

NEWS RELEASE



GARDEN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

349 Stewart Avenue, Garden City, NY 11530
(516) 465-4100 FAX (516) 742-3898

Back-to-School Safety Series – Part Two

School Bus Safety

The Garden City Police Department is pleased to present **Part Two of our four-part Back-to-School Safety Series**, designed to help students, parents, guardians, grandparents, and teachers prepare for a safe school year.

Last week, we discussed **safe driving practices** for the start of the school year. If you missed that article, a copy is available on the Village website.

This week, we focused on **school bus safety**. We encourage parents, grandparents, guardians, and teachers to review these important safety tips with children before the school year begins.

Bus Stop Safety

- **Walk with your child to and from the bus stop.** Hold your child's hand while walking on sidewalks and in parking lots until at least age eight. Children should also be accompanied and hold an adult's hand when crossing the street until at least age ten.
- **Stay with your child at the bus stop.** If you cannot be there, arrange for another trusted adult to accompany your child.
- **Wait safely.** Children should remain orderly and stand well back from the curb while waiting for the bus.
- **Meet your child at the bus stop.** Never wait for your child on the opposite side of the street. Talk with your child about what to do if you are delayed and cannot meet them as usual.
- **Have a plan.** Discuss what your child should do if they accidentally board the wrong bus or miss their regular stop.
- **Use caution when getting off the bus.** Children should use the handrail and look toward the rear of the bus before stepping off the bottom step. The Pupil Transportation Safety Institute reports that an increasing number of vehicles are passing stopped school buses on the right shoulder, where the bus door is located.
- **Be aware of loose clothing and straps.** Jackets, sweatshirt drawstrings, backpack straps, scarves, and other loose clothing can become caught on bus handrails or doors, creating a dangerous situation.
- **Move away from the bus.** After exiting, children should take approximately five giant steps straight out from the bus door to move out of the danger zone.
- **Wait for the bus driver's signal.** Teach your child to make eye contact with the driver and wait for the driver to signal that it is safe before crossing in front of the bus.
- **Remember that the danger is not limited to being on the bus.** The Pupil Transportation Safety Institute reports that **84% of school bus fatalities occur outside the bus.**

- **Look both ways before crossing.** Children should always look both ways before crossing. Never assume that a vehicle will stop simply because the school bus is stopped.
- **Never retrieve dropped items.** If your child drops something near the bus, they should never go back to retrieve it or bend down near or underneath the bus. They should alert the bus driver instead.

School Bus Behavior

Safe behavior on the bus helps protect everyone.

- Enter and exit the bus in an orderly manner, using the handrails where provided.
- Once on the bus, go directly to your seat and remain seated, facing forward.
- Listen carefully to the bus driver and follow all instructions.
- Speak quietly and respectfully to other students.
- Do not jump, fight, tease other passengers, or engage in disruptive behavior. Such behavior can distract the driver and interfere with their ability to operate the bus safely.
- Keep the aisles clear at all times.
- Keep your head, hands, arms, feet, and other objects inside the bus.
- Never run or throw objects inside the bus.
- Help keep the bus clean and in good condition. Report any unsafe or unsanitary conditions to the bus driver.

Motorist Safety Reminders

Drivers play an important role in keeping children safe. When approaching a school bus, slow down, pay attention, and be prepared to stop.

- **Yellow flashing lights mean the bus is preparing to stop.** If you are approaching a school bus from either direction and its yellow warning lights are flashing, slow down and prepare to stop.
- **Red flashing lights mean STOP.** It is illegal—and extremely dangerous—to pass or overtake a stopped school bus while its red warning lights are flashing. The red lights indicate that the bus is stopped to pick up or discharge students.
- **Remain stopped until the red lights are off.** This requirement applies to school buses on the opposite side of divided highways, on multi-lane roadways, in parking lots, and on school grounds.
- **Know the consequences.** A first-time conviction for illegally passing a stopped school bus carries a fine of **\$250 to \$400**, plus a **\$93 surcharge, 8 points on your driver's license**, and/or **up to 30 days in jail**. Subsequent violations carry fines ranging from **\$600 to \$1,500**, plus a **\$93 surcharge, 8 points**, and/or **up to 180 days in jail**.
- **School bus cameras are watching.** Many school buses are equipped with cameras that can capture motorists who illegally pass a stopped school bus, potentially resulting in a ticket.

Help Us Keep Our Children Safe

As the new school year begins, the Garden City Police Department encourages everyone—drivers, parents, students, and members of our community—to do their part to keep our children safe.

Slow down. Stay alert. Follow the rules. And remember: getting to your destination a few seconds faster is never worth putting a child's life at risk.

Be sure to look for **Part Three of our Back-to-School Safety Series: "Pedestrian and Bicyclist Safety."**