

NEWS RELEASE



GARDEN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Back to School Safety Series – Part Four

This is the final part of the four-part series of articles by the Garden City Police Department addressing Back to School Safety Issues. The previous three articles addressed Safe Driving Practices, School Bus Safety, and Pedestrian/Bicyclist Safety. This week's article will cover Stranger Danger. Parents, Grandparents, Guardians, and Teachers are encouraged to use this article to help teach their children about Stranger Danger.

Back to School "Stranger Danger":

It is essential to explain to children that strangers can look like ordinary people, not monsters. A stranger is someone that you do not know very well or do not know at all.

Experts recommend that parents or guardians role-play with their children about how someone might approach them, such as offering candy, asking for help, or if they'd like to come and meet their new puppy. You should teach your child to give a firm "NO" and walk away. When you role-play with your children, keep it matter-of-fact and calm so you do not overly frighten them. Part of protecting children is not just pointing out dangers but also teaching them confidence; this will help them to make good decisions in potentially harmful situations.

Teach your children to trust their instincts. They should trust that feeling in their gut that tells them if something is safe or not. You can describe it as the feeling in your tummy that gives you butterflies if something seems wrong.

Tell your children never to approach a vehicle or someone asking for directions; adults do not need advice from children.

There is safety in numbers; whenever possible, do not walk alone.

Carry your cell phone for use in emergencies.

NEVER accept rides from strangers.

Parents develop a secret password that only your family knows. Tell your kids they should NEVER go with anyone unless they know the secret password. Tell your children that they should NEVER share this secret password with anyone.

If you think someone is following you, go to the nearest school official, business, residence, or Police Officer for help.

If vehicle occupants harass you, you should turn around and walk in the opposite direction. The driver will have to turn around or back up to follow you.

When you are approaching your home, have your door key ready so you can enter immediately.

Immediately advise School Staff or a parent/guardian if someone is taking pictures of you as you walk to/from school.

Teach your children that if someone attempts to take them or grab them, they should fall to the ground and start screaming and kicking, bite if necessary, and do anything it takes. They should make as much noise as possible and create as much diversion as possible to draw other people's attention to the area.

If you think something is unusual, report it to the police immediately. Please do not wait until it is too late. Information the police need is:

- The vehicle's license plate number, make/model, and color.
- Description of the subject: gender, race, approximate age, weight, and height.
- A description of the subject's clothing.
- Length and color of the subject's hair; any unusual marks, scars, tattoos, jewelry, hat worn, glasses, etc.
- The subject's last travel direction; note whether it is on foot, by bicycle, or by vehicle.

Strangers often use the internet to prey on their victims. Keep home computers in a busy area of the house, and periodically check your child's computer/tablet, cell phone, etc. Children should never give out their name, address, phone number, or school name. Never arrange face-to-face meetings with anyone they meet online. Never go into chat rooms unless their parents say it is okay. Never open emails from someone they do not know, and never go to links they do not recognize. Children should always tell an adult if they see something on the internet that makes them feel uncomfortable.

The Garden City Police Department encourages everyone to take advantage of these safety tips and the others covered in the three previous articles. If you missed any earlier articles, you can stop by the Garden City Police Department to pick up copies. The Police Department wishes everyone a safe and healthy school year.