

Ohio State Highway Patrol

Monthly Commander's Column



Making Daylight Savings Time Safe for Kids

As autumn turns toward winter, daylight hours are growing shorter. When we change our clocks from Daylight Savings Time back to Standard Time in the Fall, it will be dark even earlier. But what we may not realize is that this also means that more children will be traveling to and from school in the dark, which puts them at greater risk of injuries from traffic crashes.

Nationwide, over half of all fatal pedestrian crashes and over one fourth of fatal bicycle crashes involving school age children (ages 5 through 18) occur in low light or dark conditions.

There are many things you can do to help your kids, or the kids in your neighborhood, get to school each morning and reach home safely at the end of the day.

First, you can help them learn and practice this important safety rule: Be Seen To Be Safe. Let kids know that during the day and at dawn and dusk, they should wear bright or fluorescent clothing. These colors (day-glo green, hot pink, or construction worker orange) amplify light and help the wearer stand out in a crowd. However, at night, these colors appear to be black, so kids should carry a flashlight and/or wear retro-reflective gear that reflects light back to its source so motorists can see them.

A motorist will quickly detect a child walking with a lit flashlight, or riding on a bike with an attached headlight and flashing taillight. When combined with retro-reflective gear or strips of retro-reflective tape on their jacket, shoes, cap, helmet, or backpack, a child's odds of being seen are greatly improved. The sooner motorists are alerted to something like a child moving up ahead, the sooner they can react.

Second, you can help kids remember to "stop, look left-right-left, and listen" before stepping off the curb, even where there is a traffic signal. It is also a good idea to accompany your children when they walk to and from school as often as possible.

Third, you can remind kids to avoid "jaywalking" and crossing from between parked vehicles. Crosswalks are safer and more visible, especially after dark.

Motorists can also help by paying special attention to safe driving rules in low-light conditions. First, and most important, you must be alert if you are on the road after dark. Watch carefully for children who may be walking or riding their bikes. Always drive at a safe speed, especially on unlit or winding roads or when using low beams. Never pass a stopped school bus with its stop arm extended and red lights flashing.

To help increase your ability to see at night, be sure to take off your sunglasses at dusk. Wipe off your headlights regularly, and keep your windshield clean, both inside and out. Adjust the rearview mirror to the "night" setting to avoid headlight glare. If you need to use your high beams on an unlit road, be sure to turn them off when another car approaches.

Following these tips can help ensure safety during the times each day when kids are going to and from school, and many of us are in our vehicles driving to and from work or other activities.