

VOLTS News

Valuing Our Lives Through Safety

September 2022—Volume 106

VOLTS Data Report for August

Total Observations:	350
IPSC Emp. Contact Rate:	1.06
Total Safe Behaviors:	3,406
Total At-Risk Behaviors:	32

Top 3 Safe Behaviors

- **Eyes and Hands on Task**
- **Eyes and Face**
- **Head**

Top 3 At-Risk Exposures

- **Walking/Working Surface**
- **Hand**
- **Respiratory**

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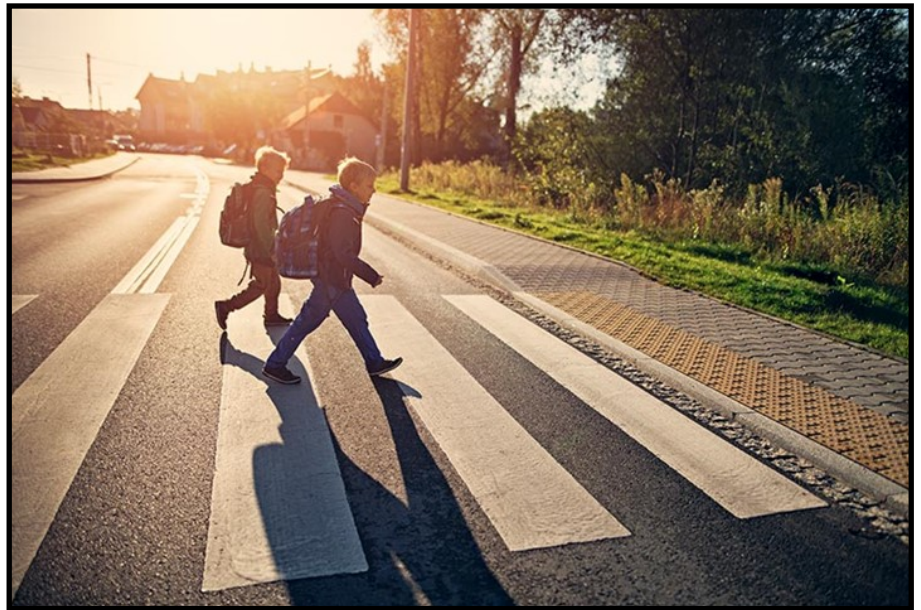
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Back to School Safe Driving Tips by Casey Draper

Parents and teachers spend a great deal of time reminding students to practice safety when walking or riding their bikes to school. However, students aren't the only ones who need to brush up on their safety skills as a new school year begins. It is also imperative for drivers to familiarize themselves with safe driving practices.

While some of the most dangerous driving days occur during summer, going back to school has its own set of hazards for both students and drivers. Reminding yourself of watch-out scenarios—and taking steps to prepare for these situations—can go a long way toward keeping everyone safe.

Practicing Safe Driving in School Zones

As a driver, you already know to follow certain safety practices in school zones. Even though school zones are typically well marked with lower speed limits posted, more children are hit by cars in areas close to schools according to the National Safe Routes to School program. This problem stresses the need for drivers to slow down and pay attention behind the wheel.

All too often, drivers are distracted or inattentive and drive into school zones too quickly. Learning where school zones are located along your regular route will help you prepare for them by reducing your speed gradually ahead of time.

If you are in a school zone, make sure to follow these rules:

- ⇒ **Know the speed limit.** Not all school zones have the same speed limit. Some speed limits are as low as 10 or 15 miles per hour.
- ⇒ **Traffic situations.** Certain driving actions such as passing another vehicle, changing lanes, and making U-turns are not allowed in school zones.

Back to School Safe Driving Tips—Casey Draper (cont.)

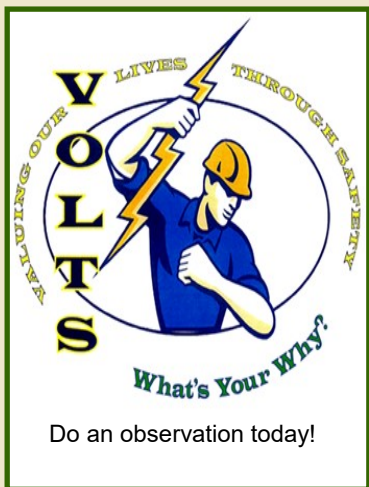
- ⇒ **Put down the phone.** Driving and mobile phones don't mix. Not only can texting or talking on the phone in an active school zone earn you a hefty fine in many states—it can also be deadly.
- ⇒ **Watch for pedestrians.** Crosswalks near school zones are particularly busy before and after school. Drive slowly and watch for pedestrians crossing the road or walking in the road. Always give the pedestrian the right of way and follow any signals given by crossing guards.
- ⇒ **Drive slowly passed parked cars.** Children can seemingly appear out of nowhere when they run out from between parked cars to cross the street. Drive slowly and keep your eyes actively scanning for movement between parked vehicles. In this situation, the center or left lane may be a better option.

Practicing Safety Around School Buses

School bus drivers face special challenges on the road. Bus drivers have large blind spots around the bus and require more time to make safe stops. Drivers sharing the road with school buses should adopt driving habits that help make the roads safer for everyone.

Here are a few important rules to remember:

- ⇒ **Always maintain a safe following distance.** Keep as much space as possible between your vehicle and the bus in front of you.
- ⇒ **In traffic, avoid “cutting” in front of a bus.** Many bus drivers leave a safe following distance between the bus and the vehicle ahead of them to ensure a safer environment for passengers. Even if your car can fit into the space, drivers should always avoid cutting in front of a bus.
- ⇒ **Watch for buses that are loading or unloading children.** Be prepared to stop when the bus stops. The most dangerous area around a school bus is the 10-foot width around the vehicle because of blind



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spots. Be sure to stop more than 10 feet behind a school bus to allow passengers a safe space for entering and exiting.

- ⇒ **Never pass a stopped school bus.** It's dangerous and illegal to pass a school bus that has stopped to load or unload children. This rule includes passing a bus from either direction, so any time you approach a school bus that has stopped to pick up or unload children, you need to stop as well.

While there are numerous hazards on the roadway, being aware of the situations mentioned above and knowing how they can create exposures may be able to help drivers travel safely through busy school zones. By understanding what creates exposure, we have an opportunity to prepare ahead of time for scenarios that may occur.

Many of the behavior-based safety (BBS) tools and techniques learned through the VOLTS BBS process can help identify at-risk exposures and reduce their likelihood of happening. Back-to-school time is busy for parents, children, teachers, and bus drivers. Each person must do their part to watch out for others and help make the roads safer. **What's Your Why?**

References

National Safe Routes to School Program (2022). <https://www.saferoutespartnership.org/>