



For immediate release

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**Investing in back-to-school safety:
Lessons for drivers, parents and students**

THORNHILL, Ont. – Kids are almost back to school and that means more than 25,000 school safety patrollers outfitted in lime green vests will be back at their posts across school zones everywhere. Aged 10 to 14, these champions of safety will help thousands of fellow students stay safe along crosswalks and as they board and disembark their school buses.

Along with the patrollers, parents, drivers and students also have a role to play in keeping our children safe this school season.

"Take a child's small size and quick movements, add some common obstacles like bushes or parked cars, mix in a distracted driver and you've got a possible recipe for disaster," said Leslie Rocha, School Safety Patrol program design specialist. "Driving where children walk, bicycle and get in and out of buses or cars requires the same skills as being a good student -- you have to pay attention."

Several CAA School Safety Patrollers are at Yorkdale Mall with the Ontario Provincial Police today offering parents, drivers and students a few basic lessons on back-to-school traffic safety:

For parents and caregivers:

- If you drive children to school, properly restrain all children under 12 in the back seat of your vehicle.
- Avoid parking on the opposite side of the street from the school. Make sure your children exit and enter on the curbside of the vehicle.
- Avoid blocking buses or making illegal U-turns in school zones.
- Help your children choose the safest walking route to school. Look for routes with controlled intersections, the lowest traffic volume and the fewest streets to cross.
- Review pedestrian safety rules with your children. This is especially important for young children venturing into traffic for the first time.

For drivers:

- Obey the reduced speed limits posted in school zones.
- Stop for all school buses that are loading and unloading students -- no matter the time of day. It's the law in Ontario. Don't proceed until the stop sign arm is raised and the lights stop flashing.
- Before backing out of the driveway, take a few extra seconds to look for students walking to school on the sidewalk.
- Watch for children riding bicycles or scooters to and from school.
- Expect the unexpected such as late students running to catch the bus.
- Watch for "invisible" children by using a technique called ground viewing. Keep your eyes searching low around parked vehicles on the road looking for little feet, bike wheels, toys or moving shadows. It could be the only warning you get before a child dashes into your path.
- Watch for foot and bus safety patrollers in their lime green vests -- they've been trained to help schoolmates stay safe when walking or taking a bus to school.

For students:

- Listen to the direction provided by adult crossing guards and school safety patrollers -- they have your safety in mind.
- Obey all traffic signs and signals.
- Look left, right and left again before crossing the street and check over your shoulder for cars turning. Make eye contact with motorists before crossing the street. Don't assume they see you.
- Cross the road only where there are crosswalks, not diagonally or between parked cars. Whenever possible, cross at intersections with stop signs, traffic signals or student and adult crossing guards.
- Wait for the school bus in a safe place far from the edge of the roadway.
- When you get off the bus, stay in the driver's sight range. If you drop something near the bus, let the bus driver or bus patroller know before you try to pick it up.

For more information about CAA South Central Ontario, visit www.caasco.com. CAA South Central Ontario is a not-for-profit auto club offering insurance, travel and roadside services. There are more than 1.8 million CAA members in Ontario and 5 million members in Canada.

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