

Behind The Badge

School Zone & Safety Concerns

School is back in session and the Evansville Police Department would like to remind drivers and pedestrians of some safety tips. If everyone remembers a few simple safety guidelines, we should all enjoy a safe school year.

Safety Belts and Child Restraint Seats: The use of safety belts and restraint seats is required by everyone in a vehicle. Proper use of belts and restraint seats helps protect you in the event of an accident, a sudden or unexpected stop, and it is the law. Accidents can occur and cause injuries whether you are traveling at a high or low rate of speed. The mandatory seat belt law is now considered "primary enforcement" in Wisconsin. This means that drivers can {and will} now be stopped by law enforcement for not wearing a seat belt. Simply put, always buckle up.

School Zones:

The speed limit in school zones and around all school grounds is 15mph. It is important that all drivers not only obey the speed limits but drive with extreme caution as children are walking to and from the schools from all directions. The Police Department would encourage drivers when dropping off children, to have all children exit the vehicle on the curb side. Parents should remind children that when they cross the street, they are to look for traffic before crossing the streets. Vehicles often stop in the lane of traffic and in no parking zones creating dangerous situations for children, pedestrians and other drivers. Parents are encouraged to remind children not to cross the street by darting in front of or behind their parents stopped vehicle. Using the crosswalks is the best way to safely cross the street.

Crossing Guards:

The adult crossing guards with hand held stop signs are utilized at various intersections where traffic flow is heavy. The Evansville School District provides this service to you and your children. Drivers are reminded that they are required to stop their vehicle and remain stopped until the adult crossing guard has safely allowed the children to cross the street and when the crossing guard has returned back to the curb of the street. **Traffic is required to stop at all directions.** Whether you are at a 4 way, 3 way or even a two way stop, all traffic is to stop and remain stopped until the adult crossing guard exits the intersection, and is back at the curb. Remember that the crossing guards are there to help keep your children safe when crossing the streets. Students and/or all pedestrians are also reminded to obey the crossing guards whether you are walking, riding a bicycle or on a skateboard. If any of the Crossing Guards observe drivers not obeying them, they have been instructed to report any and all violations to the Evansville Police Department. The Evansville Police will investigate and issue citations for violation, as any violation in a school zone is a serious one.

Cross Walks:

Drivers are required to yield and/or stop for any pedestrian in a crosswalk. Through the years there have been reports of near misses and flagrant unsafe acts by drivers in these situations. Again, the main concern is for everyone to remember safety first, so no one gets injured. Drivers must always yield to pedestrians. It only takes a few seconds to let someone cross the street. The

laws related to crosswalks are not just applicable in School Zones; they apply wherever there is a cross walk.

Stopping for School Buses:

Wisconsin law is clear in that as a driver, if you approach a legally marked bus with flashing red warning lights, you must:

- Stop at least 20 feet from the bus. This applies both to vehicles approaching from the rear and from opposing lanes.
- All lanes of traffic must stop for the school bus except in opposing lanes if the highway is divided with a center median.
- No vehicle may proceed until the bus resumes motion and turns off its flashing red warning lights.
- The stop arm on the bus is an added communication device for other drivers, but lack of the extended arm is not a reason to pass a bus whose red lights are still flashing.

As a driver, if you are following or approaching a school bus, there is a good chance the bus will stop soon. Therefore, you should anticipate that the school bus will stop at some point to pick up or drop off children. This means that you are required to STOP YOUR VEHICLE and wait for the children to enter, exit, and/or cross the street safely; and wait for the bus driver to turn off the lights and take in the stop sign, before you start driving again. Never pass a school bus when it is in this position. Passing a stopped school bus with the red lights flashing and stop sign extended, is against the law and is extremely dangerous. Many children cross the street or highway to board and/or exit the bus. Drivers must always stop for buses with the red lights on and the stop sign out regardless of a driver's direction of travel, and regardless of the number of traffic lanes present.

School bus drivers that observe a driver violate traffic laws are advised to write down a vehicle description including a license plate number, and report these violations immediately to law enforcement. A citation is often issued based on the bus driver's report and after talking to the driver of the vehicle. Violations of "Failure to Stop" for School Buses are expensive. Citations will be issued to the legal owner of the vehicle if the driver cannot be identified.

At The Bus Stop:

- Have your child wait in a safe area away from traffic and the road.
- Stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals for your child to board. Watch for red flashing lights and the stop sign to be extended, and cross only when all traffic has stopped. Look left, right, and left again before crossing.

Exiting the School Bus:

Parents are reminded to share the following important information with your children:

- When being dropped off, have your child take 10 giant steps away from the bus, remember that the bus driver can see your child better when they move away from the bus.
- Have your child always use the handrail when entering or exiting the bus and have them always remain seated until the bus stops.
- If you leave something on the bus, never return to the bus to get it. The bus driver may not see you come back and they may begin moving the bus. In addition, if you drop something near the bus, tell the bus driver before you attempt to pick it up so they will know where you are.
- Be aware of traffic on the roadway. Drivers are required to stop for all legal school buses, however, not all do. Have your child watch carefully before crossing the roadway. Remember in rural areas the speed limit is greater and thus more difficult for a driver to stop quickly.

Bicycle Safety: A bicycle has to obey the same laws as motor vehicles. Bicycles must stop at stop signs and travel in the same direction as vehicular traffic. If a bicycle has only one seat, then only one person is to be on the bike. Bicycle helmets are strongly recommended and can protect riders from injury. Bicycles in the city are required to be licensed. The Evansville Police Department issues bicycle licenses. The license will assist law enforcement in the return of lost or stolen bicycles. The cost is \$5.00 per bike. A registration form with information about the bicycle and owner is completed and maintained at the Evansville Police Department. A copy will be provided to the owner. It is also recommended that all bicycles be locked and secured to a bike rack when not in use. Bicycle locks are relatively inexpensive and often prevent thefts from occurring.

Parking at the High School: All vehicles parked in any parking lot or area at or around the Evansville High School property, must have a valid, visible parking permit issued by the high school staff. Any vehicle not displaying a visible, current year parking permit will be ticketed. This applies to students, staff, administration, faculty, visitors, etc., everyone. Evansville Police will check the area daily and citations will be issued to any vehicle not displaying the proper parking permit.

The start of a new school year is exciting for both students and their parents. The Evansville Police Department officers will be out enforcing all traffic laws regarding school buses, etc.,. Therefore we cannot stress enough the importance for students and drivers to practice safe habits that help ensure a safe school year.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Evansville Police Department at 882-2292.