



August 28, 2009

School's back - time to learn the golden traffic safety rules

Drivers are reminded to be cautious and watch out for schoolchildren

Edmonton... In the excitement of returning to school, children may forget basic road safety rules as they walk, bicycle or ride the bus to schools across Alberta. Throughout the province, traffic injuries are the leading cause of death and a leading cause of hospitalization to children younger than 14. Motorists are urged to use caution and adhere to speed limits when driving through school or playground zones.

A child's perception of traffic dangers is less developed than an adult's. Children are less able to perceive the dangers of crossing the road, and have a tendency to dart into traffic after a friend, pet, or toy. The increased excitement of starting a new school year coupled with less accurate depth perception and difficulty judging the speed of oncoming vehicles makes children more susceptible to pedestrian collisions.

Driving tips to keep children safe:

- Examine the road ahead and obey posted speed limits. Always be prepared to slow down or stop.
- Do not drive while distracted - always be alert of your surroundings.
- Use caution when approaching intersections or mid-block crosswalks. Parked or stopped vehicles may hide a pedestrian crossing the road. The fine for failing to yield to a pedestrian in a crosswalk or passing a vehicle stopped at a crosswalk is \$575 and four demerit points.
- Watch for school safety patrollers, identified by their orange vests, and stop as directed. School safety patrollers play a vital role in directing children safely across the street.
- Be very cautious in parking lots or when backing out of a parking stall or driveway.
- Watch for kids between parked vehicles and on the sidewalk. They may dash out into the street after a friend or a toy.

Driving tips when around school buses:

- Alternating flashing yellow or amber lights mean a bus is slowing down to stop. **Do the same.**
- When approaching a school bus with red lights flashing—you must stop! The fine for passing a school bus with its red lights flashing is \$402 and six demerit points.

- Always watch for children crossing roads. Prepare to slow down and stop.

Speed limits in school and playground zones

The speed limit in a school zone is 30 kilometres per hour unless otherwise posted. A school zone is in effect on school days from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. unless other times are posted.

The speed limit in a playground zone is 30 kilometres per hour unless otherwise posted. A vehicle is not permitted to pass or attempt to pass another vehicle travelling in the same direction from 8:30 a.m. to one hour after sunset in a playground zone.

Reminder for parents

Parents also have a key role in back-to-school safety. Taking the time to remind your children about some simple safety rules can really make a difference. Here are some road safety reminders for parents to tell their children:

- Follow the bus safety rules - make sure your child always rides the bus safely.
- Before crossing the road: POINT across the road to show drivers you want to cross; PAUSE until the cars stop and you make eye contact with the drivers; PROCEED with your arm extended after all cars in all the lanes have stopped. Never run into the street.
- Ride legally - No helmet! No bike! If your child is under the age of 18 he/she must always wear a helmet when riding a bike.
- Remind your child to wear proper safety gear when rollerblading, skateboarding, or riding a scooter. Safety gear provides extra protection, reducing the chances of getting seriously hurt. If children have portable MP3 players, it is safer to not use them while engaging in these types of activities.

As motorists, we can save lives and reduce injuries by simply following the rules of the road. As a parent or teacher, we can protect our children from harm by teaching them the golden rules of traffic safety.

For more safety tips, go to www.saferoads.com and click on Safety Central from the top menu, then Just for Kids from the drop-down menu.

For more information, contact the Office of Traffic Safety at 780-422-8839 or your regional traffic safety co-ordinator. To find your local co-ordinator, visit www.saferoads.com and click on Contact Us, then the [Regional Traffic Safety Co-ordinator](#) on the left-hand side.

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