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Northeast Florida Safety Council Reminds Parents & Students Of Back-To-School Safety Tips

Jacksonville, Florida; July 26, 2017 – Summer vacation is coming to an end and schools throughout Northeast Florida will be starting in a few weeks. The Northeast Florida Safety Council (NEFSC) wants to remind parents and students to be safe getting back to the classroom with specific tips that address various safety concerns.

Children's safety should cover areas such as preparing for school and traveling to and from school (by school buses, bikes and by foot). And with students out and about around every morning and afternoon, motorists need to take additional caution.

Backpack Safety

Before your child sets out for school, start by ensuring that the backpack is not a problem.

- Choose a backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back.
- Pack lightly. The backpack should not weigh any more than 10-20% of the child's body weight.
- Always use both shoulder straps.
- Consider a rolling backpack for heavier loads.

School Bus Safety

Research shows school buses are 16 times safer than traveling in a family car. But certain steps need to be followed.

- Arrive at designated bus stop 5 minutes before the scheduled pickup. Always take the bus. Never accept a ride from a stranger.
- To be seen in the early morning darkness, wear retro-reflective tape on clothing or backpack.

- Wait for the bus well away from the roadway. Don't approach the bus until it is stopped and the doors are open.
- Use the handrail on the bus. When getting off and having to cross in front of the bus, walk well in front of the bus so the driver can see you cross.
- Go straight home and know of places on the way to your home that you can go to in case of emergencies.

Traveling To School By Bike

To ride a bike to and from school, a child should be a minimum of 9 - 12 years old and should understand the rules of the road.

- Wear a properly fitted helmet and clothes suitable for biking.
- Have the bike in good working order and preferably with reflectors, a light and a bell.
- Know and obey all traffic rules, including keeping on sidewalks if possible and riding with the traffic.
- Never ride in the dark.

Traveling To School By Foot

Parents must decide if their child is old enough and mature enough to walk to school. If possible, try to have your child walk with other schoolmates.

- Prepare ahead for a safe walk to school, considering hazards such as train tracks, busy intersections, etc.
- Stay on sidewalks when possible. If there are no sidewalks, walk on the left side facing traffic.
- Look both ways before crossing roads and only cross at intersections.
- Always obey the directions of crossing guards.

Motorist Tips

Special caution should be observed when children are in the neighborhoods traveling to school or are gathered around bus stops.

- Do not text or talk on your cell phone while driving.
- When backing out of your driveway or leaving your garage, watch for children walking or biking to school.
- Notice children who are gathering and moving around at bus stops.
- Be alert for school zones that have reduced speed limits at designated times of the day.
- Watch for school buses. Red flashing lights and an extended arm indicate the school bus is stopping to load or unload children. State law requires you to stop.

NEFSC is a non-governmental, not-for-profit, public service organization dedicated to promoting good health, saving lives, preventing accidents and maintaining a safe environment through workplace safety programs, road safety training programs and community service. With four locations throughout the First Coast, NEFSC offers classroom safety courses in addition to online training. For more information about the organization's services, call 904-399-3119 or visit Jaxsafety.com.