

## For Immediate Release



Contact: Ekaterine Tchelidze  
Town of East Hartford  
Phone: 860-291-7202  
Cell: 860-817-8590  
[etchelidze@easthartfordct.gov](mailto:etchelidze@easthartfordct.gov)

### East Hartford Police Department Issues Back to School Safety Tips

**East Hartford, CT** – As the new school year begins on August 28 and children are ready to head back to school, the East Hartford Police Department would like to remind all drivers to use caution on the roads and stop when the lights on school buses are flashing red. Connecticut State law requires that drivers stop for school buses that are flashing red lights, on all undivided highways whether they are approaching or are behind the school bus. Failure to stop can cause serious consequences and carries fines for motorists starting at \$465.00 for the first offense.

However, it is also important for children to entertain caution.

"As school starts up, it is important for parents and guardians to remind their children about safety procedures around bus stops," Mayor Marcia A. Leclerc said. "Most accidents involving school buses take place while children are entering or exiting the school bus each day, so please take extra care when traveling behind or near a bus."

**According to the East Hartford Police Chief Scott Sansom there are a number of safety tips recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Association including;**

#### **Drivers: Stop for school buses**

You may need to add more time to your commute, because when buses stop to pick up students, other drivers need to stop, too.

- Yellow flashing lights mean slow down — don't speed up — because the bus is preparing to stop. There are likely students waiting to get on the bus or parents waiting nearby to pick up children.
- Red flashing lights mean stop — and wait at least 20 feet behind the bus — because children are getting on or off the school bus. Stay stopped until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop-arm is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving.
- Even when lights aren't flashing, watch for children, particularly in the morning or mid-afternoon, around school arrival and dismissal times. Be alert as you back out of a driveway, or drive through a neighborhood, school zone or bus stop.

### **Parents: Talk bus safety with your children**

School buses are the safest way for children to travel to and from school. Your child should arrive at the bus stop at least 5 minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. Teach them to play it SAFE:

- Stay five steps away from the curb.
- Always wait until the bus comes to a complete stop and the bus driver tells you to board.
- Face forward after finding a seat on the bus.
- Exit the bus when it stops and look left-right-left for cars before crossing a street.

### **Walkers: Watch the road**

Walking to school is great exercise, but children under 10 years old should be accompanied by an adult or with someone who will make sure they walk safely. If you're walking:

- Use the sidewalk whenever possible, and if there isn't a sidewalk, walk on the edge of the street facing traffic.
- Whenever they are available, use marked crosswalks to cross the street, and look left-right-left for vehicles or bikes before crossing.
- Make sure you never play, push or shove others when you walk around traffic.
- Everyone should watch the road, not their phones.

### **Bikers: Know the Rules of the Road**

Riding your bike can be a fun and quick way to get to school. Be sure to do these simple things to keep your bike ride safe:

- Always wear a correctly fitted helmet, and securely fasten the chin strap.
- Ride in the same direction as traffic, and follow traffic signs and signals.
- Stay in the bike lane whenever possible.
- Never use electronics while riding – they are distracting.

### **Student drivers: Focus on the Road**

For some teens, back to school also means the new-found freedom of driving. You should keep these things in mind when driving to school:

- The car shouldn't move until everyone is buckled up.
- Follow the speed limit.
- Stay focused. In 2017, 297 people died in crashes that involved distracted teen (15- to 19-year-old) drivers.

- Remember that the phone stays down when you're driving. Make it a habit to put your phone in the glove compartment or other inaccessible location, to reduce temptation to check notifications or texts.
- Reduce distraction by limiting the number of additional passengers. If you do have others in the car with you, keep your eyes and your mind on the road.

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The greatest risk to a child isn't riding a bus, but approaching or leaving one. From 2008 to 2017, there were 264 school-age children killed in school-transportation-related crashes. The majority of those students weren't on the bus; 203 were either walking, waiting for the bus, biking, or in another vehicle.

Over the next couple of weeks East Hartford Police Officers will be stepping up enforcement in school zones and bus routes to ensure that the motoring public is obeying traffic laws so our children can stay safe. **In case of an emergency, call 911.**