

Darienite

News for Darien

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AAA: Know the Specific Danger Points to Keep Kids Safer Between Home and School

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“The wheels on the bus go ‘round and ‘round . . .” goes the children’s song. And that should remind motorists to be diligent when area students return to school this week.

In its annual *School’s Open–Drive Carefully* message, AAA Northeast encourages drivers to be careful during mornings and afternoons when children get on and off school buses.

— an announcement from [AAA Northeast](#) combined with a brief Facebook post from Darien Police Department

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), **the greatest risk to children isn’t riding school buses; it’s approaching or leaving them.**

Between 2008 and 2017, NHTSA reports 264 school-age children were killed in school transportation-related crashes, primarily when they waited at bus stops or crossed streets before boarding or getting off school buses.

“Kids get caught up in the excitement of ‘back-to-school’ and sometimes they forget to look for cars, even though drivers are required to yield and stop for school buses with activated lights” Mayko added. “Others have trouble judging traffic speed and distance, so drivers need to be aware — especially in school zones, near playgrounds or at bus stops — that kids may dart into streets.

AAA Northeast reminds drivers a school bus’s *flashing yellow lights* mean ‘**Slow Down**’ because the bus is preparing to stop; while *red flashing lights* mean ‘**Stop**’ and wait at least 20 feet behind the bus as children get on or off the vehicle. State law requires drivers to remain stopped until the bus lights stop flashing, the driver withdraws the extended stop-arm, and the bus begins to move.

As part of its *School’s Open–Drive Carefully* campaign, AAA Northeast offers parents and schools — especially ones with AAA School Patrols — [free School Bus Safety Posters](#) as tools to teach children to identify school bus Danger Zones. Copies of the 16-inch x 22-inch color poster — plus information to start a AAA School Patrol — may be obtained by emailing Fmayko@AAAnortheast.com.

What Drivers Should Remember

Meanwhile, AAA Northeast offers these driver tips to keep children safe:

- **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.
- **Come to a complete stop.** Research shows more than one-third of drivers roll through stop signs in school zones or neighborhoods.
- **Look for clues,** such as AAA School Safety Patrollers, crossing guards, and school zone signs that indicate children are in the area.
- **Keep your eyes moving.** Scan between parked cars; look for shadows on the ground. Since children can be quick crossing roadways unexpectedly or emerging suddenly between parked cars, understand that taking your eyes off the road for just two seconds doubles your chances of colliding with another car or pedestrian.

What School Children Should Know

On the other hand, parents and guardians should teach school-aged children to:

- **Cross at corners,** not in mid-block. Use crosswalks if they’re available.
- **Use your ‘eagle’ eyes:** look left, right, then left again before crossing streets.
- **Right on reds** can be dangerous; watch for turning vehicles when crossing at corners.
- **Eliminate electronics** such as headphones and cellphones when crossing streets.

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Darien Police Are Watching

"Darien Public Schools don't open until next week, but we're out here now reminding our motoring public to drive safely on all of our roadways and especially through school zones," the Police Department recently said [in a Facebook post](#).

"Remember, speed limits in school zones tend to be 5 to 10 miles per hour below the normal posted limits."