

## Safety Reminders for Back to School

It's that time of year again – back to school time. Canada Safety Council would like to continue to remind parents and guardians to teach your children about safe travel to and from school. Take the time to know the rules and educate your children about safe conduct when using and sharing roadways, whether it be by school bus, car, bicycle or by foot.

### School Bus Travel

Research conducted by Transport Canada shows that school bus travel is one of the safest methods of transportation. It is 16 times safer than travelling in a family car per passenger/kilometre of travel. Although school buses have an excellent safety record, mishaps can happen. These mishaps can include instances where children are injured while riding on the bus. It is more common however, for injuries to be sustained once outside the bus, including being hit by their own school bus or other vehicles.

Every driver must remember that when approaching a stopped school bus (on a non-divided road) that has its overhead red signal-lights flashing and side stop sign out, must stop before reaching the bus and must not proceed until the overhead red signal-lights have stopped flashing.

*Here are some safety tips to share with children to ensure safe travel.*

#### Getting to and on the school bus:

1. Arrive at the bus stop at least five minutes before the scheduled pick up time. Children should never run after the school bus to try to catch it. If you miss the bus, go back home or if you are at school, report to a teacher.
2. Stay on the sidewalk, well away from the roadway and stay back until the bus has come to a full stop and the door opens.
3. If your child needs to cross the street, teach them to look to the left, then to the right, and to the left once more before crossing the street.
4. Use the handrail when boarding or exiting the bus.

#### Riding on the school bus:

5. Take a seat as quickly as possible, put belongings under the seat and stay seated.
6. Never stick anything out of the window, including arms or heads.
7. Save food for snack time at school or until you get home.
8. Wait until the school bus comes to a complete stop before getting off.

#### After riding on the school bus:

9. When getting off the bus: take two large steps away from bus. If you must walk in front of the bus, walk ahead at least three metres (10 giant steps).
10. The driver must be able to see you and will give a signal when it is safe to cross. Cross in a single file.
11. If a child drops something near or under the school bus, they should never attempt to retrieve it without the driver's permission.

## Travel by Car

Parents and guardians must respect their child's school safety measures for dropping off and picking up their children at school. Every effort must be made to avoid collision and injury by refraining to create hazardous situations of traffic congestion and unsafe driving practices within the school zone. Respect posted speed limits, and designated drop-off and pick-up areas.

## Travel by Bicycle

To ride a bicycle to and from school, children must be mature enough (minimum 9 – 12 years old), and must have enough experience. The rider should be able to scan ahead and check behind without swerving.

### *To ensure safe cycling, young cyclists must:*

- Wear a properly-fitted helmet, and have clothes that are suited for cycling (e.g. their pants tucked in).
- Have their bikes fitted properly and in good working order. The bike should have a regular maintenance check-up and should have a bell. It is also a good idea to have a safety flag.
- Know and obey all traffic rules, signs and signals. They must signal turns and stops. Ride in a straight line in the same direction as traffic and stop at every stop sign.
- Be predictable to other road users by riding with the traffic usually on the right hand side of the roadway.
- Never ride in the dark. If an older child must ride in the dark, make sure that reflective clothing and night-accessories (e.g. reflectors and lights) are used.

## Walking to school

Many children use roadways to make their way to and from school. Parents and guardians must review road safety rules with their children and the importance of not accepting rides or any invitations from strangers. It is best to walk with a buddy and keep focused on getting straight home.

### *To keep safe on roads, children pedestrians must:*

- Find a safe and direct route to school with the help of their parents. Hazards should be identified (train tracks, busy intersections, etc.) and a designated route with safety rules should be established.
- Stay on sidewalks whenever possible. If there is no sidewalk, use the left side of the road facing traffic.
- Cross streets only at crosswalks and learn to look to the left, the right and then left again before proceeding, even at intersections with pedestrian walk signs.
- Wait until traffic comes to a stop before crossing. Make sure drivers see you before you cross.

Prevention is the key to safety. With education and awareness, all children should be able to get safely to school and home again. Take the time to share these valuable rules and tips with your children.