

Back to School Safety Tips From the Bazetta Fire Department

By Brian Taylor

Sad as it may be summer is coming to a close and we will soon see the big yellow school busses rumbling through our neighborhoods once again. That's right, school is only a few short weeks away. With the beginning of the school year not only comes the promise of new beginnings and excitement of seeing old friends, but also some dangers for our young ones as well.

When parents talk about school safety these days, they're usually referring to the surge in violence at schools. But research shows that school-age children are actually nine times more likely to sustain an unintentional injury – whether on the playground or in school – than to be the victim of violence while at school. In fact, an estimated 2.2 million children ages 14 and under are injured in school-related accidents each year, according to the National SAFE KIDS Campaign.

Accidents can be prevented if parents are on the lookout for potential hazards. To help you keep your kids free from harm, here are some safety tips from the Bazetta Fire Department.

Traveling to and from School

Plan a walking route to school or the bus stop. Choose the most direct way with the fewest street crossings and, if possible, with intersections that have crossing guards.

Walk the route with your child beforehand. Tell him or her to stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields and other places where there aren't many people around.

Teach your child never to talk to strangers or accept rides or gifts from strangers. Remember, a stranger is anyone you or your children don't know well or don't trust.

Be sure your child walks to and from school with a sibling, friend, or neighbor.

Teach your kids – whether walking, biking, or riding the bus to school – to obey all traffic signals, signs and traffic officers. Remind them to be extra careful in bad weather.

When driving kids, deliver and pick them up as close to the school as possible. Don't leave until they are in the schoolyard or building

If your child bikes to school, make sure he wears a helmet that meets one of the safety standards (U.S. CPSC, Snell, ANSI, ASTM, or Canadian). Research indicates that a helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by up to 85 percent.

Teach children to arrive at the bus stop early, stay out of the street, wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before approaching the street, watch for cars and avoid the driver's blind spot.

Remind your children to stay seated at all times and keep their heads and arms inside the bus while riding. When exiting the bus, children should wait until the bus comes to a complete stop, exit from the front using the handrail to avoid falls and cross the street at least 10 feet (or 10 giant steps) in front of the bus.

Tell your child not to bend down in front of the bus to tie shoes or pick up objects, as the driver may not see him before starting to move.

Be sure that your child knows his or her home phone number and address, your work number, the number of another trusted adult and how to call 911 for emergencies.

On the Playground

Check the playground equipment at your child's school. Look for hazards such as rusted or broken equipment and dangerous surfaces. The surface around the equipment should be covered with wood chips, mulch, sand, pea gravel, or mats made of safety-tested rubber or fiber material to prevent head injury when a child falls. Report any hazards to the school.

Avoid any drawstrings on the hood or around the neck of jackets and sweatshirts. Drawstrings at the waist or bottom of jackets should extend no more than three inches long to prevent catching in car and school bus doors or getting caught on playground equipment.

Make sure that the school's athletic director or a custodian anchors soccer goals into the ground so they won't tip over and crush a child.

Teach children proper playground behavior: no pushing, shoving, or crowding.

Give your child some strategies for coping with bullies. He should not give in to a bully's demands, but should simply walk away or tell the bully to stop. If the bullying continues, talk to the teacher.

Make sure your child's school has up-to-date information on recalled toys and children's products. Schools, daycare providers and parents can receive recall information by fax, email, or in the regular mail free of charge by calling the Consumer Product Safety Commission hotline at 800-638-2772, or visiting the organization's [web site](#).

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