

UW Health: Pedestrian safety urged as children go back to school

Posted on Monday, Aug 30, 2021

>> WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)

MADISON, Wis. – Soon children throughout the state will return to class, and this presents certain dangers as they make their way from home to school.

Students travel to school in a variety of ways, including by bicycle, parents' vehicle, the bus or simply walking. Each of these methods involve vehicle traffic of some kind, according to Shawn Koval, schools coordinator, Healthy Kids Collaborative, UW Health.

“We encourage students and families to walk and bike to school, but to keep safety in mind when interacting with vehicular traffic,” he said. “Especially when crossing the street or riding a bike on a street without a sidewalk.”

The number of traffic fatalities this year in Dane County already has exceeded the total for all of 2020, according to officials from the Dane County Traffic Safety Commission. This includes an unusually high number of pedestrians struck by motor vehicles.

Drivers should always be aware and slow down, especially in school zones and pay close attention in high pedestrian-volume areas, Koval said. It's important to remember the hefty fines and penalties for speeding in school zones too, he added.

“Children on foot or riding a bike can be difficult to see because they are simply smaller than adults,” he said.

For parents and children there are some things they can do to stay safe on the way to school, according to Koval.

- Plan ahead: Learn or review your route ahead of time using an online map tool

like Google Maps, or even better, practice the route.

- Join a “walking school bus:” Some schools and families organize group walks to school but remember to wear a mask when in group settings.
- When walking:
 - Look left, right and left again before crossing the street.
 - Put down phones, headphones and other devices when crossing the street.
 - Children younger than 10 should cross the street with an adult.
 - It is important for adults and older adolescents to be good role models.
- When riding a bike to school:
 - Wear a properly fitted helmet.
 - Use hand signals and follow the rules of the road.
 - Wear bright colors.
 - Adults should ride with younger children.

Koval is available for interviews today.