

“BACK TO SCHOOL”

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY TIPS

As the dog days of summer come to an end, Iowa’s 482,000 students will be heading back to school. The Iowa Association of School Boards and the Iowa Pupil Transportation Association want to remind all parents and students that getting to school safely, whether riding the school bus, a bicycle or walking, requires following some basic safety tips. Parents are urged to discuss the following safety tips with students before sending them off to school this fall.



Riding the School Bus:

According to the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration, the school bus remains the safest way for students to get to and from school. However, accidents can happen and student injuries do occasionally occur. Parents can help reduce these by discussing the following school bus safety rules with their children.

- Arrive at the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus arrives.
- Stay out of the street or roadway and avoid horseplay.
- Always wait for the bus driver’s signal before crossing the street or roadway to the bus; and always look both ways to make sure no vehicles are passing the bus.
- Always cross at least 10 feet (or 10 giant steps) in front of the bus so the bus driver can see you.
- Remain seated at all times and keep the bus aisles clear.
- Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop before leaving your seat and exiting the bus.
- Do not throw objects
- Do not shout or distract the driver unnecessarily.
- Obey the driver at all times
- Keep heads and arms inside the bus and never throw objects out bus windows.



Riding Bikes to School:

More than 27 million children ages 5 to 14 ride bicycles, and many of them ride their bikes to school. Unfortunately, bicycles are associated with more childhood injuries than any other product except the automobile. To keep children safe, they should follow these safety tips for parents of children riding bicycles to school:

- Ensure that children wear bike helmets at all times when bicycling. Head injury is the leading cause of death in bike crashes, accounting for more than 60 percent of bicycle-related deaths. Bike helmets have been shown to reduce the risk of head injury by as much as 85 percent and the risk of brain injury by as much as 88 percent.
- Teach children to follow the rules of the road. Ride on the right side of the road, with traffic, not against traffic; use appropriate hand signals, respect traffic signals; stop at all intersections, marked and unmarked; and stop and look left, right and left again before entering or crossing the street.
- Do not allow children to ride on the road without direct adult supervision until age ten.
- Plan a safe cycling route with children and ride it with them.
- Do not let children ride a night. The risk of sustaining an injury during non-daylight conditions is nearly four times greater than during the daytime.
- Ensure schools provide cyclists with “safe areas” where there are few motor vehicles and pedestrians.



Walking to School:

Pedestrian injuries remain the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths among children ages 5-14 according to Safe Kids Worldwide, a national organization dedicated to keeping kids safe. Several national surveys reports support this, including one in which nine out of 10 crosswalks within the vicinity of an elementary or middle school had at least one of four common hazards: cross walks in poor condition or not present; drivers failed to stop, or stopped and made illegal turns; posted speed limits during school hours were 35 mph or more; and curb ramps were either outside the crosswalk or missing completely.

Another survey found that nearly 60 percent of parents and children walking to school encountered at least one serious hazard with the most common being lack of sidewalks or crosswalks, wide roads and speeding drivers.”

Here are some safety tips for parents to discuss with their children:

- Children under 10 should never cross the street alone.
- Choose the safest route to school and walk it with your children.
- Instruct children to recognize and obey all traffic signals and markings.
- Make sure children look in all directions before crossing the street.
- Direct children to not enter the street from between parked cars or from behind bushes or shrubs.
- Train children to cross the street at a corner or crosswalk.
- Warn children to be extra alert in bad weather.
- Inform children of designated crossings.
- Teach children to never dart out into traffic.
- Demonstrate to your children pedestrian safety by being a good parent role model.

Adapted from “Back to School Safety Tips,” *Health News Digest*, August 2007

The Iowa Pupil Transportation Association is an organization designed to serve as a resource for school administrators, supervisors, mechanics, drivers and the Iowa Department of Education in the upgrading of Iowa’s pupil transportation program.

The Iowa Association of School Boards is a private, non-profit organization serving public school board members, and is a primary advocate for outstanding public education for all Iowa students.