

Dear Chief:

With the return of school, what can be done to increase the safety of children when dropping them off or picking them up from our Elementary, Middle, and High Schools?

Dropping off and picking up children is a challenging task in every city and the problem is only compounded when street design is not ideal. Being safe in and around our schools requires a TEAM (Children, Parents, School Staff, and Others) EFFORT:

- First and foremost, don't assume your children understand traffic and its hazards. Take the time to teach and set a good example for them to follow.
- Teach children the meaning of traffic signs. Stop at all stop signs, red lights, and obey traffic signals.
- Teach children to cross in the crosswalks at the corner, not in the middle of the block and never between parked cars.
- Teach children to never cross an intersection diagonally.
- Teach children to look to see that drivers are aware of them. Making eye contact with a driver is a good way to know whether a driver is aware that someone is about to cross the road.
- Teach children to walk bicycles, skateboards, and scooters across the crosswalk.
- Teach children to look for turning vehicles before stepping off the curb, even if the pedestrian signal says walk.
- Teach children to stay off of their cell phones, keep ear buds and headphones out of their ears, and to pay attention to their surroundings until they are clearly in safe areas.
- When possible, provide children with bright colored clothing and/or backpacks that can be seen by others.

Parents, you shoulder the most responsibility in keeping your children safe. Here are some reminders specifically for you:

- Give yourself plenty of time to travel to and from our schools.
- Eliminate distractions; phones, radio, and pets.
- Watch for children and other traffic.
- Observe the posted speed limit and watch for school zones.
- Do not pass a stopped school bus when its lights are flashing.
- Do not pass other vehicles while in a school zone.
- All traffic must stop when red lights are flashing on a stopped school bus and should not proceed until the bus has turned off its flashing red lights.
- Drivers must yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian already crossing the street whether in a marked or unmarked crosswalk. A crosswalk legally exists across each leg of a marked OR unmarked intersection.

As teammates, the City of Alamosa is doing its part as we continually monitor and evaluate traffic design in our school areas for the specific purpose of increasing safety. Police officers are present and available in and around schools during drop off and pick up times, and we stay in close communication with our school system partners by making each other aware of problematic areas. By all of us taking ownership in child safety, we can keep our children safe.

Craig Dodd, Chief of Police