



Oregon Department of Transportation

NEWS RELEASE

Transportation Safety Division

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Think safety when preparing for back-to-school

As fall approaches, parents and children are getting ready for school. The Oregon Department of Transportation warns parents – and drivers – that when you think of back-to-school, you should think of safety as well.

“In just a few weeks, children will be lining up at bus stops, riding their bikes or walking to school,” said Sue Riehl, Youth Safety program manager. “It’s the responsibility of motorists to pay attention to pedestrians, school zones and school children. Children can be unpredictable, and younger children especially aren’t able to judge speed and distance as well as adults can. We urge everyone to take special care in school zones and be extra cautious.”

A recent state law changed how speed limits in Oregon’s school zones are posted.

“The important thing to do is obey the signs that are posted,” Riehl said. “With the start of school, law enforcement will be stepped up in many of these school zones. The idea isn’t to pass out traffic tickets. It’s about avoiding a tragedy.”

Parents, older children and other family members share responsibility to help identify safe routes and teach traffic rules to younger children. ODOT offers these back-to-school safety tips.

Driver Safety

- Yield to pedestrians. Do not pass or drive around pedestrians in a crosswalk.
- Obey the posted speed limit.
- Do not pass other cars stopped at a crosswalk or intersection. The drivers may be stopped for pedestrians. Pedestrians may be crossing the street when the light changes.
- When making a right turn at a red light, look to the right and left for pedestrians and bike riders as well as oncoming traffic.
- In rainy conditions, your visibility may be reduced. Be aware that pedestrians may have difficulty seeing vehicles, too – especially if umbrellas or jacket hoods block their vision.
- Use extra care in school zones or areas where children may dart out into traffic.
- Do not pass a school bus with flashing red lights. Yield to buses merging into traffic.

Pedestrian Safety

- Before crossing a street, look left-right-left for traffic in all directions. Keep looking for cars as you cross the street.
- Don't run out into the street from between parked cars. The cars can hide you from drivers so they can't see you until it's too late to stop.
- Wait for a walk signal and a green light to tell you it's your turn to cross the street. Look before you go to make sure drivers see you and have yielded or stopped. Continue looking for cars as you cross.
- When crossing railroad tracks, stop well away from the tracks, look in both directions and listen for an approaching train. Never try to beat a train across the tracks. Watch your step as you cross the tracks so you don't stumble or fall.

Bicyclist Safety

- Check your route with a parent or other adult. Choose streets with low traffic volumes, slow speeds and few complex intersections.
- Make sure your bike is the proper size and is properly maintained.
- Always wear a helmet that has been fitted correctly.
- Ride in the same direction as traffic, not against traffic.
- Wear bright colored clothing that will make it easier for drivers to see you. If you ride when it's dark, use lights, reflectors and retro-reflective clothing.
- Stay alert and ride predictably. Don't assume motorists can see you. Wait until you are sure they have stopped or yielded before you go.

School Bus Safety

- Arrive at the bus stop early.
- Stand at least 10 feet away from the edge of the road.
- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, cross at least 10 feet ahead of the bus so the bus driver can see you and you can see the bus driver.
- Never walk behind the bus or go under the bus.

Clothing Tips

- Buy backpacks and bags with reflectors. They may cost a little more, but make a big difference in visibility on overcast fall days.
- Ask for outerwear with reflectors. A child in a dark jacket can be invisible to drivers in bad weather. Brightly colored coats, umbrellas and hats are more visible to drivers.
- Shoes with reflectors show up better in low-light conditions and increase safety. Consider wet and slippery weather when choosing shoes
- If you ride a bike or a skateboard to school, wear the proper safety gear, including helmets and pads.

For more safety information, visit the ODOT Transportation Safety Division at

www.oregon.gov/ODOT/.

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