



DRIVER SAFETY LETTER

NPTC
National Private Truck Council

CENTERLINE
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Back to School

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As summer ends, children of all ages are returning to school. Whether they are driving on the roadway, walking on the side of the road, or waiting for school buses, expect to see a lot more people on the roads and a lot more erratic driving behavior.

According to a report by the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA), autumn is the most dangerous time of year for pedestrians—with 29% of pedestrian-related fatalities occurring during the season. In fact, pedestrian-vehicle injuries are a leading cause of death for children ages 5-14. The following are some tips to keep in mind:

- Plan your trips to give yourself a little extra time to handle the increased congestion that may occur during school hours, particularly around school zones. This will help ease potential frustration and keep you focused on the task at hand.
- Be aware of school zones. Get in the habit of noticing where school zones and crosswalks are on routes that you normally take. Accidents, including pedestrian accidents, are far more likely to occur locally on routes with which drivers are more familiar and comfortable.
- Stop for school bus lights. Always stop for school buses with flashing red lights. Drivers approaching the bus must come to a complete stop for the entire time the red lights are on.
- Obey crossing guards. School crossing guards are given police training and have the same authority as local traffic police in most areas. Disobeying a crossing guard could result in serious trouble. Remember that driving on major streets where crossing guards and crosswalks are observed is safer than taking the "short-cut" side streets where children may be unattended.
- Anticipate the worst. The speed and distance of oncoming cars are more difficult for young children to judge. Slow down and always anticipate the chance that a small child may run in front of you.
- Be careful around parked vehicles, especially those parked on the side of the road. Children waiting to cross may be challenging to see in these situations.
- Turn your headlights on. Drive with headlights on in areas with children and pedestrians. The AAA says the use of headlights can reduce pedestrian accidents by about 25%.
- Avoid using cell phones when driving. Cell phones are a known distraction. Never use hand-held cell phones while driving and never use hands-free cell phones while driving in school zones or areas with children. The same goes for distracting activities, such as looking at notes and reading maps.
- Avoid reversing. Try to avoid reversing your vehicle in areas with children. It is more difficult to see short children and attend to your vehicle's blind spots while reversing.
- Don't speed. The speed limit in most school zones during school times or when children are present is 25 MPH. Bad weather or areas with limited visibility will require a lower speed. Your ability to see pedestrians and your stopping distance may be greatly impaired by weather or road conditions, so use common sense and slow down.
- Do not honk at pedestrians or bicyclists. Honking at a child, whether they are on foot or on a bicycle, is generally not a good idea. The noise could startle the child, causing them to trip or fall and potentially putting them in danger from other approaching traffic.

The NPTC Monthly Driver Safety Letter, jointly sponsored by NPTC and [Centerline Drivers](#), is a Microsoft Word document that you can print out and post as is, if appropriate, or modify any way you wish to make it a better fit for your drivers, including adding your company logo. If you are already doing an in-house letter, you may find information here that you can cut and paste into your own letter. If you are interested in specific subjects, or have any comments/feedback, contact Tom Moore, CTP, at tmoore@nptc.org or (703)838-8898.