



*Pride in Service with Integrity*

## **Back To School Safety**

The safety of our children is the responsibility of the entire community. With the start of another school season just around the corner, parents, children, and drivers are reminded to use caution when using our roadways. Parents should talk with children about safety as they may not be aware of potential dangers. Together, we can make a difference before tragedy strikes. Here are some important tips for drivers, parents, and children to consider before the upcoming 2012 / 2013 school year.

### **Drivers:**

- Be patient.
- Consider school bus traffic and allow extra time for daily commutes.
- Be cautious when driving. Pay attention to the sides of roadways and corners where kids may be walking to or waiting at bus stops.
- Use headlights during dawn hours and low light conditions.
- Avoid distractions. Talking on cell phones, texting, applying make-up, etc. while driving are all recipes for disaster.
- Follow posted speed limits in and around school zones.
- Stop for stopped school busses. Florida law requires all motorists to stop for stopped school busses (with red lights flashing) when travelling in the same direction. When travelling in opposite directions, motorists may proceed with caution if on a divided highway (with unpaved space of at least 5 feet), there is a raised median, or a physical barrier is present.

### **Walking To and From School / Bus Stops:**

- Plan a walking route to school or the bus stop. Choose the most direct way with the fewest street crossings and, if possible, with intersections that have crossing guards.
- Walk the route with your child before school starts. Tell them to stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields and other places where there aren't many people around.
- Teach your child to cross at designated crosswalks at intersections.
- Mind all traffic signals and/or the crossing guard. Never cross the street against a light, even if traffic is not visible.
- Wear reflective material; it makes you more visible to street traffic. Reflective book bags are available at most retail outlets.
- Be sure your child walks to and from school with a sibling, friend or neighbor.
- Avoid wearing headphones because music can be distracting and cause you not to notice potential hazards around you.
- Avoid horseplay. Never run out into the streets or cross in between parked cars.

- Teach your child never to talk to strangers or accept rides or gifts from strangers and to run for help if approached by a stranger.

### **Bicycle Safety:**

- If your child rides a bike to school, instruct him or her to always travel with a friend.
- Ride in well-lit areas and never take shortcuts.
- Always wear a helmet while riding. Helmets should fit properly and the straps should always be fastened.
- Wear bright colored clothes and place reflectors on the bike.
- Avoid wearing headphones because music can be distracting and cause you not to notice potential hazards around you.
- Teach your child that he or she is subject to the rules of traffic signs and signals, just as motorists. They should be alert to traffic signs and know what they mean.

### **School Bus Safety:**

- Children should know their bus number.
- Children should know their telephone number and address.
- Parents/guardians should visit the bus stop with their child.
- Walk the route to and from the bus stop with your child, pointing out landmarks and safe places to go if they are being followed or bothered by a stranger. Identify safe places can be used if your child needs help.
- Teach your child what to do if the bus does not arrive on time.
- Teach your child to stay with a group while waiting at the bus stop.
- If an adult approaches your child for help or directions, remind them that adults should not ask children for help; they should ask another adult.



The Broward Sheriff's Office in anticipation of the upcoming 2012 / 2013 school year will be increasing our law enforcement presence in and around our schools. Keeping in mind that "Your child's safety is our number one priority" and with over a quarter million students returning to our schools, we have implemented the following initiatives.

- Districts will concentrate on traffic and speed enforcement in and around school zones within their district
- Additional patrols will be provided in the morning hours and at school dismissal times
- School Resource Deputies will be back at their schools focusing on issues that arise on or around the school campus
- COPS members will be patrolling that area of bus stops and egress and ingress routes around school
- Patrols near schools will center around suspicious vehicles and suspicious persons
- District Operational Plans will be put in place that will focus on issues related to the opening of the new school year (i.e. vehicle traffic control, vehicle congestion around schools, pedestrian and bicycle safety, Stranger Danger, Online / Cyber Safety, Bullying and other related issues )

# Keep Kids Safe As They Return To School

As Broward County students make their way back to school, BSO wants you to be aware of these important safety tips to help keep kids safe to and from their classrooms. For children who walk or ride bicycles or the bus:

- Discuss with your children the safest route to and from school or to the bus stop. Map out the route you help your children select and walk with them so they may become familiar with it. Teach your children to stop, look and listen for approaching and turning vehicles, especially those turning right on red.
- Teach your children to use crosswalks. Make sure your children understand they must walk, not run, across the street - and continue to look for vehicles. Help your children understand how important it is to cooperate with deputies, school safety patrols and adult crossing guards.
- Make sure your children walk with friends - not alone.
- Teach children to avoid places that could be dangerous and tell them to notify an adult (you, a teacher, a neighbor, or a deputy) about anything that doesn't seem quite right. Discuss drugs with your children, and emphasize their ability to just say "no" to teens or adults who offer them drugs. Remind children NEVER to talk to, ride or walk with strangers. They should run for help even if a stranger displays a weapon.
- Encourage and praise your children for following safety guidelines every day.

## **For parents who drive their children to and from school:**

- Whenever possible, carpool with neighbors to reduce the number of cars at the school.
- Observe posted speed limits in school zones. Drive cautiously around school locations even when reduced speed limits are not in effect as students participating in extracurricular activities after hours will still be crossing streets and riding bikes.
- Arrange for a specific place to meet your children, on the same side of the street as the school and away from the congestion.
- Use your seatbelt! Children will follow your example.
- Use a properly installed car seat/booster seat for young children. BSO can help ensure you have correctly installed the seat. To find out the dates, times and locations of BSO's free car seat safety checks, please call (954) 321-4777 or check BSO's website ([www.sheriff.org](http://www.sheriff.org)).

## **For students who ride Broward County Transit buses to school:**

- Plainclothes and uniformed deputies are often on board county buses to make sure passengers' rides are safe and enjoyable. Deputies will also be at certain school pick-up locations throughout the county to assist school children.
- When boarding the bus, students should have the proper fare or their bus pass ready for the driver. Students should only board the bus through the front doors.
- Students should be at their designated stop before the bus arrives. Make sure your children know that if they miss a bus, another one will pass through again. Remember that the driver is not allowed to stop in the middle of the road to pick up passengers.
- Teach children never to cross the street in front of a bus. Traffic does not stop for a county bus as it must for a school bus.
- School Resource Deputies, a school administrator or the Broward Sheriff's Mass Transit Unit can assist students who experience trouble with others or harassment on the bus. The Broward Sheriff's Office Mass Transit Unit is located at the Broward Central Terminal in downtown Fort Lauderdale and can be reached at (954) 765-4324.