

## Back to school safety



Yes it is that time of year again when the lost backpacks, papers, and pencils find their way back to the classroom. As with the start of every school year there are some things teachers may ask you to buy for your child's school supplies, and they may even ask you to help them finish their homework. So with all these things to keep you busy, it might sound silly to suggest one more thing that you should do for the school year. If your child is one of the students walking to school you need to make sure they know how to get there safely.

First if you have a child under the age of 10 they need to go with an adult when walking to school, mostly if they need to cross the road. It might sound like a lot of work, but you'll get some exercise, and your children will be able to learn what they should and should not do when walking to school.

When choosing a route find one that has the fewest street crossings and use the sidewalk as much you can. If there is a section where there is no sidewalk, it is best to walk facing traffic and to stay far left.

Streets can be the most unsafe section of a route on the way to school, when crossing make sure the cars stop before stepping out into the street. Look the driver in the eye so you know they can see you. Before you step into the road make sure to look both ways to see if cars coming the other way have stopped. Once you can see that the cars have stopped walk never run across the street. The best place for your child to cross the street is at a crosswalk or with crossing guards. Find out if your school has a crossing guard and make sure you children know that it is always better to cross the street with a crossing guard than on their own.

There are a few things outside of walking to school that you can do to keep your child safe. If you have a section in your yard that they play in make sure it is away from cars parked or on the road, and fence off the section they play in.

When choosing school clothes look for items that have reflective fabric. This type of fabric can in some cases also be found on backpacks and shoes. The more they have the better drivers can see your children no matter the time of day.

As a parent you know they like to play, it does not matter where, so before you jump in your car make sure you walk around the back of your car before backing out. Even if you know all of your children are either in the house or at school keep in mind that there are almost always other children in the neighborhood and they could be behind your car, checking every time is a good habit to get into.

Most children like to be independent; they like to be able to do things on their own. By teaching your children safety tips while out walking to school they will be able to learn how to get safely from one place to the next. Talk to your children about why it is more safe to walk across the road rather than run, or why it is good to cross with a crossing guard and you will feel a little more at ease with your child's safety.

*For more information on back to school safety tips look us up on the web at <http://health.utah.gov> under Health and Safety Topics click on Safe Kids.*

Safe Kids also has a new web site that can be found at: <http://www.utahsafekids.org>