



Pedestrian Safety

School-Aged Children Are Especially Vulnerable to Traffic-Related Pedestrian Crashes

- While every year school buses transport millions of children to and from school and school-related activities, millions of other children rely on walking to get to and from school or the bus stop. As a result, pedestrian crashes are a serious traffic safety problem for school-age children that results in tens of thousands of injuries and hundreds of deaths each year.
- In 1998, traffic crashes killed 573 pedestrians ages 5 through 18 and injured another 23,000. Almost 10 percent of all traffic fatalities ages 5 through 18 are pedestrians.
- Between 1988 and 1998, more children were killed as pedestrians walking near a bus than as passengers of a school bus. On average, 22 children die in school bus-related crashes each year as pedestrians and 9 as occupants.

Young Children Are Physically Different From Adults

- Children are short. This makes it difficult for them to see motorists and for motorists to see them - especially around obstructions like parked or moving cars, buses and bushes.
- Children have underdeveloped peripheral vision - approximately one-third narrower than an adult's, so a child won't see a motorist approaching from the right or left as soon as an adult will.
- Children have difficulty judging a car's speed and distance, leading them to misjudge how far away from them a moving car really is. They often believe cars can stop instantly.
- Children often think if they can see the driver, the driver can see them.

Parents and Motorists Can Prevent Child Pedestrian Deaths and Injuries

- Parents and motorists must realize that children are not small adults. Until children are at least 10 or 11 years old, they don't have the skills to handle traffic.
- Parents or other responsible caregivers must supervise children at all times.
- Parents and other caregivers must always set a good example. They should cross at intersections, stop at the curb, look LEFT-RIGHT-LEFT for traffic in all directions, cross when it is clear, and keep looking for cars as they cross.
- Drivers should observe speed limits at all times, especially around children. The faster a striking vehicle is traveling, the more seriously injured a struck pedestrian will be. A disproportionate number of the injuries sustained by child pedestrians are severe.
- When driving in school zones, near playgrounds, or in neighborhoods where children might be playing, motorists should always expect a child to dart out into the roadway.
- Children should wear bright colored clothing in the daytime and carry flashlights or wear retro-reflective materials at night.
- When turning left at a green light or making a right turn on red, motor vehicle drivers need to look for pedestrians as well as cars. Pedestrians have the right of way in these situations.

Children Need Safe Routes and Play Areas

- Play areas should be away from traffic, fenced and under adult supervision.
- Slower traffic, more crosswalks and crossing guards, and more sidewalks with wider surfaces and unobstructed views help make the neighborhood safe.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Walkability Checklist (available in English and Spanish) helps parents and children assess the "walkability" of their neighborhood and chart the safest route to school, the park, or a friend's house. Copies can be ordered or downloaded directly from NHTSA's web page at: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov> or, you can fax your order to (202) 366-7721. A copy is included in the Activities Guide of this package.

Children Should Be Taught To Always Follow These Steps:

- Always cross at an intersection or crosswalk when one is available. Before crossing a street, stop at the curb, edge of the road, or corner before proceeding. Look left-right and left again, and if it's clear, begin to cross, looking over your shoulder for oncoming vehicles. Continue to watch for traffic when crossing.
- Walk facing traffic when there are no sidewalks, so you can see what's coming.
- If you must walk through parked traffic, stop and look carefully before stepping out from between vehicles. Don't run between parked cars and buses. Don't run across the street or through a parking lot.
- Be especially careful when walking after dark. Placing retro-reflective stickers on shoes and book bags, or slipping on a retro-reflective wrist band, is easy to do and it greatly increases your chances of being seen.
- At intersections with traffic lights and pedestrian signals, it's important to follow the signals carefully. Wait until you see the WALK signal, following again the basic rules for crossing.
- A flashing DON'T WALK signal indicates you should not start to cross the street. However, if you have already started crossing when it begins flashing, continue walking. The timing mechanism in the signal device allows you time to cross before it changes to a steady DON'T WALK signal.
- If you see a steady DON'T WALK signal, don't begin to cross the street! Wait for the next WALK signal.
- The WALK signal and the green traffic light indicate that it's your turn to cross the street, but they do not mean it is SAFE to cross. The WALK signal and the GREEN light mean LOOK, and then go if no traffic is coming your way.
- Always watch for turning cars when crossing the street.

**For more safety information:
visit the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website at
www.nhtsa.gov.**