

SCHOOL SAFETY: Parents should prepare children before walks to school

BOISE - A walk to school in the morning can be invigorating, and may help children unwind after spending a day in the classroom. It also brings inherent risks.

We all have an interest in helping schools, cities and counties ensure that routes are as safe as possible. Parents and children need to use caution if they forego buses, bicycles, private vehicles or carpools.

Consider the following:

- Be visible to others. Wear reflective material if walking or biking to school in low-light conditions. If a driver's vision is blocked by a parked car or other obstacle, move out carefully to where drivers can see you and you can see other vehicles. Avoid wearing dark clothes at sunrise or sundown.
- Walk to school as part of a group, if possible, and always have a responsible adult with you.
- Walk on the sidewalk if one is available.
- Walk facing traffic if no sidewalk is available.
- The safest place to cross a street or highway is at a corner or intersection, but watch for vehicles entering the street at an intersection or from driveways.
- If you are 10-years-old or younger, cross the street with an adult, not by yourself.
- Before you step off the curb to cross the street, stop, look to your left, then to your right and again to the left to see if cars are coming.
- If a car approaches, make eye contact with the driver to ensure that he or she sees you.
- Walk, don't run. This gives time for drivers to see you before you enter the roadway. Running also makes you more likely to fall. Don't dart from between parked cars or from in front of a car. The driver of the car coming down the street will not be able to see you.
- Obey all traffic signals and/or crossing guards. Never cross against a "don't walk" light, even if you don't see any traffic coming.
- NEVER accept a ride from a stranger. Report any suspicious contact by a stranger to your parents, teacher or other school official. Give a good description of the stranger

and his/her vehicle, including the license plate number. Never accept a ride with anyone unless your parents have specifically given permission.