



OFFICIAL MEDIA RELEASE KENT COUNTY SHERIFF DEPARTMENT



SCHOOL BUS SAFETY: DRIVERS NEED TO BE EXTRA CAUTIOUS AS KIDS GET BACK-TO-SCHOOL

Summer days are waning away and kids across Michigan go back to school next week. The Kent County Sheriff's Office encourages drivers to cut down distractions and concentrate on the road as kids of all ages get back to school.

Children are often eager to get on and off the bus because they are excited to get to school and they are also excited to get home and tell their parents about their day. Sheriff Stelma has some safety measures for both students – and motorists – to help ensure safety for everyone.

Tips for Students:

- Always arrive at the bus stop early.
- Prior to boarding, wait until the bus has come to a complete stop, the door is opened and the bus driver says that it's OK to board.
- Once on board proceed quickly to your seat and stay sitting until the bus arrives at your school or other drop off location.
- Do not move around on the bus.
- Always walk on the sidewalk when preparing to cross the street near a bus. Make eye contact with the driver so that you are sure he or she sees you.
- Never walk behind the bus.
- If you are walking beside the bus, make sure you are at least 10 feet (10 "giant" steps) away.
- Take extra precaution to make sure that clothing with drawstrings and book bags do not get caught in the hand rail or door.
- Never stop to pick something up you have dropped while the bus is stopped. Wait until the bus has driven off to avoid not being seen by the driver.

Tips for Motorists:

- Remember that children are unpredictable in their actions. Take extreme caution when traveling in a school zone.
- If you live in an area where there are no sidewalks, drive cautiously. Be more alert to the possibility of children walking in the road.
- Be more aware of children playing near school bus stops.
- Take extra time to look for kids at intersections, on medians and on curbs.
- Enter and exit driveways and alleys slowly and carefully

- Reduce any distractions inside your car so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings.
- Put down your phone – don't talk or text while driving!
- Slow down and prepare to stop whenever you see yellow school bus lights flashing.
- Never pass a school bus when there are flashing red lights. This is a sign that children are getting off the bus – and it's the law!

Traveling to and from School:

- Plan a walking route to school or the bus stop. Choose the most direct way with the fewest street crossings and, if possible, with intersections that have crossing guards.
- Walk the route with your child beforehand. Tell him or her to stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields and other places where there aren't many people around.
- Teach your child never to talk to strangers, accept rides from strangers or accept gifts from strangers. Remember, a stranger is anyone you or your children don't know well or don't trust.
- Be sure your child walks to and from school or the bus stop with a sibling, friend or neighbor.
- Teach your kids – whether walking, biking or riding the bus to school – to obey all traffic signals, signs and traffic officers. Remind them to be extra careful in bad weather.
- When driving kids, deliver and pick them up as close to the school as possible. Don't leave until they are in the schoolyard or building.
- If your child bikes to school, make sure he wears a helmet that meets safety standards. Research indicates that a helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by up to 85%.
- If your child rides a scooter to school; make sure she wears sturdy shoes, a helmet, kneepads and elbow pads. Children under 12 should not ride motorized scooters.
- Be sure your child knows his or her home (or parents' cellular) phone number(s) and address. They should also know where you work, your work phone number, the phone number of another trusted adult and how to call 911 for emergencies.

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