



UNION COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

BEHIND THE STAR

SHERIFF MALCUM J. "JAMIE" PATTON



Thinking About School Safety

Summer is winding down and even though we are still in the midst of the Corona Virus Pandemic, it's time to start thinking about our kids going back to school. While they may not return for full time traditional classes right away, there will be student activity in and around our schools in just a few short weeks. "For several months now, drivers have been traveling the roads and passing through school zones without the thought of yellow flashing lights, school buses, bus stops, or our kids walking to school" said Sheriff Jamie Patton. The Sheriff's Office want all drivers to start thinking now about a safe start to the school year.

According to research from the National Safety Council, most of the children who lose their lives in school bus-related incidents are between the ages of four to seven years old. Here are a few tips to help keep our kids safer as our schools re-open for the year.

1. Slow down before entering school zones. Do not wait until you get right to the zone before you reduce your speed. School zones are posted at twenty miles per hour and are active before and after school.
2. Remember, there are kids walking to school and from school, as well as walking through the school parking lots. A lot of parents transport their kids to and from schools, which creates a lot more vehicle traffic at the start and end of the school day.
3. Be alert for school crossing guards and obey their stop signs. Sometimes crossing guards can be students. If they make you stop, be patient and do not get upset and honk your horn. Remember, they have an important job to do and want the kids that pass through their intersection to arrive at school and home safely.
4. Never pass a vehicle that is stopped in a school zone or near a school crosswalk.

The National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) launched a national study in 2015 involving a total of 102,371 school bus drivers in 26 states. This number represents about one-fifth of the nation's estimated 485,000 school bus drivers. NASDPTS officials report, "the most alarming finding of the survey is that 1,483 of the total violations were illegally passing on the right side of the bus, where the students load and unload. The majority of the violations (75, 986) were on the left side of the bus". There are a few things to think about when it comes to sharing the road with school buses.

1. All fifty states have laws making it illegal to pass a school bus that is stopped loading or unloading students.
2. School buses use yellow lights to alert motorists that they are slowing down and are preparing to stop for loading or unloading of students.

3. It is not safe to pass a bus that has yellow flashing lights, since children are unpredictable. You do not know what side of the road the children might be standing on or if they will run across the road when they see the bus.
4. A ten-foot area around an entire school bus is the most dangerous for children. Stop far enough back to allow them space to safely load and unload the bus.
5. Never pass a school bus or a vehicle stopped behind a school bus on the right side. It's illegal and could have tragic consequences.

If you have any questions about school safety tips for your child, please call the Union County Sheriff's Office at 937-645-4100 x 4310.