

NEWS RELEASE



GARDEN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Back to School Safety Series: Part-One

It's that time of year again; summer vacation is almost over, and schools are reopening. With that in mind, the Garden City Police Department will issue its annual four-part series of articles on Back-to-School Safety Issues. Part One will address "Safe Driving Practices," Part Two "School Bus Safety," Part Three "Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety," and Part Four "Stranger Danger."

When schools open in the morning and close in the afternoon, the areas around schools are very busy and crowded. Parents and other adults can do much to improve traffic safety around our schools by driving cautiously, teaching their children safe practices, and limiting vehicle trips. In some cases, parents and other adults may be the cause of safety concerns. Drivers should obey the directions of Police Officers and Crossing Guards, follow all traffic laws, and apply the following safety practices.

Back to School "Safe Driving Practices":

- When dropping off or picking up children at school, avoid parking on the opposite side of the street. If you must park on the opposite side of the street, NEVER call your children to your car. Always meet them on the school side of the road and walk them to your vehicle. Also, talk with them about what to do if you are not there on time.
- Make sure children are careful opening car doors. Children should always get in and out of your vehicle through the rear curbside door.
- Drivers should not double park or block traffic. Parking or waiting in red zones, such as disabled parking areas and no-stopping zones, is prohibited.
- Do not block school buses or use areas designated for buses only.
- Never stop or park in a crosswalk or within the posted crosswalk "No Parking" area. Students and other pedestrians rely on the crosswalk and need the visibility provided by the posted no-parking buffer to cross the street safely.
- Do not violate the law by using the excuse "I'll just be here for a minute" when picking up or dropping off students.
- U-turns are illegal within school zones. Avoid turning around in neighboring driveways. It is hard enough to see children and even harder when you are backing up or making U-turns.
- When backing up from a driveway or garage, be aware that children may be walking or bicycling to or from a school or school bus.
- Never leave a child of any age in a vehicle without adult supervision. A small child may rapidly suffer dehydration, heat exhaustion, and consequent organ failure. Older children could play games that may lead to tragedy.
- Learn the traffic patterns at the schools to avoid causing disruptions.
- SLOW DOWN! You are free to drive even slower than the posted school zone speed limit, and you should always do so when conditions warrant it, such as heavy rain, snow, fog, icy roads, darkness, or heavy traffic.

- NEVER pass a stopped school bus when its red flashing lights are on. Whether you are behind the bus or approaching from the opposite direction, you must come to a complete stop and remain stopped until the warning lights are off. Be advised that many buses are now equipped with cameras, which may result in violators receiving tickets for passing a stopped school bus.

Motorists should keep in mind that young children usually see and hear differently than adults. Children only have two-thirds of the peripheral vision adults have, and they have difficulty determining the source of a sound. They are still learning to judge distance and speed. When a car approaches them, they cannot accurately judge its speed or how long it will take to cover the distance. Children generally focus on one thing at a time. If they are playing with friends or riding bikes, they are unlikely to be aware of your vehicle. Children are spontaneous and have trouble stopping an action once started. Children also tend to overestimate their abilities, thinking they can run across a street before the light changes or a car approaches.

If parents and other motorists make it a habit to incorporate these safe practices into their routines, the risk of injury or death to anyone in the school zone will be significantly reduced.