

NEWS

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RELEASE

ONEIDA COUNTY : For Immediate Release – Monday August 29, 2011 12:00noon

As summer draws to a close, back-to-school season is in full effect. Safety should be a priority for every family as children return to classrooms this fall. It is important for parents to stay up-to-date on the proper safety precautions and share this information with their children to keep them safe throughout the school year. The law enforcement officers in Oneida County urge all of our citizens to practice good safety habits in relation to our schools, students, and transportation.

One way to ensure their safety is to go over a few, simple rules. Practice with your younger child how to safely wait for and board the school bus. Go over safe bicycling procedures if they'll be riding and don't forget your older child that may be driving. The older child may also be at a particular risk and needs your guidance.

For some 22 million students nationwide, the school day begins and ends with a trip on a school bus. The National Safety Council School reports bus transportation is safe. In fact, buses

are safer than cars. Unfortunately, each year many children are injured and several are killed in school bus incidents.

More often than not, these deaths and injuries didn't occur in a crash, but as the pupils were entering and exiting the bus. Remember these safety tips:

- Have a safe place to wait for your bus, away from traffic and the street.
- Stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals you to enter.
- When being dropped off, exit the bus and walk ten giant steps away from the bus. Keep a safe distance between you and the bus. Also, remember that the bus driver can see you best when you are back away from the bus.
- Use the handrail to enter and exit the bus.
- Stay away from the bus until the driver gives his/her signal that it's okay to approach.
- Be aware of the street traffic around you. Drivers *are* required to follow certain rules of the road concerning school buses, however, not all do. Protect yourself and watch out!

Even if you don't ride in a motor vehicle, you still have to protect yourself. Because of minimal supervision, young pedestrians face a wide variety of decision making situations and dangers while walking to and from school. Here are a few basic safety tips to follow:

- Mind all traffic signals and/or the crossing guard -- never cross the street against a light, even if you don't see any traffic coming.
- Walk your bike through intersections.
- Walk with a buddy.
- Wear reflective material...it makes you more visible to street traffic.

Here are some simple reminders for drivers:

- Slow down and be especially alert in the residential neighborhoods and school zones
- Take extra time to look for kids at intersections, on medians and on curbs
- Enter and exit driveways and alleys slowly and carefully

- Watch for children on and near the road in the morning and after school hours
- Reduce any distractions inside your car so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings. Put down your phone and don't talk or text while driving

The National Safety Council has additional helpful safety information available on the World Wide Web and the law enforcement officers in Oneida County urge you to explore the various back to school safety areas of this web site at <http://www.nsc.org>

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