

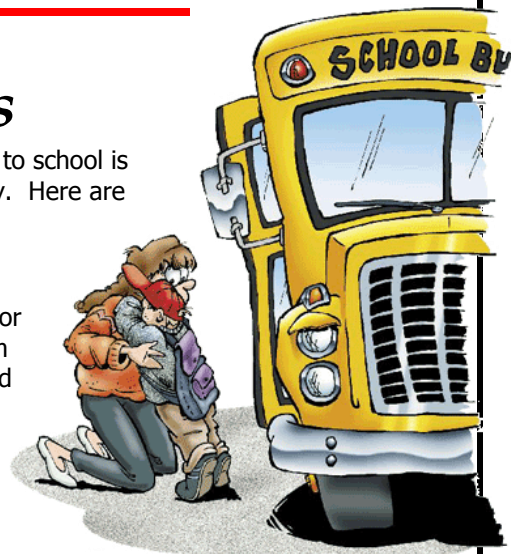
SEMPER SAFE

Back-to-School Safety Tips

It's hard to believe that summer is almost over and the time to send the kids back to school is once again upon us. Back to school time means it's also time to think about safety. Here are a few safety tips to help keep you and your children safe all school year long.

Playgrounds

Each year, more than 200,000 kids are treated in U.S. hospital emergency rooms for playground-associated injuries. Most of these injuries occur when a child falls from the equipment. Take a look at the surfaces of your local playground. There should be a 12-inch depth of wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel. Mats made of safety-tested rubber or fiber material also make great padding to help prevent injuries.



Bike Safety

Since a growing number of kids are riding their bikes to school, make sure your kids follow these simple biking rules:

- ◆ Always wear a bicycle helmet, no matter how short or long the ride.
- ◆ Ride on the right, in the same direction as auto traffic.
- ◆ Use appropriate hand signals.
- ◆ Respect traffic lights and stop signs.
- ◆ Wear bright color clothing to increase visibility. Wear reflective materials when riding during limited visibility.
- ◆ Know the "rules of the road." That includes no talking or texting on the phone while you are riding.

Backpacks

Textbooks, notebooks, lunch, toys... how much weight is your child toting back and forth each day? Take the load off your child by following these backpack safety tips.

- ◆ Choose a backpack with wide, padded shoulder straps and a padded back.
- ◆ Pack light. Organize the backpack to use all of its compartments. Pack heavier items closest to the center of the back. The backpack should never weigh more than 10 to 20 percent of the student's body weight.
- ◆ Always use both shoulder straps. Slinging a backpack over one shoulder can strain muscles.

Eating During the School Day

- ◆ Most schools regularly send schedules of cafeteria menus home. With this advance information, you can plan on packing lunch on the days when the main course is one your child prefers not to eat.
- ◆ Try to get your child's school to stock healthy choices such as fresh fruit, low-fat dairy products, water, and 100 percent fruit juice in the vending machines.

- ◆ Each 12-ounce soft drink contains approximately 10 teaspoons of sugar and 150 calories. Drinking just one can of soda a day increases a child's risk of obesity by 60%. Restrict your child's soft drink consumption.

We all worry when we send our kids back to school. However, by being aware of the hazards your kids may face and taking a few safety precautions, you'll be able to help keep your child safe.

As Marines, Sailors and Civil Servants we live by our core values. So think before you jeopardize the safety of yourself, your fellow Marines, Sailors, civilian employees or family members, and remember SEMPER SAFE!

