



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release



Carteret County Sheriff's Office offers back-to-school safety tips

CARTERET COUNTY, NC – As summer days are waning and the start of school is fast approaching, the Carteret County Sheriff's Office is reminding the community of several tips to help keep kids safe as they travel to and from school.

Every day millions of students use school buses as transportation to and from school. Although school buses represent the safest form of highway transportation, there are a number of safety factors of which both student and drivers should be aware. Hoping to ensure school bus safety, Carteret County Sheriff Asa Buck encourages caution whenever school buses are present.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in recent years there were an average of 128 fatalities in school transportation-related traffic crashes each year and more school-aged pedestrians have been killed during the hours of 7 a.m. to 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. to 4 p.m. than any other time of day.

"Parents can teach their children the following safety tips which will inform the students of the danger signs to watch for and avoid when walking, biking, or riding a bus between school and home," Sheriff Buck said. "All too often, children – like adults – become creatures of habit and overlook simple safety precautions. I would like to ask all school children to remember a few safety rules:

- Always arrive at the bus stop at least 5 minutes early.
- While the bus is approaching make sure to stand at least three giant steps away from the curb, wait until the bus has come to a complete stop and the door opens before approaching 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, walk at least three giant steps away.
- Use the handrail when entering and exiting the bus. Take extra precautions to make sure that clothing with drawstrings and book bags do not get caught in the handrail or door.
- Never stop to pick something up that you have dropped when a bus is stopped. Tell the bus driver or wait until the bus has driven off to avoid not being seen by the driver.
- While walking, remember to always travel with a friend. Two heads are better than one, especially if there's an emergency.
- A stranger is anyone you or your parents don't know well.
- You or your friend must never take candy, money, medicine, or anything else from a stranger.
- If a stranger in a car asks you questions, don't get close to the car (you could get pulled in) – and never get in the car.
- Strangers can be very tricky – they can ask you to walk with them to "show" them something; they can offer to pay for your video game, or ask you to help them find a lost dog or cat. Don't be fooled!

- Don't tell anyone your name or address when you're walking and don't think that because someone knows your name that they know you – they may just be looking at your name printed on your lunch box, school bag or T-shirt.
- If you think you're in any danger, yell, and run to the nearest store or "safe house" or back to school.
- Always tell your parents or teacher if a stranger has approached you.
- Only one person belongs on your bike. Never let a second person ride with you.
- Allow plenty of room for a safe stop. Never follow bikes or cars too closely.
- Keep both hands on the handle bars for safe steering.
- Always give proper signals. Keep a firm grip on the handle bars with your right hand and use your left arm and hand to signal turns and stops. Arm straight out is a left turn; arm bent up at the elbow is a right turn; and arm bent down at the elbow is a stop.
- Avoid riding your bike at night. If you must ride at night, equip your bike with a good headlight and rear reflectors. Wear light-colored or reflective clothing so others can see you easily.
- Make sure you obey all traffic signs and signals. Stop completely at stop signs and always look both ways before starting out again."

Tips for motorists include:

- Remember that children are unpredictable in their actions. Take extreme caution when traveling in a school zone.
- If there are no sidewalks, drive cautiously. Be more alert to the possibility of children walking in the road.
- 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 and the stop arm is extended. This is a sign that children are getting on or off the bus. Motorists must wait until the red lights stop flashing, the stop arm is withdrawn, and the bus is moving before they can start driving again.
- Learn and obey the school bus laws in North Carolina.

Sheriff Buck also suggests that parents drive their child's bus route with them to practice the proper safety precautions they can take to help ensure their child enjoys a safe ride to and from school.

The Sheriff explains that it's easy for children to get into a routine in traveling back and forth to school. However, he stresses that children should remind themselves – and be reminded by parents – that practicing safety every day can save them from serious injury.

"By taking the time to carefully prepare your child on how to handle these situations, you can ensure your child's safety whether they are on their way to school or home, playing on a playground or riding their bikes," Sheriff Buck concludes.

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