

NEWS RELEASE

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DHSMV PROMOTES CHILD SAFETY AWARENESS IN AUGUST

~Every Child is a Human Caution Sign~

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.— August brings the end of the summer break and the beginning of a new school year in Florida. It's an ideal time for focusing on child safety, and the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles will do just that by launching its *Child Safety Awareness Month*. The theme of this inaugural awareness campaign is "Every Child is a Human Caution Sign."

"Whether playing in the yard, riding in the backseat of a vehicle, or waiting at a school bus stop, a child is a human caution sign," said Captain Nancy Rasmussen, Chief of Public Affairs for the Florida Highway Patrol. "They are living reminders that we need to slow down, pay attention, and abide by traffic laws for their safety as well as our own."



Each week, DHSMV will focus on different traffic related safety issues involving children, such as seatbelts and child restraints, bicyclist and pedestrian tips, school bus safety, and making sure a child is not behind the vehicle when backing up. The Department, in partnership with other state agencies, will be distributing safety reminders, such as:

Be Alert While Backing

- Walk around your vehicle to check for children playing.
- Turn off your radio to better hear your surroundings.
- Keep your foot on the brake until you completely shift into reverse.
- Back out slowly.
- Teach children to never play in, on, around, or under vehicles.
- Know your vehicle's blind spots and look again before backing.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety

- While on a bicycle, ride in the same direction as traffic and obey all traffic signs, signals and lane markings.
- Always use a headlight and taillight at night.

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- Pedestrians should use the sidewalk if there is one; if not, walk on the side of the road facing traffic.
- Always cross streets where pedestrians are expected, such as corners and crosswalks.
- And be visible. Wear bright and reflective colors on your clothes, shoes and/or wristbands.

Bus Safety

- Motorists are required to stop when approaching a school bus that is stopped with its red lights flashing and STOP arms extended.
- The only time traffic approaching an oncoming school bus does not need to stop, is if there is a raised barrier such as a concrete divider or at least five feet of unpaved space separating the lanes of traffic.
- Motorists should be alert and watch for children especially near schools, bus stops, school buses, and in school parking lots.
- At bus stops, children should wait in a safe place away from the road.
- Children should never walk behind a bus.
- Remember, Stop on Red, kids ahead!

Seatbelts and Child Restraints

- Buckle up. A seatbelt is your vehicle's most important safety feature, but it only works if you use it.
- Florida law requires the use of seat belts by drivers of motor vehicles and all children riding in a vehicle under the age of 18.
- Keep children in the back seat, at least through age 12, if possible. Front seat air bags, when deployed, can be dangerous to children.
- A new law taking effect in January 2015 will require children 4 and 5 years of age to ride in a booster seat.

To view the Department's Child Safety Awareness Month video, go to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykzgp5iwiPU>.

For more information on this and other safety campaigns sponsored by the DHSMV visit www.flhsmv.gov/SafetyTips/, or contact the DHSMV Communication Office at (850) 617-3102.

The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles provides highway safety and security through excellence in service, education and enforcement. The Department is leading the way to a safer Florida through the efficient and professional execution of its core mission: the issuance of driver licenses, vehicle tags and titles and operation of the Florida Highway Patrol. To learn more about DHSMV and the services offered, visit www.flhsmv.gov, follow us on Twitter @[FLHSMV](https://twitter.com/FLHSMV) or find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/FLHSMV).

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