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Idaho kids are back in class and it’s time for drivers to step up safety

BOISE – As students across Idaho return to classrooms, some as early as this week, ITD's Office of Highway Safety is urging drivers to slow down, stay alert, and make safety their top priority in school zones and around school buses.

With more children walking, biking, and riding to school, OHS reminds drivers that the choices they make behind the wheel directly affect the safety of Idaho's students, families, and educators.

"Back to school means more kids on our roads, more buses on their routes, and more responsibility for every driver," said Josephine Middleton, Highway Safety Manager. "We want every child to arrive safely, every day. That starts with drivers who are focused, patient, and following the law."

School Zone Safety

Drivers should expect reduced speed limits, increased pedestrian activity, and crossing guards during morning and afternoon hours. OHS encourages drivers to:

- Follow posted school-zone speed limits, even if children aren't immediately visible.
- Eliminate distractions and stay off the phone.
- Watch for children who may cross unexpectedly or step out from between vehicles.
- Obey crossing guards and school staff directing traffic.

When to Stop for a School Bus

Idaho law requires drivers to stop when a school bus displays flashing red lights and an extended stop arm. Stopping for a school bus isn't just courteous, it's the law, and it protects children who are boarding or exiting the bus.

Reckless Driving Penalties Under Idaho Code

Idaho's reckless-driving statute, Idaho Code 49-1401, outlines penalties for dangerous driving behaviors, including violations that occur in active school zones. A driver may be charged with reckless driving if they endanger people or property, pass in a no-passing zone with restricted visibility, or drive more than 20 miles per hour over the posted speed limit in an active school zone when children are present and visible. "Reckless driving puts everyone at risk, especially in places where kids are present," Middleton said. "The law is clear, and the consequences are serious."

A Shared Responsibility to Protect Kids

As the school year begins, children are excited, nervous, distracted, and still settling into new routines. They may not always look both ways, wait for signals, or notice approaching vehicles. Adults know better, and that means every driver has a responsibility to look out for them.

"Kids have a lot on their minds at the start of the year," Middleton said. "Drivers need to slow down, pay attention, and give children the space and protection they deserve."

For more information on school-zone safety, visit shift-idaho.org/

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