in clear view of the bus driver.
- Children should always board and exit the bus at designated locations that provide safe access to the bus or to the school building.



Tips for Motorists

- All passengers should wear a seat belt and/or an age- and size-appropriate car safety seat or booster seat.
- Do not text or talk on your cell phone while driving.
- Slow down and obey all traffic laws and speed limits.
- Be alert for school zones that have a reduced speed limit at designated times of the day.
- Watch for school buses. Red flashing lights and an extended stop arm indicate the school bus is stopping to load or unload children. State law requires you to stop.
- Keep an eye out for children walking in the street, especially where there are no sidewalks.
- Be alert for children playing and gathering near bus stops and for those who may dart into the street without looking for traffic.
- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch for children walking or biking to school.



Tips for Parents



- Be a good role model. Always buckle up in the car, always wear a helmet when biking, and always follow pedestrian safety rules. Don't text or talk on your cell phone while driving.
- Supervise young children as they are walking or biking to school or as they wait at the school bus stop.
- Provide your children with bright clothing so motorists can easily see them.
- Make sure that your teen driver understands and obeys all traffic laws. Discourage them from texting or talking on a cell phone while driving.

Tips for Students

- Always buckle up when riding in a car. Be sure to remove your backpack before getting in the vehicle.
- Always ride in the back seat. It's the safest place for young people.
- Always wear a helmet and follow traffic safety rules when riding your bike.
- If you ride a school bus, learn and practice the safety rules for waiting at the bus stop, getting on and off the bus, and riding the bus. Never wait for the school bus in the roadway.
- If you walk to school, learn and practice the safety rules for pedestrians. It's extremely important for you to use sidewalk when available, look left-right-left when crossing the road, and always walk facing traffic.
- Always cross at crosswalks, obey all traffic signs, traffic lights and crossing guard instructions.
- Cross railroad tracks only at designated pedestrian or roadway crossings. Observe and obey all warning signs and signals.
- Do not walk, run or ride your bicycle down railroad tracks. It's illegal and dangerous.
- Teen drivers should avoid speeding and distractions while driving, such as texting, talking on cell phones, eating and adjusting the radio. Teens are also reminded never to overload their vehicle; everyone riding in a vehicle must use a safety belt.
- Be a good role model for your younger brothers, sisters and friends, and help them learn and follow vehicle safety rules.



Additional Resources

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency: <http://www.pema.pa.gov>
ReadyPA: www.readypa.org
Weather-Ready nation: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/com/weatherreadynation/>
Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.ready.gov
American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/prepare>
National Safety Council: <http://www.nsc.org/>

