

## **BACK TO SCHOOL**

### **Safety Tips for Children and Parents**

**Though we may not believe it, back to school is a very exciting time for our children, especially the young ones! It is important that our children and parents understand the hazards and dangers our children face during the school year.**

#### **FROM HOME, TO HOME**

##### **Parents:**

1. Prepare your child for travel to and from school, whether by school bus or walking, by ensuring, if at all possible, that they never travel alone. If riding the bus, make sure you watch your child as they walk to the bus stop and keep an eye on them until they are safely on the bus. An adult should also be waiting near the bus stop when the children return home. If walking to school, remember there is safety in numbers. Children should never walk to school alone! Speak with your neighbors and identify those children in your neighborhood who walk to school and form an alliance! One neighbor, again if at all possible and perhaps even in a rotation, should keep an eye on the youngsters as they walk to school.
2. Talk to your children about "Stranger Danger"; tell them to never talk to strangers as they walk to and from school. If they are approached by a stranger, especially in a vehicle, they should move away as quickly as possible and go on to school or back home, whichever is closest. Any contact with a stranger should be reported to a teacher, or mom and dad as soon as possible. It is important that, unless there are organized before and after school activities or pre-arranged events, our children should go directly to and from school.

**3. Tell your child/teen: if anyone was to approach and touch them, or attempt to touch them they should run and scream as loud as they can to attract attention. If grabbed, they should do their best to fight against the suspect's attempts while screaming and calling for help.**

##### **ELECTRONIC DEVICES:**

1. Many of our children, even the youngest, are carrying cellular telephones these days. The cell phone can be an extremely useful tool for our children if an emergency situation occurs. Cell phones allow the kids to call for help when needed and to communicate with their parents. Unfortunately, cell phones also create a distraction for our children. Texting, talking on the phone with friends and even playing games keep our children from paying attention to their surroundings and makes them vulnerable to strangers and traffic hazards alike. Parents should warn their children of these hazards and restrict casual cell phone use when traveling to and from school, even on the school bus.

### **TRAFFIC HAZARDS:**

1. Neighborhood streets, crosswalks and school crossings pose the most danger to our children when traveling to and from school. Children should be told to pay extra attention when traveling to and from school, even if there are crossing guards present. Crossing guards, those who volunteer their time to help keep our children safe, often have a difficult time attempting to control vehicle traffic and the children they are trying to protect at the same time. Children should be told to obey the directives of the crossing guards at all times.
2. Our children should also be reminded to never play in the street and be extra careful when crossing the roadway. It is during the early morning (school) hours when folks seem to be traveling in a hurry the most, and often drivers are not prepared to react when a child suddenly appears in front of their vehicle!

### **HOME ALONE**

**Often times circumstances dictate that children be left at home alone for a short period before and after school. If this is necessary, parents should ensure the following:**

1. In Arizona, the law does not designate the exact age at which a child can stay home alone or watch other children.
2. Parents need to use a “reasonableness test” by asking these questions:
  - a. Can your child, regardless of his or her age, act reasonably under the circumstances?
  - b. Police advise parents to consider the following:
    - i. Is your child mature enough to know what to do in an emergency?
    - ii. If there is a fire, is your child mature enough to get out of the house?
    - iii. Is he or she mature enough to get other children out of the house?
3. Important Key Points:
  - Keep the doors locked.
  - Do not open the door for or talk to anyone who stops by unless the person is a trusted family friend or relative, and the visit has been pre-approved by the parents or guardians.
  - Never telling anyone who calls that you’re home by yourself.
  - Before leaving your child home alone, ensure there is a trusted neighbor or friend who knows the child is home alone and that the child can call if

they just feel afraid or uncomfortable, or, of course, if there is an emergency.

**These simple rules and tips should assist us in keeping our children safe not only during the school year, but at all times!**