

**West Traffic Division
Captain's Message
September 2015**

It's Back to School Time – Teach Children to be Safe!

Parents, guardians, and other adults have the responsibility to teach children how to be safe near roadways and when crossing streets. Children have a tendency to suddenly dash across a street without looking for any approaching hazards, often because something much more interesting has their attention. Parents and guardians are concerned for their children's well-being, however when it comes to teaching safe street crossing, they too often take chances, break the law, and jeopardize their children's safety, particularly when in a hurry. Too many parents, and other adults or older juveniles, have unwittingly taught children to dash across the road in an unsafe manner by doing so themselves. This has led to several serious injuries and deaths in our communities for both adults and minors, which could have been avoided had they taken the time to safely cross the road.

Since most children have returned to school, it is also important to remember traffic safety at or around school grounds. **Section 22454(a) VC states vehicles must stop, from either direction, when a school bus is stopped for the purpose of loading or unloading children.** School buses may be equipped with a flashing red light signal and/or a stop signal arm. Although drivers on a divided highway traveling in the other direction need not stop, it is a good habit to stop or slow down anyway, in the event a pedestrian suddenly darts across the street, towards or from the bus.

For 23 million students nationwide, the school day begins AND ends with a trip on a school bus. The greatest risk is not riding the bus, but approaching or leaving the bus. Before children go back to school or start school for the first time, it is essential that adults and children know traffic safety rules.

Drivers

- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch out for children walking or bicycling to school.
- When driving in neighborhoods with school zones, 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.
- SLOW DOWN. Watch for children playing and congregating near bus stops.
- 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" that school bus drivers use 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 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 (5) 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's 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 don't get caught in the handrails or doors.
- NEVER walk behind the bus.
- Walk at least three giant steps (6 feet) 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.

Parents

- Teach children to follow these common sense practices to make school bus transportation safer.

As for all pedestrians, it is crucial that you remain aware of vehicular traffic when you are in areas where vehicles are traveling. Pedestrians have a responsibility to follow the rules of the road for their own safety. Pedestrians have the right of way in marked and unmarked crosswalks when they have complied with the law and have not placed themselves in danger by moving into the path of closely approaching vehicles. ***Upon verifying that there are no vehicles approaching close enough as to be a hazard to him or her, the pedestrian gains the right of way when he or she steps off of the curb area and onto the roadway.*** At that time, approaching vehicles must yield the right of way to the pedestrian. The traveling public, no matter whether they are pedestrians or vehicle operators, must remain aware of surrounding vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The following events are being sponsored by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) for the entire month of September:

- ***“Child Passenger Safety Week”*** is scheduled for the week of **September 13–19**, and ***“National Seat Check Saturday”*** is scheduled for September 19th. In recognition, West Traffic Division’s (WTD) Community Traffic Services Unit (CTSU) will be conducting the following events:
 - **Monday, Sept. 14th** from 07:00 am – 12:00 pm

- Child Seat Inspection
TBD
Los Angeles
- **Tuesday, Sept. 15th**
Seatbelts and Booster Education for 1st Graders
TBD
Los Angeles
- **Wednesday, Sept. 16th**
Child Seat Inspections*
LAPD – West Traffic Division
4849 W. Venice Avenue
Los Angeles
Please call **213-473-0543 to make an appointment.**
- **Thursday, Sept. 17th**
Seatbelts and Booster Education for 2nd Graders
TBD
Los Angeles
- **Friday, Sept. 18th**
Roving Child Seat Inspections
TBD

According to a new NHTSA survey, the following are the five (5) most significant and commonly observed mistakes made by parents and caregivers when using and installing car seats and booster seats:

1. **Wrong harness slot used** – The harness straps used to hold the child in the car seat were positioned either too low or too high;
2. **Harness chest clip** positioned over the abdomen rather than the chest or not used at all;
3. **Loose car seat installation** – The restraint system moved more than two inches side-to-side or front to back; anything more than one inch is too much.
4. **Loose harness** – More than two inches of total slack between the child and the harness strap; there should be no slack.
5. **Wrong seat belt placement**– Lap belt resting over the stomach and/or shoulder belt on the child's neck or face.

For more information, go to www.nhtsa.gov. Detailed information is available from various sources such as www.safercar.gov, which displays an informative pamphlet. You can sign up to have your child's restraint system installed by a certified technician on certain installation dates by calling WTD's Community Traffic Services Unit (CTSU) at (213) 473-0543, or go online at or www.seatcheck.org for a location near you. CTSU is one of the specialized units operating as a part of WTD that works to resolve particular community concerns. If you have traffic safety concerns in a particular area, you may contact CTSU at (213) 473-0215 or WTD at (213) 473-0222 to voice your concerns.

West Traffic officers will be focusing their enforcement efforts toward enforcing child safety seat laws, and reducing traffic collisions, injuries and deaths involving drivers under the influence of alcoholic beverages and/or drugs. The areas within Operations-West Bureau and WTD are Hollywood Area, Wilshire Area, Pacific Area, West Los Angeles Area, and Olympic Area. Any of the geographical areas' WebPages can be accessed via LAPDOnline. Please check the Crime Prevention Circular for the areas that are of particular interest to you.

Traffic Tips

- * **LOOK both ways twice before crossing the street.**
- * **ALWAYS wear your seatbelt.**
- * **DON'T drink and drive.**
- * **Do NOT use handheld devices such as cell phones, MP3 players nor GPS units while driving.**
- * **Please SLOW DOWN. Speed kills.**
- * **WATCH OUT for pedestrians crossing streets in and outside of crosswalks, especially at night.**

Captain Valencia Thomas
Commanding Officer
West Traffic Division