



WESTPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Foti Koskinas
Chief of Police

Press Release

Westport Police Department Announces Back to School Traffic Safety Campaign

(Westport, CT) - With the start of the Westport Public School year on Tuesday September 8, 2020, the Westport Police Department has already begun and will continue to target traffic violators in school zones with a “Back to School” enforcement and education campaign. Our officers will be continuing to observe traffic for distracted drivers and speeding in school zones as well as monitoring bus stops and routes citing those that disregard school bus signals. The Westport Police Department is committed to protecting children from motorists who disregard the law, especially around school zones and bus stops where students congregate.

As COVID-19 has significantly altered our schools’ scheduling with staggered student arrival and dismissal times, motorists will now for the first time be sharing the roads throughout the course of the day with school buses making frequent stops, as well as with children who will be walking and/or biking to school. With this in mind, this year more than ever we strongly urge commuters to allow extra time to reach their destinations in order to proactively prepare for potential traffic delays. Please remain vigilant and alert around school zones, bus stops and school buses. Obey the school bus laws of Connecticut, which include slowing down and preparing to stop for yellow flashing school bus lights and stopping for red flashing school bus lights.

A list of suggestions for drivers, students and parents are listed below. Parents are encouraged to discuss these safety tips with their children and with young or inexperienced drivers in their home.

Drivers

- **When driving in neighborhoods with school zones or backing into a roadway, watch out for young people who may be thinking about getting to school, but may not be thinking of getting there safely.**
- **Slow down. Watch for children walking in the street, especially if there are no sidewalks in neighborhood.**
- **Be alert. Children arriving late for the bus may dart into the street without looking for traffic.**

- **Learn and obey the school bus laws in your state. Learn the "flashing signal light system" used by school bus drivers to alert motorists of pending actions:**
 - ***Yellow flashing lights*** indicate that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles.
 - ***Red flashing lights*** and extended stop arms indicate that the bus has stopped, and that children are getting on or off. Motorists on both sides of the roadway must stop their cars and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop sign is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before they can start driving again.

Children

- **Get to the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive.**
- **When the bus approaches, stand at least three giant steps (6 feet) away from the curb, and line up away from the street.**
- **Wait until the bus stops, the door opens, and the driver says that it is okay before stepping onto the bus.**
- **If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk on the sidewalk or along the side of the road to a point at least five giant steps (10 feet) ahead of the bus before you cross. Be sure that the bus driver can see you, and you can see the bus driver.**
- **Use the handrails to avoid falls. When exiting the bus, be careful that clothing with drawstrings and book bags with straps are not caught in the handrails or doors.**
- **Never walk behind the bus.**
- **Walk at least three giant steps away from the side of the bus.**
- **If you drop something near the bus, tell the bus driver. Never try to pick it up because the driver may not be able to see you.**
- **Follow instructions given by school crossing guards. Do not cross until they have stopped traffic completely and have advised it is safe to cross.**

We all have a responsibility to make sure children are able to travel to and from school safely. With that goal in mind, let us once again work together to have a safe back to school season!

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