

NEWS RELEASE



GARDEN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Back to School Safety Series – Part Two

This is part two of a four-part series of articles by the Garden City Police Department addressing Back-to-School Safety Issues. In last week's article, we addressed safe driving practices. If you missed last week's article, a copy was placed on the Village website. This week's article will cover school bus safety. Parents, grandparents, guardians, and teachers are encouraged to use this article to help teach children about school bus safety.

Bus Stops:

- Hold your child's hand and walk together to and from the bus stop each day. Research has shown that you should hold their hand on the sidewalk and in parking lots until your child is at least eight (8) years old. Furthermore, until they are ten (10) years old, you should hold their hand while crossing the street.
- Stay with your child at the bus stop. If you cannot stay with your child, arrange for another trusted adult to accompany them.
- When waiting for the school bus, have the children stay orderly and stand back from the curb.
- Meet your child at the bus stop after school; never wait on the opposite side of the street. Talk to your child about what they should do if you are delayed and cannot meet them as usual.
- Discuss with your children what they should do if they accidentally get on the wrong bus or miss their regular bus stop.
- When children get off the bus, they should use the handrail and look out the door to the rear of the bus before stepping off the bottom step. The Pupil Transportation Safety Institute advises that more and more vehicles are passing stopped school buses on the right shoulder – where the door is located.
- Remember, clothing can get caught. Jackets, sweatshirt drawstrings, backpack straps, scarves, and loose clothing may get caught on bus handrails or doors. This could be dangerous while getting on or off the bus.
- Children should take five giant steps straight out from the school bus door and out of the danger zone.
- Teach your child to make eye contact with the bus driver and wait for the driver to signal them before they cross in front of the bus.

- The Pupil Transportation Safety Institute reports that 84% of School Bus fatalities occur outside the bus.
- Remind your children to look both ways for traffic before crossing the street. Never assume cars will stop for the bus.
- Never go back for anything you left on the bus, and never bend down near or under the bus.

School Bus Behavior:

- Enter and exit school buses in an orderly manner, using handrails where provided.
- After getting on the bus, go directly to your seat and remain seated, facing forward.
- Students need to listen to the bus driver for special instructions or information.
- Speak quietly and politely to the other children near you.
- Do not jump up and down, fight or tease other passengers, or be unruly. These activities can distract the bus driver, and they may not be able to give proper attention to driving.
- Keep aisles clear.
- Keep heads, hands, arms, feet, and other objects inside the bus at all times.
- Never run or throw items inside the bus.
- Help keep the bus clean and in good condition. Report any unsafe or unsanitary conditions to the bus driver.

Motorist Reminders:

- Remember, if you are approaching a school bus from the front or behind and its yellow lights are flashing, the bus is preparing to stop.
- It is illegal – and very dangerous – to pass or overtake a stopped school bus when emergency red lights are flashing. These flashing lights mean the bus is either picking up or discharging students.
- If the bus's red lights are flashing, you must stop and remain stopped until the red warning lights are off. This includes school buses that are on the opposite side of divided highways, on multiple-lane roadways, in parking lots, and on school grounds.
- The first-time fine for illegally passing a school bus ranges from \$250 to \$400, plus a \$93 surcharge, 5-points on your license and/or 30 days in jail; subsequent violations carry fines ranging from \$600 to \$1,500, plus a \$93 surcharge, 5-points on your license and/or up to 180 days in jail.
- Be advised that many buses are now equipped with cameras, which may result in violators receiving tickets for passing a stopped school bus.
- The Garden City Police Department encourages residents to incorporate these safe practices into their lives to make this school year safe. Next week, read part three of the Back-to-School Series, "Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety."