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PRESS RELEASE

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Kids and Drivers Must Be Road Ready for that First Day of School

A new school year is about to begin and as parents purchase school clothes, backpacks and lunch boxes, the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) wants to remind them to prepare their kids with ways to arrive at school and home safely on their first, and every school day. At the same time, drivers need to be extra vigilant.

“If at all possible, parents should walk or ride with kids to school before that first day, teaching them the safest routes and *their* road safety and personal safety rules,” said OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. “Remind your kids how important safety on your streets is to you and them; that they need to be careful every time they leave the house. Drivers, especially those dropping off kids, need to stay focused and on the lookout for children.”

The following safe walking, bicycling and driving practices can only be effective if parents teach their kids early and often, and set good examples themselves:

Walking

- Always cross at an intersection or crosswalk, if available, and look both ways before crossing.
- When no cars are coming, walk - do not run - across the road, and keep looking for cars while crossing.
- At intersections with traffic lights, watch for turning cars and obey all traffic signals.
- Always walk on the sidewalk if there is one.
- If there are no sidewalks, be sure to walk *facing traffic* so you can see what's coming.
- Don't run between parked cars and buses.
- Don't run across the street or through a parking lot.
- No cell phone talking or texting while going to or from school. Watch what's going on around you.

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Bicyclists

- Always wear a helmet.
- Always ride on the right side of the road. Never ride against traffic.
- Ride single file.
- Watch out for dangerous things in the roadway – storm drains, gravel, pot holes, trash.
- Stop at all stop signs and at all traffic lights. Be extra careful at crossroads.
- Maintain control of your bike. Don't swerve or make sudden turns.
- Watch out when riding next to parked cars. They can open doors or pull into the street.
- Listen for cars approaching from the side or behind you. Never wear headphones.
- Know your road signs and obey them.
- Always be prepared to stop.
- No cell phone talking or texting while riding. Watch what's going on around you.

Drivers

- It's especially important to slow down and watch out for kids at the beginning of the school year. Students are excited and their uncertainty with the new school schedules may hinder them from paying attention to traffic conditions and their own safety. Simply put, children may not be watching for traffic. California's *maximum* speed limit in school zones is 25 MPH when children are present and near the road. Remember - ALL drivers are responsible for every child's safety near school zones or school busses.
- One of the dangers kids may face can actually be other parents. Distracted or hurried parents sometimes forget about safety once their own kids have been dropped off. Stay extra alert in or near school driveways or drop off zones.
- What's good for the kids are good for drivers too – no cell phone talking or texting while driving. Watch what's going on around you. And make sure your kids won't be calling you while you are driving.
- When school buses stop to load or unload passengers, and its "Red Lights are Flashing," all vehicles must stop – in both directions. If the bus stop is on a divided highway, then only those vehicles approaching from the rear must stop.

School Buses:

- If your child rides a school bus, make sure that he or she knows to remain seated at all times, to keep the aisles clear, not to throw objects, not to shout or distract the driver, and to keep his or her hands and arms inside of the bus.
- The California school bus is one of the safest modes of transportation in the world, but everyone must do their part to be safe when traveling near buses transporting kids, whether in motion or stopped.

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