



NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakotans Reminded To Watch for Pedestrians as Kids Head Back to School

BISMARCK, N.D. – With the excitement of children heading back to school soon, the North Dakota Department of Health is reminding North Dakotans about the importance of paying attention to pedestrians. Driving in a school zone can be a dangerous time and drivers are reminded to watch for children who may dart out between cars or cross the street without looking according to Diana Read, Injury/Violence Prevention Program director.

“As our children return to school this fall, it’s important for all of us to keep their safety in mind,” said State Health Officer Terry Dwelle, M.D. “That means driving carefully and looking out for children walking to and from school. It also means teaching our children how to be safe pedestrians. Together, we all can help to ensure our children are safe.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children younger than 10 always walk with adults. The Department of Health recommends that parents walk to school with their children and teach them about pedestrian safety along the way so that when the children are old enough to travel solo, they can stay safe and enjoy their walks to and from school. It’s also a great way for both parents and children to get exercise and practice healthy lifetime habits.

The Department of Health encourages parents to share these safe walking tips with their children and to practice them as they walk to school together:

- Always walk – don't run – across the street.
- Don't walk suddenly into the path of a vehicle.
- Stop completely at all street corners.
- Obey all the pedestrian signals.
- Never dart out into the street between parked cars.
- Cross streets only at intersections and crosswalks.
- Look left, then right, and left again before crossing.

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- Continue looking both ways as you cross the street.
- Walk alertly – use your eyes and your ears to increase your safety.
- Walk facing the flow of traffic on sidewalks and paths.
- At signals, begin walking when the “WALK” signal is showing. Finish crossing even when the signal flashes “DON'T WALK.” The flashing “DON'T WALK” signal means don't step off the curb and begin crossing.

Drivers should be aware of the increase in pedestrian traffic when school starts and take measures to ensure safety on the roads for all pedestrians. Here are a few safety tips:

- Look for pedestrians at all intersections: signals, stop signs and roundabouts.
- Stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk. Remember that there is a crosswalk at the intersection of any two streets, whether marked or not.
- Look for pedestrians when turning right on a red light or left across oncoming lanes of traffic.
- Use caution when passing another vehicle stopped at an intersection. They may be stopped for a pedestrian you can't see.
- Obey the speed limits and school zone speed limits.
- Avoid distractions when you're driving, like eating or talking or texting on a cell phone.

Remember that in the state of North Dakota, the pedestrian has the right-of-way at the crosswalk.

For more information, call Diana Read, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4537.

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