

Bus safety critical for both students and drivers

With students back in school, the yellow school buses have started running again. While travel by school bus is one of the safest modes of transportation, it's important to remind your children how to act safely in and around the bus. It's also important for you to remember how to drive safely around school buses.

"Students and motorists need to be aware and alert around yellow school buses," says Dr. Gerry Predy, Senior Medical Officer of Health for Alberta Health Services. "The key to safety is awareness of common danger areas and alertness when in those danger areas."

The time of greatest danger to students and others on the roadways is during the loading and unloading of a school bus. Children should follow these safety guidelines:

- While waiting for the bus, stand in a group with the other students. You should stand at least two giant steps away from the road and pay attention to traffic.
- When the school bus approaches the bus stop, line up with the smaller children in front. Stay away from the bus until it stops.
- After the bus has stopped, get on the bus one at a time. Hold on to the handrail while climbing the steps and then go directly to your seat.
- Never run behind or in front of the school bus to pick up something that you dropped or forgot. Wait for the bus to move on and then pick it up.
- When getting off the bus, take 10 steps away from the bus right away. Be sure to make eye contact with the driver and look both ways before crossing the street in front of the bus.

When the school year starts again, motorists often need to be reminded of their responsibility to watch out for children in school zones and around school buses:

- No matter which direction you are driving from, stop whenever approaching a stopped bus with activated alternating flashing red lights.
- Be prepared to stop for flashing amber lights on a school bus.
- Motorists can contribute to school bus safety by simply being alert and cautious when approaching a school bus, regardless of whether its lights are flashing.
- Motorists who choose to break the law and pass a school bus when the bus has its flashing red lights activated will be fined and receive six demerit points.

Residents with any other health-related concerns can call Health Link Alberta to speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at 780-408-LINK (5465) or outside the local calling area, toll free at 1-866-408-LINK (5465).

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than 3.5 million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.