

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 Three

Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety

This is Part Three of the Garden City Police Department's four-part **Back-to-School Safety Series**, addressing important safety issues as students return to school.

In our previous articles, we discussed **Safe Driving Practices** and **School Bus Safety**. If you missed either article, copies are available at the Garden City Police Department.

This week's article focuses on **Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety**. Parents, grandparents, guardians, and teachers are encouraged to review these safety tips with children and help reinforce safe habits throughout the school year.

Pedestrian Safety

- **Stay focused.** Children should not walk while talking on a cell phone, texting, or otherwise using a mobile device.
- Students walking to or from school should use sidewalks whenever available. Walk along the side of the sidewalk farthest from traffic. If no sidewalk is available, pedestrians should walk in a single file as close to the edge of the roadway as practical and face oncoming traffic so approaching vehicles can be seen.
- Research has shown that children should be accompanied closely by an adult. Until a child is at least **eight years old**, parents and caregivers are encouraged to hold the child's hand when walking on sidewalks and in parking lots. Children should also be closely accompanied and have their hands held while crossing streets until approximately **10 years old**, depending on the child's individual ability and maturity.
- Teach children to be **defensive pedestrians** and **never assume a driver sees them**.
- Before crossing the street, **LOOK LEFT, then RIGHT, then LEFT again**. Never run into the street. When crossing at an intersection, be especially alert for vehicles turning onto the street.
- Avoid crossing streets in the middle of a block, particularly where parked vehicles may obstruct a driver's or pedestrian's view. Whenever possible, cross at stop signs, traffic signals, designated crosswalks, or locations where crossing guards are present.
- Never assume that a green traffic signal or **WALK** signal means it is automatically safe to cross. Always look **LEFT, RIGHT, and LEFT again** before entering the roadway.
- Remove earphones or headphones before crossing the street. You need to be able to hear approaching vehicles and other traffic.
- Never simply follow a group of people across the street. Make sure it is safe for you to cross before entering the roadway.

- Walk the route to school with your child and discuss safe practices along the way. Teach children about traffic laws and encourage them to ask questions whenever they are unsure what to do.
- Stay visible during nighttime hours and in poor weather conditions by wearing light-colored or reflective clothing.
- **Crossing Guards** are stationed near schools to assist children and others in crossing the street safely. Their signals and directions should always be followed. Disregarding a crossing guard's directions is dangerous and may constitute a violation of New York State law.

Bicycle Safety

- Persons riding bicycles are required to follow applicable traffic laws and are subject to many of the same rules of the road as motorists.
- New York State law requires bicyclists and passengers **under 14 years of age** to wear an approved bicycle helmet while riding a bicycle.
- Regardless of what the law requires, the Garden City Police Department recommends that **everyone riding a bicycle wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet**. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, bicycle crashes can cause serious head injuries, underscoring the importance of wearing a helmet.
- Teach children how to ride a bicycle and practice in a safe location away from traffic. Children should be comfortable signaling, turning, slowing down, and stopping before riding in areas where vehicles are present.
- Teach children to be **defensive riders** and **never assume a driver sees them**.
- Bicyclists should carefully watch for vehicles, other bicyclists, and pedestrians. Use extra caution when approaching intersections and driveways where vehicles may be entering or exiting.
- Children should walk their bicycles across intersections when appropriate and when directed to do so by traffic conditions or crossing personnel.
- Bicyclists should use designated bicycle lanes when available or ride as close to the right-hand edge of the roadway as practical, traveling in the **same direction as traffic**.
- Ride bicycles in a **single file**.
- Never carry more people on a bicycle than it was designed to carry, and never allow anyone to ride on the handlebars.
- Wear bright or reflective clothing when riding, particularly during low-light conditions, and make sure the bicycle is equipped with the required reflectors and lighting.
- **DO NOT ride a bicycle while texting or otherwise using a cell phone**. Bicyclists should also avoid using headphones or earphones that interfere with their ability to hear surrounding traffic. New York State law prohibits operating a bicycle while wearing more than one earphone.

Bicycle Equipment Requirements

New York State law requires bicycles to be equipped with certain safety equipment, including:

- a) Brakes capable of making the tires skid on dry, level pavement.
- b) A bell, horn, or other device capable of being heard from at least 100 feet away. Sirens and whistles are not permitted.
- c) When a bicycle is operated between one-half hour after sunset and one-half hour before sunrise, it must be equipped with a white front headlight visible in darkness from at least 500 feet and a red or amber taillight visible from at least 300 feet.

d) When purchased new and/or operated at night, a bicycle must have reflective tires or wide-angle, spoke-mounted reflectors. The reflectors must meet applicable New York State requirements regarding color and placement.

Make Safety a Habit

The Garden City Police Department encourages residents to incorporate these safety practices into their daily routines. A few minutes spent reviewing pedestrian and bicycle safety with children can help prevent injuries and make the trip to and from school safer for everyone.

Please look for **Part Four of the Garden City Police Department's Back-to-School Safety Series, "Stranger Danger,"** in next week's paper.