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School Buses Are Nearly Eight Times Safer than Passenger Vehicles

Safe Kids Wake County provides tips to keep kids safer while riding a bus

Raleigh, NC - While carpooling is a common practice in many communities, a school bus is the safest way for children to get to school. School buses serve children daily in nearly every community, and fatal crashes involving school bus occupants are extremely rare events.

Getting to and from the bus is actually more dangerous than riding the bus itself. In the United States, 26 children were killed as pedestrians getting on or off a school bus, or while waiting at the school bus stop, in 2007. This means that five times as many children were killed while getting on or off the bus than while riding it.

With the traditional school year starting on Monday, it’s a good time to teach children how to stay safer around school buses.

“Remind your children about the 10-foot danger zone around the school bus where the driver can’t see them,” says Debbie Newman, Safe Kids Wake County coordinator. “To be sure the bus driver can see them – young children should take at least five giant steps away from the bus while entering or exiting the bus. Older kids who must cross the street should look at the bus driver for an ‘OK’ sign before crossing in front of the bus.”

10 school bus safety tips that all children should know:

- Arrive at the bus stop five minutes early.
- Stay in a safe place away from the street while waiting for the bus.
- Stand at least five giant steps (10 feet) away from the edge of the road.
- Wait until the bus stops, the door opens, and the driver says it is okay before moving toward the bus.
- Have your parents help you check that your clothing does not have drawstrings and that your book bag does not have straps or dangling objects. They can get caught in the door when exiting the bus.
- If something falls under or near the bus, tell the driver. Never try to pick it up yourself!
- When you get on or off the bus, look for the bus safety lights and make sure they are flashing. Tell the driver if they are not.
- Be alert to traffic. When you get on or off the bus, look left, right and left again before you enter or cross the street.
- Stay in your seat, and sit quietly on the bus so that the driver is not distracted.
- Some school buses now have seat belts. If you have seat belts on your school bus, be sure to learn to use the seat belt correctly on every ride.

“School buses are, by far, the safest way for kids of all ages to get to and from school,” adds Debbie Newman. “It would be ideal if children did not have to cross a busy street unattended to get to their bus stop. However, regardless of their bus stop location, all kids should stand on the grass or sidewalk while waiting for the bus. Kids should not move toward the bus until the driver has opened the door of the bus and signaled it is okay to enter.”

In North Carolina it is against the law to pass a stopped school bus, and motorists should never pass a school bus with its lights flashing. Visit www.napt.org for more details. To learn more about pedestrian safety and child passenger safety, visit www.safekids.org.
Safe Kids Wake County works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. Safe Kids Wake County is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations with a mission of preventing unintentional childhood injury. Safe Kids Wake County was founded in 1996 and is led by WakeMed Health & Hospitals.

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