



News Release

Media Contact:
Georjeane Blumling, Ph.D.
Vice President Public Relations
757-233-3825
Gblum@tidewater.aaa.com

AAA TIDEWATER OFFERS TIPS TO STOP BACK-TO-SCHOOL TRAGEDIES

One-Third of Child Pedestrian Fatalities Occur During After-School Hours

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va., (August 12, 2013) – As summer draws to a close and the classroom bell rings in the new school year, 55 million children across the United States will head back to school. With 13 percent of those school children typically walking or biking to school, AAA warns drivers to be especially vigilant for pedestrians during before- and after-school hours. The afternoon hours are particularly dangerous for walking children over the last decade, nearly one-third of child pedestrian fatalities occurred between 4 and 8 p.m.

“More than forty-three percent of children lost their lives during after-school hours in 2011,” cautioned Georjeane Blumling, spokesperson for AAA Tidewater Virginia, “and although we’ve seen a steady decrease in the number of tragedies each year, it’s important to remember that one death, is one too many.”

AAA offers six ways to keep kids safe this school year:

1. **Slow down.** Speed limits in school zones are reduced for a reason. A pedestrian struck by a vehicle traveling at 25 mph is nearly two-thirds less likely to be killed compared to a pedestrian struck by a vehicle traveling just 10 mph faster.
2. **Eliminate distractions.** Children often cross the road unexpectedly and may emerge suddenly between two parked cars.
3. **Reverse responsibly.** Every vehicle has blind spots. Check for children on the sidewalk, driveway and around your vehicle before slowly backing up. Teach your children to never play in, under or around vehicles—even those that are parked.
4. **Talk to your teen.** Car crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in the United States, and more than one in four fatal crashes involving teen drivers occur during the after-school hours of 3 to 7 p.m. Get evidence-based guidance and tips at TeenDriving.AAA.com.
5. **Come to a complete stop.** Always come to a complete stop, checking carefully for children on sidewalks and in crosswalks before proceeding.
6. **Watch for bicycles.** Children on bikes are often inexperienced, unsteady and unpredictable. Slow down and allow at least three feet of passing distance between your vehicle and the bicycle. If your child rides a bicycle to school, require that they wear a properly-fitted bicycle helmet on every ride. Find videos, expert advice and safety tips at ShareTheRoad.AAA.com.

AAA’s *School’s Open – Drive Carefully* awareness campaign was launched in 1946 in an effort to prevent school-related child pedestrian traffic crashes, helping kids to live fulfilling, injury-free lives.

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