

Traffic Safety and a New School Year

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This month finds several thousand children in our precinct returning to school or starting school for the first time. Whether it be a public school, charter school, private school or any other type of educational facility, many children will be walking, riding bikes, driving or will be driven to school. This activity of course presents many chances for an unfortunate accident or criminal behavior.

We all have a responsibility as drivers of motor vehicles to be watchful for other children, even if you are not driving a child to school yourself. Children are hard to see and often forget to look for cars as they cross the street or walk along the sidewalks. Drivers should take extra precautions while driving in the morning and afternoons where schools are located and their surrounding neighborhoods. It is difficult to watch for children while you are driving if you are on your cell phone, or being distracted by other occupants in the car. Drivers also need to obey the speed limits, especially in school zones. School zone speed limits are a zero tolerance area for speed violations and anybody stopped for violating the speed in a school zone will be cited. Your vehicle must be going 15 MPH as it enters the school zone at the first sign and stay at 15 MPH until your entire vehicle passes the crosswalk in the school zone.

Teen age drivers who are fortunate enough to drive to their high school need to be respectful of the surrounding neighborhoods and obey the traffic laws. Many high schools do not have enough parking to accommodate all the drivers so the cars filter out into the surrounding neighborhoods. Teen drivers need to park where permitted on PUBLIC streets and be respectful by not throwing garbage on the ground, playing extremely loud music or driving erratically in the area. Speed limits in residential areas are 25 MPH. Teens also need to be aware that they are not allowed to park in private communities unless allowed, in private community park parking lots, community centers or where prohibited by signs.

Children who walk to school should be old enough and mature enough to handle the responsibilities of getting to school on time and safely. These children should always walk in groups or at least pairs for their own safety or even have a parent walk with them. Children who walk to school should know the route to the school, which should be open and afford a safe view of the surrounding walk areas, not through dark or overgrown areas, private yards or other areas where they cannot be seen. Children should be taught to avoid contact or speaking to any person they do not know, or to avoid walking up to a car that pulls up next to them. Parents need to communicate with their children about these issues, do not assume they know, even if they say they do, repeat it anyways to them.

If everyone takes a few moments to slow down and take the time to be safe, we can avoid any accidents and we can have a safe school year. So, please slow down, watch for children and be safe. I can be reached at tim.mitten@phoenix.gov or at 602-495-5238 if you have any questions or concerns about this or any other issues. Thank you for all you do for your involvement in your neighborhoods to improve the quality of life.