

Back to School Safety

The first day of school marks a significant milestone in the life of a child. It's an exciting time for seeing old friends and making new friends, learning new things, and for some, riding the bus to school. Each year over 20 million students across the country ride the bus to and from school, while countless others walk, ride bicycles or are dropped off by their parents.

As you know in the next couple of weeks the young people of Ottawa County will be returning to school. In that respect the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office would like to share with you several tips, which are intended to enhance the safety of those returning to school.

Parents

- If dropping your child off at school be aware of school rules as to student drop offs, most schools ask that you do not drop off your child in the same area as the bus drop off. This is to avoid traffic congestion and helps to reduce the chance of injury to your child.
- If you are the parent of a child that will be walking to school it is advisable to take some time and pre-walk your child's route.
 - Point out the safe places to cross the street and point out areas of danger.
 - Also show your children homes that display the Michigan Child Watch sign, these are homes that children can come to for help should the need arise. (If you would like more information on the Michigan Child Watch program contact your local Police Department or the Ottawa County Sheriff's Office).
 - Identify Bus stop locations and review and re-enforce the school bus safety rules.

Students

- Students if walking to school use bike paths and sidewalks where available. In areas where there are no sidewalks or bike paths walk along the side of the road facing traffic.
- Wear light colored clothing and avoid using headphones or other electronic devices that will distract you from traffic.
- If riding a bicycle to school and there are no bike paths, ride with traffic, if riding in the dark your bike must have a light on it. When riding your bike you should always wear a bicycle helmet.
- While at your bus stop: do not run into traffic
 - Arrive to your bus stop early.
 - Never walk behind the bus.
 - Make sure the bus comes to a complete stop before trying to enter or exit the bus.
 - When crossing the street observe traffic, don't rely solely on the bus lights, and watch for the signal from your bus driver to cross.

Motorists

- When driving during the hours prior to school and at dismissal time be aware of traffic around the schools.
- Many schools still use school speed zones, and as a driver it is your responsibility to know where these zones are and adhere to the posted speed limit.
- In addition several schools throughout Ottawa County also use School Crossing Guards. Crossing guards assist students in crossing the street safely and rely on you the motorist to stop when directed by the school crossing guard.
- Finally all drivers when approaching a school bus that has activated its flashing red lights must stop. Be alert to children's unpredictable behavior and wait for the lights to stop flashing before beginning to move again.

The Sheriff's Office wishes all students and school staff a safe and enjoyable school year.