

## Back to School Safety tips

New Orleans, La. - With the 2010 school session upon us, New Orleans Police Superintendent Ronal Serpas would like to remind motorists to be alert for children boarding or exiting school buses. Louisiana law requires that if any school or church bus used in the transportation of children is stopped upon a roadway for the purpose of receiving or discharging passengers, with the stop arm and signal lights activated, the operator of a vehicle approaching from any direction shall bring his vehicle to a stop and shall not proceed until the bus has completed receiving or discharging passengers and has been put in motion. Disregarding a school bus stop arm is a serious violation and one that school bus drivers are quick to report. Any person who violates this law will be cited and or summoned.

Another concern is speeding in school zones. Be aware of the school zones in your area and remember to adjust your speed. Observe the posted speed limit in marked school zones when children are present or when the yellow school zone lights are flashing. There will be an increase in police presence in and around schools. Please instruct your child to cross wherever Crossing Guards are available. They are there to assist in the safe crossing of pedestrians and children.

Superintendent Serpas stated: "The safety of our children is paramount. Most injuries to our children each year can be avoided by following the below safety tips".

### Additional Safety tips for parents and students

#### Walking

- Ensure your child leaves early enough to get to school prior to the start of school.
- Use the same route every day and avoid shortcuts.
- Go straight home after school.
- Students should use public sidewalks when walking to school.
- Choose the safest route between home and school and practice walking it with children until they can demonstrate traffic safety awareness.
- Walk to school with other students when available. Strength in numbers.
- Teach children to recognize and obey traffic signals and pavement markings.
- Cross- at designated crosswalks, street corners and traffic controlled intersections.
- Always look both ways before crossing the street and never enter streets from between parked cars or from behind shrubbery.
- Walk- don't run- across intersections. The crossing guard in the street does not mean its safe to cross.
- Avoid talking to strangers and get distance between themselves and anyone who tries to approach or make contact with them.

- Never get into a vehicle with a person even if they know them without parents permission. If a stranger approaches, tell a trusted adult such as a parent or teacher.
- That includes taking a ride from a stranger or someone they know without parent's permission.

## **Riding Bicycles**

Bicycles are associated with more childhood injuries than any other consumer product except the car. To make sure children are safe when riding bicycles to school:

- Check with your school principal to make sure bicycles are allowed. Some schools do not allow students to ride bicycles until a specific grade.
- Obey rules of the road; the rules are the same for all vehicles, including bicycles.
- Stay on the right-hand side of the road and ride in the same direction as traffic.
- Know and use appropriate hand signals.
- Choose the safest route between home and school and practice it with children until they can demonstrate traffic safety awareness.

## **Riding the Bus**

Although bus travel is one of the safest ways to get to and from school, injuries can still occur, and most of them take place when children are getting on or off the bus. Some safety tips for riding the bus are:

- Arrive at the bus stop at least five minutes before the scheduled arrival of the bus.
- Stay out of the street and don't horseplay while waiting.
- Wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before getting on or off.
- Remain seated and keep head and arms inside the bus at all times.
- Do not shout or distract the driver.
- Do not walk in the driver's "blind spot" – the area from the front of the bus to about 10 feet in front of the bus.

## **Driving**

Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths among children age 14 and under. To reduce the risk of injury:

- Always use child safety seats and safety belts correctly when driving or riding in a car.
- Arrive early- especially the first few weeks of school- and use the school's designated student drop- off and pick- up zone.
- Do not double park or make u-turns in front of the school. Police officers are issuing citations for traffic violations and there is no warning or grace period.
- Children should enter and leave the car on its curbside.
- Pick your child up on time so they aren't left waiting near or out front of the school unattended.