

Behind The Badge

School Zone & Safety Concerns

September 2009

School is back in session and the Evansville Police Department would like to remind everyone of some safety tips.

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 considered "primary enforcement" in Wisconsin. This means that drivers can now be stopped by law enforcement for not wearing a seat belt. Put simply, 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 should also remind children not to cross the street by darting in front of or behind their parents stopped vehicle. Using the crosswalks is the only 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 we consider any violation in a school zone a serious one.

Cross Walks:

A great concern is that the drivers in vehicles are not paying attention and yielding to pedestrians crossing the street. 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: If you are following or approaching a school bus, there is a good chance the bus will stop soon. As a driver, 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 then 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.

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 \$3.00 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.

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