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# PARENTING

## Features

### Parents Should Consider Safety for Back to School

Robert Thomas, Information Specialist,  
 Cooperative Media Group, University of Missouri



*Parents should do their own safety homework, be wary of heat stress as they send kids back to school*

Before the kids head back to school after their summer breaks, parents should do some homework of their own to make sure the new school year is safe on several fronts, including safeguards against the scorching heat that has settled over Missouri.

“School buses and many school rooms are not air-conditioned. Young children should wear loose-fitting, light-colored clothing that breathes,” said Karen Funkenbusch, University of Missouri safety specialist. “They should carry school-approved water bottles and wear comfortable shoes where they may have to walk over hot surfaces.”

In addition to safeguards from the heat, younger children should be taught the importance of safety rules concerning travel on school busses, she said.

Many of the 22 million school children nationwide will ride school buses, some for the first time.

The National Safety Council reports more than 9,000 injuries are involved in school buses each year, resulting in about 25 deaths.

Most of these injuries do not occur in crashes, but as students enter and exit school busses, she said.

Children should be told to stay away from traffic, avoid roughhousing and line up at least six feet from the curb. Children should wait until the school bus stops and opens the doors before stepping onto the roadway, Funkenbusch said.


Children should find a seat and sit down and avoid loud talking or noise that could distract the driver.

In getting off the bus, children should walk along the side of the road or on the sidewalk to a point at least 10 feet in front of the bus if they must cross the street. They should be sure that the bus driver can see them and signals it is okay to cross. Children should never walk behind the bus.

“Most parents know that their young children should be schooled in avoiding contact with

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strangers and not be fooled by a stranger's friendliness," Funkenbusch said.

"Children should be taught never to talk to strangers, take a ride with a stranger or accept anything like candy or money from someone they do not know," she said.

They should learn never give a stranger their name and if a stranger bothers them, run in the opposite direction and tell the parents immediately.

Latchkey kids should know to keep doors shut and locked and never answer a door to a stranger.

"These are common sense tips to adults, but many children can get caught up in the excitement of a new routine, and so it is good for parents to instruct them," Funkenbusch said.

For more information contact Funkenbush at the University of Missouri Extension in Boone County at 573-882-2731.

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