



News Release

Sunrise Fire-Rescue Department
(954) 746-3400
www.sunrisefl.gov
Thomas DiBernardo, Fire Chief

Back-to-School Safety

(SUNRISE, FL)- As summer fades into fall, kids everywhere will be returning to their classes. The related excitement and activity often exposes them to increased hazards.

Each day, several dozen children are struck by cars - most often before and after school. The good news is that these accidents can be prevented when drivers, parents, and the students themselves all remember to use safe habits around vehicle traffic.

Drivers should to slow down and be on the lookout for children in school zones and residential neighborhoods; children can dart out from driveways or from behind parked vehicles unpredictably. Vehicles must always yield to pedestrians and crossing guards at crosswalks and intersections, and must never pass a stopped school bus on an undivided road when its lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended. Additionally, drivers should never try to pass other vehicles stopped for pedestrians. Parents should avoid loading and unloading their children across the street from the school. *Don't forget to enforce - and model - seatbelt use!*

It is critical that parents teach their kids basic traffic-safety rules, including:

- Always look left, right, and left again before crossing the street.
- Only cross at designated crosswalks, and even then, remain alert.
- Never rely on a car to stop; make eye contact with drivers to determine whether they see you.
- Increase your visibility – walk in groups, wear bright/reflective clothing, and have reflectors on your bike's back, front, spokes, and pedals.
- Walk on the sidewalk. If there isn't one, walk facing traffic, as far to the outside as possible.
- Bicyclists need to ride single-file with the direction of traffic, following traffic laws and using hand signals, and to watch for opening car doors and other obstacles. *Helmets are a must.*

Children younger than age ten should only cross the street with an adult leading them. That being said, teens are actually now more likely to be the ones hit by a car, due to their propensity for texting when they should be minding their surroundings. All kids must be taught to stay vigilant when navigating around traffic and to avoid distractions such as texting and talking on the phone, wearing headphones, or using other electronic devices.

While traffic-safety is a major concern for students, it is far from the only one. For some students, their biggest problems start once they have safely arrived at school, only to be confronted with peer-pressure and bullying. Starting in the home, through loving support and communication, parents can build up a child's self-esteem and help provide a foundation of resilience. Beyond that, parents can offer coping strategies, including:

- If you are bullied, tell your parents, teacher, counselor, or other trusted adult.
- Don't get drawn into a fight, and try not to show anger or fear.
- Calmly tell the bully to stop, try using humor to diffuse the situation, or simply walk away.

- Avoid situations where you may be run into the bully alone, without adults or your friends.
- Don't bring expensive things or extra money to school that may tempt a bully to try to take them from you.

Other threats to a child's health and well-being can be even less obvious. Even the innocuous-seeming backpack can cause pain and injury when it is over-loaded for a child's size or worn improperly. When selecting a backpack with their child, parents should look for one with padding and extra straps at the chest or hip, and then ensure their children wear it as intended.

Although students face these ongoing challenges and many others, with safety education and guidance, they can still enjoy a safe and fulfilling school year – every year.

For more information and safety tips, visit the City of Sunrise website at www.sunrisefl.gov, 'Like' us on Facebook at Sunrise-Rescue, and follow us on Twitter @SunriseFRD. In the event of an emergency, always dial 9-1-1 immediately.