

Safety Talk

School-Time Safety

It's that time of year again- back to school, so we have to be very aware of children and their movements to and from school. Children typically present motorists with unique challenges; they are small, less familiar with the rules of the road and unpredictable. This puts a larger burden on you while driving in residential areas or school zones. There are 3 instances where you should be most aware of children and their unpredictable nature: around school buses, as pedestrians and while riding bicycles.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Association(NHTSA) statistics state that most injuries involving children happen outside of school buses, involve children ages 4 to 7 and occur from 7- 8 am and 3- 4 pm (those hours when children are going to or leaving school).

School Buses

Most fatalities that occur to children don't happen while on school buses but when motorists illegally pass a stopped school bus. Every state in the US has laws to help prevent such an accident. First, it is illegal to pass a school bus that is stopped to load or unload children. It's pretty easy to tell if a school bus is stopped; there will be bright flashing lights. If you see a bus with yellow flashing lights, it's to alert you that the bus is preparing to stop to unload or load children.

When stopped, the bus uses red flashing lights and an extended stop sign arm to let you know that it has come to a complete stop. Second, all states require that you stop in both directions on an undivided roadway when a bus has its red flashers on, regardless of how many lanes make up the road. On divided highways, state laws vary, but all agree that traffic behind a school bus traveling in the same direction must stop.

It's important that you be alert when driving near a school bus. Children may dart from one side of the street to the other once the school bus has dropped them off. This is why it can be a good idea to leave at least 10 feet in front of and behind a bus and to pause before moving on after a bus has turned off its red flashers.

Child Pedestrians

Remember that pedestrians typically have the right of way at all intersections and this counts for children as well. When driving near a school, pay close attention to any signs indicating a reduction of speed. Many school zones use signs with yellow flashing lights to alert you that school is in session and that you must stop for pedestrians in crosswalks. Children often cross against lights or in the middle of the street and can be very difficult to see due to their size. Because of this you need to take extra care when driving in school zones, residential areas, playgrounds and parks.

Riding Bicycles

As a general rule, bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as anyone else using the road. This works well for those familiar with the rules of the road but clearly children don't fall into this category. It's important to be very aware in school zones and neighborhood areas where children may be riding. They are more likely to shoot out of a driveway or from behind parked cars with no warning and without looking both ways for traffic.

Obviously none of us want to hit any pedestrian or bicyclist, you'd feel terribly if you caused an injury. However, imagine how much worse you'd feel if you hurt or killed a child because you weren't paying attention.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Why can it be so challenging driving your vehicle near schools or parks?

What times of the day do most fatalities involving children occur? Why?

MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: _____

_____ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: _____

_____ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: ___/___/___

TIME: _____

TOPICS ADDRESSED: _____

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

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EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

Supervisor's Signature

____/____/____
Date

Safety Coordinator's Signature

____/____/____
Date