

Back to School Safety and Planning for Emergencies

Now is a good time to review back-to-school safety with your children and check school safety policies. Here are six tips for a safe return to school:

1. Review your family emergency plan and check emergency kit supplies

Sit down with your children to talk about different kinds of emergencies and review your [family emergency plan](#). Talk about what to do and where you will meet if you are not together when an emergency takes place. Involve your children in preparing an emergency kit or checking your emergency supplies to make sure you have key items on hand and check expiry dates on batteries and food. Use [this list](#) as your guide.

2. Be aware of school emergency procedures

Make sure you read information from the school about their plan for emergencies, emergency procedures and alternate locations should an emergency take place. Also be sure to check that the school has current emergency contact information for your children, including work, mobile and home telephone numbers.

3. Watch for children walking, cycling and coming off school buses

Children are small and easily distracted, and for drivers, this can create dangerous situations on the roads. Be vigilant and alert behind the wheel, especially in school zones. You never know when a small child might step out from between parked cars or off a sidewalk. And parents, take time to remind your children about crossing the street safely, wearing a helmet while cycling, and staying safe on buses.

4. Review school bus safety

Make sure children don't arrive too early at the bus stop where they can wander or get distracted. Make sure children wait well away from the road and stay back until the school bus makes a full stop and the doors open. Explain that children must walk at least three metres (10 feet) away when crossing in front of the bus so the driver can see them. When driving your car near a school bus please note that extra caution is needed. On an undivided road, it is illegal to pass a school bus when the signal lights are flashing. Children are often crossing the road at that time. Drivers must proceed with caution once the signal lights have stopped flashing.

Children should follow the bus driver's instructions, and here are some general rules for when on the bus:

- Take your seat as quickly as possible and sit properly, facing forward at all times.
- Keep your head, arms and everything inside the bus. Don't throw anything out the windows or around in the bus.
- Talk quietly. The driver must concentrate to drive the bus safely.
- No fighting, shouting or playing in or around the bus.

5. Obey crossing guards

A crossing guard is there to keep children safe. If you come up to a set of lights while driving, and the light turns green, but the crossing guard still says stop, follow his/her direction and not the traffic light. There might be a child still crossing the street that you can't see.

6. Be allergy aware and pack safe school lunches

When packing lunches for your school-aged children, make sure you're being allergy aware. And if your kids pack their own lunches, help them be allergy aware, too. The main allergens to watch for -- because they're responsible for the majority of reactions in Canada -- are peanuts, tree nuts, sesame, soy, seafood, fish, wheat, eggs, milk and sulphites. Reactions range from mild skin irritations to loss of consciousness, and in the worst cases can be fatal. Check out Health Canada's [tips for packing safe lunches](#).

This tip has been brought to you by [Public Safety Canada](#). To learn more about how to become better prepared to face a range of emergencies, visit [GetPrepared.ca](#), or follow us on Twitter [@Get Prepared](#).