



NEWS RELEASE – August 10, 2015

2015-15

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Lieutenant Adam Winters, KHP PIO, (785) 296-6800,
Cherie Sage, Safe Kids Kansas, (785) 296-1223
Ann Williamson, KDOT PIO, (785) 296-3585; cell (785) 806-1205; annw@ksdot.org

AGENCIES PARTNER TO PROMOTE SAFETY AS KIDS HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL

Safe Kids Kansas, KDOT, KHP urge parents to talk to kids about pedestrian safety & more before class begins

Back to school is a busy time for children and families. Between school supplies, new clothes and sports tryouts, parents may not think about safety issues. During back to school time, Safe Kids Kansas, the Kansas Department of Transportation, and the Kansas Highway Patrol want to remind parents to talk to their children about how to stay safe.

Pedestrian safety is very important this time of year as more than 19,200 children seek medical attention for injuries sustained while walking, and almost 500 children die every year in pedestrian accidents. According to a 2012 report by Safe Kids, pedestrian injuries among 16-19 year olds increased 25 percent over the previous five years. Teens now account for half of all pedestrian deaths among children 19 and under.

"Distraction is a big problem, both while driving and walking," said Cherie Sage, Safe Kids Kansas coordinator. "As kids head back to school, we're urging parents to talk to their kids to make sure they are paying full attention when crossing the street. And we adults need to follow our own advice. If we put our devices down, our kids are more likely to do the same."

Safe Kids Kansas recommends the following tips for back to school.

1. **Put devices down while crossing the street and getting onto or off of the bus.** One in five high school students cross the street while distracted by technology. Teach your kids to put devices down, look up, listen, and make eye contact with drivers before crossing the street. If your kids ride a bus, teach them only to use devices while on bus, and not while waiting on, or exiting the bus.
2. **Walk with your kids to the bus stop and wait with them until it arrives.** Tell kids to stand at least three giant steps back from the curb, and to line up away from the street, as the bus approaches and board the bus one at a time.
3. **Make sure your carpool is safe.** Carpooling is a great way to save time for busy families. Make sure each child in the carpool has a car seat, booster seat or safety belt, based on individual age, weight and height. If there isn't, find an alternative way for your child to get to and from school.

4. **Receive a pre-participation physical exam.** Before playing organized sports, make sure your child receives a pre-participation physical exam, or PPE, by a doctor. This can help rule out any potential medical conditions that may place your young athlete at risk.
5. **Drink enough water.** To keep kids in top shape for sports or gym class, it's important for them to stay hydrated. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends 5 oz. for an 88-pound child every 20 minutes or 9 oz. for a 132-pound adolescent every 20 minutes.
6. **Check playgrounds where your children play.** Look for age-appropriate equipment and hazards, such as rusted or broken equipment and dangerous surfaces. Report any hazards to the school.
7. **Whether walking or driving, obey all traffic signals.** Kids should cross the street at the corner or crosswalk if there is one, but it's also important for drivers to watch out for young people who may be thinking about getting to school.

Back to school safety is not only critical for students and their families, but for all of those who travel on our roads. KDOT and KHP remind motorists they must be alert as they share the road with kids headed back to school.

1. **Be alert.** Children arriving late for the bus may dart into the street without looking for traffic.
2. **If you see a bus ahead, slowdown in preparation for its stop.** It's easy to misjudge the speed at which you can overtake a bus, and they make frequent stops.
3. **Know that it is illegal to pass a school bus stopped for loading/unloading.** In Kansas, the fine for this potentially deadly violation is \$315, plus court costs.
4. **Learn the flashing signal light system that school bus drivers use to alert motorists of pending actions.** Never pass a bus when flashing lights are displayed.
 - **Yellow flashing lights** indicate the bus is preparing to stop. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop.
 - **Red flashing lights and an extended stop arm** indicate the bus is stopped and children are getting on or off. Motorists must stop and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended sign is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before starting to drive again.
5. **While stopped behind a bus, motorists should put all distractions away and give their full attention to the road,** and what is going on in and around the bus.

For more safety information, visit www.safekids.org, or call 785-296-1223.

###