



SAFETY MOMENT

BACK TO SCHOOL!

At the end of every summer, the days grow shorter and the sun loses some of its warmth but for many parents, it's the best time of year, as the kids head back to school!

In every town, village, city and neighbourhood, the schools reopen and drivers need to adjust their speed and awareness to make sure all the kids get safely to and from school.

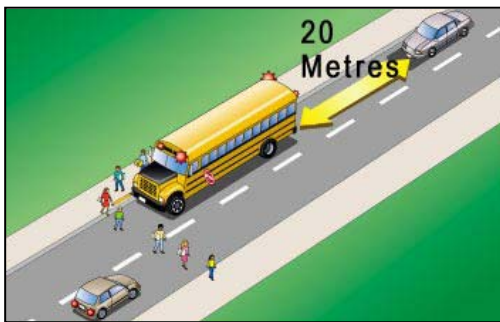
What are some of the things that drivers need to be aware of and adjust for as school goes back into session?

- ✓ Adjusting speed for school zones.
- ✓ Young children walking on their own without supervision.
- ✓ Children on bicycles who may or may not know traffic laws and habits.
- ✓ Impatient parents dropping kids off in front of the school and stopping where they block traffic.
- ✓ School buses stopping to pick up or drop off students.
- ✓ Heavier traffic generally as vacation ends and most folks get to their jobs.
- ✓ In some areas, the weather is already getting colder and wetter.
- ✓ Any other ideas?



All of this activity can challenge even the best driver and it's easy to allow a lapse in attentiveness if you are in a hurry or thinking about something else.

Q: What are the rules and what is the correct procedure around school buses?



In every jurisdiction, that we are aware of, a school bus displaying flashing red lights requires you to stop regardless of which side of the road you are on. The school bus red lights are intended to stop **ALL TRAFFIC** to permit children to safely cross the street in front of the bus. Be patient and **NEVER** pass a school bus with red lights flashing.

Younger Children Walking

The little ones (unlike some teenagers) can be very excited to get back to school and allow this excitement to overcome whatever road safety education that they may have had. They may be easily distracted and run out to greet a friend on the other side of the road or simply wander across without checking traffic or using a guarded crosswalk.

Your eyes are your best defence! Stay alert and keep moving your eyes and tracking those kids! Cover your brake and watch for telltale signs that they may suddenly dart out. The lower your speed, the shorter your stopping distance, so keep the speed down!





Children on Bicycles

For many kids, riding their bike to school is a new thrill and they may only have the basic control skills. Keep a sharp eye out for riders and when passing them, leave lots of room. One small wobble or bump can send them right into your path. The best plan is to wait until you can move way over into the other lane and not pass closely or squeeze them towards the curb or ditch. New riders are focussed on controlling the bike and are easily startled by closely passing cars. This can cause them to jerk the handlebars and lose control!

Pick Ups & Drop Offs

If your route takes you past a school, try to avoid times when school is either going in or letting out students. Parents who pick up or drop off kids may stop in inappropriate spots and tie up traffic. Avoid the frustration and traffic jams by picking times carefully. If you are picking up or dropping off your own kids, park a block away and walk. The exercise will do everyone good and you can avoid the melee at the front of the school.



Heavier Traffic in Early September, as school goes back in.

Plan in advance for heavy traffic by leaving earlier and expecting to take longer to get to your destination. It's much more relaxing and safer to not feel the need to hurry and yet still know that you will arrive on time or even early. Trying to hurry through heavy traffic is counterproductive and will just stress you out without really saving any time.



Changing Weather Conditions

As the fall starts and weather changes, make sure that your vehicle is ready. Check your tires for inflation and tread wear to ensure that you do not aquaplane on water; check wiper blades to ensure that they work well to keep the windshield clear in the rain. Before winter sets in, get a proper winterization done on your vehicle.

Practical Challenge:

Your goal is to drive at or below the speed limit in every school zone that you encounter this month. This may be tougher than you think, for some. If you are used to driving over the limit on most roads, this speed will feel "normal" and slowing to school zone speed will at first feel impossibly slow. This is just the contrast between your normal "just a bit over" speed in a regular zone and the reduced school zone limit.

Persist! But if you fail, at least be patient when you get stuck behind the rest of us who are at the school zone limit!



Be Safe!