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Kick off the School Year with a Lesson in Safety

Important Tips from the California Office of Traffic Safety

SACRAMENTO, CA – Back-to-School season can be a whirlwind of fun, excitement, and anticipation for parents and children alike. This time of year is also a time for new learning experiences and with the month of August designated as National Back to School Safety Month, the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) would like to encourage parents to give their children a safety refresher on walking, riding their bicycle and bus protocol before they head back to the classroom.

“The best way for parents and caregivers to educate their children on road safety is to talk openly and plainly about it and set a good example,” said OTS Director, Rhonda Craft. “During summer break, children can easily get out of a safe school routine. It’s important to sharpen their skills by going over tips and safety procedures before sending them on their way that first day of school.”

According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2013, five percent of all pedestrian fatalities and an estimated 15 percent of all pedestrians injured were children 14 and younger.

The following walking, biking and school bus safety practices can be very effective when communicated and properly demonstrated by parents to their children:

Walking

- Walk on the sidewalk. If one doesn’t exist, walk facing traffic.
- When crossing the street, look both ways for cars.
- Always use the crosswalk if one is available, otherwise cross at an intersection.
- Obey traffic signals when crossing the street.
- Refrain from wearing headphones or using a mobile device.
- If you walk with friends, don’t be too involved in conversation that you’re not paying attention to what you’re doing.

Biking or Skateboarding

- Get familiar with the safest route and traffic signals and signs.
- Always wear a properly fitted helmet.
- Always stop and look both ways before crossing any street or intersection.
- Never wear headphones.

(more)



Taking the Bus

- Wait five giant steps from the road and when the school bus arrives, wait until the driver lets you know that it is safe to board.
- When boarding the school bus, go straight to your seat and sit facing the front.
- Respect the driver and minimize distracting behaviors.
- When exiting the bus, look out for cars and immediately move out of the roadway.

Reminders for Parents and Caregivers:

- Plan ahead by plotting your route and give yourself a few extra minutes to accommodate possible commute delays during mornings and afternoons.
- Exercise caution around schools and neighborhoods by always following the posted speed limit inside school zones, which is often 25 mph *maximum* but may be as low as 15 mph. Keep an eye out for any children in the area.
- Be extra aware around school drop off zones, and make sure your kids are, too. Don't think safety is over once you drop your child off; there are many others around.
- If you must use your phone, pull over into a parking spot when it is safe to do so.
- Avoid distractions such as eating, applying makeup, changing the radio, and using mobile devices.

For more information about other OTS efforts, visit www.ots.ca.gov, facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS or twitter.com/OTS_CA.

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