


School Year Safety Starts With Extra Caution

When it comes to driving a tractor trailer or straight truck down neighborhood streets, you can't be too careful. And as the 2019-20 school year begins, caution will be the name of the game.

More than 55 million children travel to and from school each day by school bus, car, bicycle or on foot. That means roads will be jam-packed.

Practice extra caution. Follow these nine safety tips:

- 1. Plan for extra travel time.** School buses make many stops, and GPS/mapping tools don't capture most bus routes. So, plan for delays, or choose highways instead of traveling through a neighborhood during peak school traffic times.
 - 2. Watch for school bus lights.** It's illegal to pass a school bus on an undivided road in all 50 states when it flashes its yellow or red lights, or when it extends its STOP arm.
 - 3. Obey school zone speed limits.** They're often 25 mph or slower, and with good reason. According to the American Automobile Association (AAA), a pedestrian struck by a vehicle traveling at 25 mph is two-thirds less likely to be killed compared to a pedestrian struck by a vehicle traveling just 10 mph faster.
 - 4. Check each state's laws.** If you're driving through several states, know when each state's school year starts and ends, and when the school day starts and ends. Also, check that state's traffic laws. They may vary regarding important items like stopping distance between a school bus and another vehicle.
 - 5. Know the most dangerous hours to drive.** From 2007-2016, more school-age pedestrians were killed between the hours of 6-7 a.m. and 3-4 p.m. than any other hours of the day, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).
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- 6. Know that school bus crashes cause many injuries.** Between 2008 and 2017, 70 percent of deaths in school-bus-related crashes were occupants of vehicles other than the school bus, according to the National Safety Council. Seventeen percent were pedestrians.
 - 7. Stay clear of crosswalks.** When you block a crosswalk or intersection, you may put a pedestrian in the path of moving traffic. So, keep crosswalks clear, especially in school zones, playgrounds, parks and residential areas.
 - 8. Watch for new drivers.** Teenagers can't wait to start driving a car to school. They're also inexperienced and may make mistakes.
 - 9. Drop the phone (and the food).** Stay distraction-free so you're alert at all times.