



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

August 4, 2014

CONTACT:

Chris Cochran

(916) 509-3063

chris.cochran@ots.ca.gov

Take Extra Safety Precautions on the First Day of School

August is Back to School Safety Month

SACRAMENTO, CA – Back to School season is a busy and exciting time, a time for fun and learning. It should not be a time for tragedy. As parents prepare to provide their kids with the essential school supplies and textbooks, the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) encourages them to educate themselves and their children about proper safety precautions before heading back to the classroom. August is designated as Back to School Safety Month, with the aim of promoting traffic safety among parents and children of all ages who walk, ride their bicycle, take the bus, or are driven to and from school.

“Having a conversation with kids about road safety and personal safety rules can have a huge impact in keeping them safe, especially during the first week of school,” said OTS Director Rhonda Craft. “Remind your kids how important safety is to you and them, and that they need to be careful and aware every time they leave the house.”

According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 95 children under the age of 14 were killed in traffic related crashes in California in 2012. NHTSA also reports that an average of three children ages 14 and younger were killed and 462 were injured every day in the United States in motor vehicle crashes during that same year. The following safe walking, bicycling and driving practices can only be effective if parents teach their kids early and often, and set good examples themselves:

Reminders for Parents and Guardians:

- **Plan Ahead.** Plot your route and give yourself a few extra minutes to accommodate possible commute delays during mornings and afternoons. Apply any makeup and eat breakfast before you leave your house in the morning to avoid distractions while on the road.
- **Exercise Caution Around Schools and Neighborhoods.** Given the increase in pedestrian and bike traffic, drivers should always follow the posted speed limit inside school zones, which is often 25 mph *maximum* but may be as low as 15 mph. Keep an eye out for any children in the area.
- **Drop Off Zones.** Be extra aware around school drop off zones, and make sure your kids are, too. Too many parents are in a hurry to leave and don't watch for other children.
- **Cell Phone Use.** If you must use your phone, pull over into a parking spot when it is safe to do so.

(more)



Reminders for Kids:

- **Biking or Walking to School.** If you have a child that will be biking or walking to school, make sure they know the safest route, are familiar with traffic signals and signs, and remind them to stop and look both ways to make sure no cars are coming before using crosswalks. Children must also always wear a properly fitted helmet if he or she is riding a bike or skateboard; it's the law.
- **Riding a School Bus.** If your child rides a school bus, make sure that he or she knows to remain seated at all times, to keep the aisles clear, not to throw objects, not to shout or distract the driver, and to keep his or her hands and arms inside of the bus.
 - When a school bus stops to load or unload passengers and its red lights are flashing, all vehicles must stop – in both directions. If the bus stop is on a divided highway, then only those vehicles approaching from the rear must stop.

“Following these tips will help ensure that you and your children remain as safe as possible not only in the beginning of the school season, but throughout the rest of year,” said Craft. “Children are our most valuable and precious possessions – let’s provide them with the knowledge they’ll need to keep themselves safe.”

Additional child safety tips and information about other OTS efforts can be found at www.ots.ca.gov or via facebook.com/CaliforniaOTS and twitter.com/OTS_CA.

###