



# BROOME COUNTY TRAFFIC SAFETY BOARD NEWSLETTER

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## It's time for "Back to School Safety!"

August/September 2008

Slowly but surely the summer is winding down. It's time to start preparing our kids to go back to school safely. Don't be fooled though – we still have the rest of August to go. And that means our roads are still full of construction zones, families traveling to their vacation hot spots, motorcyclists as well as bikers and pedestrians. To get us through this next month, we need to practice planning, patience and watchfulness. Since construction zones and higher volumes of traffic slow us down, we should plan on giving ourselves plenty of time to get to where we are going. Delays and detours are inevitable in the summer months so expect it. Plan ahead. If you find yourself stuck in traffic for whatever reason, be patient. Frustrated and irritated drivers tend to become more aggressive and tailgate or speed. These driving behaviors will most likely land you in a fender bender or worse. It's better to be a little bit late than to cause a crash. Watchfulness is key when driving in the summertime. With warmer weather comes more kids playing in or near the road. It also brings about more people walking and cycling. As motorists, we need to be alert and watch carefully for other things in the road besides cars. Spring and summer are the most popular motorcycling seasons so drivers should expect to see more bikers on the road with them. Remember, motorcyclists, bicyclists and pedestrians all have a right to share the road with a car, so as motorists respect that. Everyone that shares the road should follow the appropriate rules of the road including obeying all traffic signals and signs. Bikers and cars should ride on the right hand side of the road while pedestrians ideally should be walking on the sidewalk or walking facing traffic on the left. Following these rules keeps everyone safe and things running smoothly.

As summer nears an end, we still have to practice safe driving behaviors. Motorcyclists, construction zones and traveling families will soon be replaced by school buses, kid bikers and kid pedestrians. Watch carefully for children who are waiting for buses on the sidewalks and for children who are near schools. If you are in a school zone, follow the posted speed limit. It is there for a reason. Children can be unpredictable and because of their height, drivers have a hard time seeing them. So go slow! Safety rules apply to everyone so teach your child to be safe too. Be sure to teach your child to stand well back from the curb when waiting for the bus and to make sure that they are visible to the bus driver when crossing in front – this means they should be able to see the bus driver's eyes. For children who may bike or walk to school be sure to teach them the rules of the road and to ALWAYS be extra cautious when crossing at intersections. Children should always look left, then right, then left again and behind them. And one last thing for drivers – be careful around school buses. An estimated 50,000 motor vehicles illegally pass school buses every day. If you aren't sure when it is safe to pass a school bus, check out our safety tips below:

### THE LAW SAYS:

- It is illegal to pass a stopped school bus when the large red lights located on top of the bus are flashing. Flashing lights mean the bus is picking up or discharging students.
- You must stop whether you are approaching the school bus from the front or overtaking it from the rear.
- You must always stop for flashing red lights, even on divided and multilane highways and on school grounds.
- The first-time fine for illegally passing a school bus is a \$250 fine, 5 points on your license, and/or possibly 30 days in jail.



**\*\*Worse yet, the memory of hitting or killing a child may be one you carry for the rest of your life!**

# Child Passenger Safety Awareness Week

## September 21-27, 2008

### **GROWING UP SAFE: It's a four-step process.**

As children grow, how they sit in your car, truck or SUV should change. Save your child from injury or death by observing all four steps recommended by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

# 1

**Rear-Facing Seats:** For the best possible protection keep infants in the back seat, in rear-facing child safety seats, as long as possible up to the height or weight limit of the particular seat. At a minimum, keep infants rear-facing until a minimum of age 1 **AND** at least 20 pounds.

# 2

**Forward-Facing Seats:** When children outgrow their rear-facing seats (at a minimum age 1 **AND** at least 20 pounds) they should ride in forward-facing child safety seats, in the back seat, until they reach the upper weight or height limit of the particular seat (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds).

# 3

**Booster Seats:** Once children outgrow their forward-facing seats (usually around age 4 and 40 pounds), they should ride in booster seats, in the back seat, until the vehicle seat belts fit properly. Seat belts fit properly when the lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall).

# 4

**Seat Belts:** When children outgrow their booster seats, (usually at age 8 or when they are 4'9" tall) they can use the adult seat belt in the back seat, if it fits properly (lap belt lays across the upper thighs and the shoulder belt fits across the chest).

**\*\*When you're an expectant mother, it's important to always wear your seat belt to protect you and your unborn child. Wear the lap belt across your hips and below your belly with the shoulder belt across your chest (between your breasts). \*\***



# Teens and Distracted Driving

Did you know that teen drivers have the highest crash risk of any age group? Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among American teens, accounting for more than 1/3 of all deaths of 16-to-18 year olds. There are many factors that help contribute to these high statistics. Teens are involved in more crashes because of their limited driving experience, immaturity and likelihood to speed or drive at night – just to name a few. But one of the major and less known factors is that teens are more likely to become easily distracted. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 80% of crashes and 60% of near crashes involve some form of driver inattention three seconds before the event. Locally, approximately 24% of the 3,123 crashes that occurred in Broome County in 2006 involved driver inattention and that percentage is expected to keep rising. Teens have enough to worry about when they are driving without throwing in intentional distractions.



Young drivers are just starting to get familiar with the road and most are still getting used to the mechanics and handling of a vehicle. All the supervised driving experience in the world sometimes can't prepare you for unexpected driving/road situation. However, we see young drivers (and old) everyday talking and texting on cell phones, falling asleep at the wheel, eating, drinking, smoking, reading, adjusting the radio, playing loud music, applying makeup and conversing with passengers while driving. These types of activities distract us visually (eyes off the road), cognitively (mind off the road) and manually (hands off the wheel). These are all skills we need to have in order to drive safely.

Distracted driving can have severe consequences and that is why the Broome County Traffic Safety Board is raising awareness with a new teen safe driving program called "Keeping it Real Behind the Wheel." This program was inspired by a local resident and Traffic Safety Board member named Joel Dunham. Joel's daughter, Megan was killed in 2001 in a tragic motor vehicle crash caused by driving inattention. "Keeping it Real Behind the Wheel" is a program that educates young drivers about distracted driving and how to avoid it as well as stresses the importance of safety belt use. Beyond facts and statistics, the program offers the real life story about Megan. Megan was just like any other teenager... a senior, fresh with her license and a car. Unfortunately, her life was cut short because of distracted driving. Teens and all drivers need to face the fact that crashes can happen to anyone at anytime. We all might think we are the best multi-taskers, but it's just not true.

"Keeping it Real Behind the Wheel" has already been presented at three high schools including two driver's education classes and is available to your high school, driver's education class, youth group etc... For more information about this free, educational program, please call (607) 778-2807.

# Broome County Traffic Safety Events

## **Saturday, August 9, 2008 – 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Megan Dunham Memorial Golf Tournament**

Registration – 12:30 p.m., Tee off – 1:00 p.m., Dinner – 6:00 p.m.

Located at Belden Hill Golf Course, Harpursville

Tickets: 18 holes, cart and dinner - \$56

Dinner only - \$15

## **Tuesday, August 19, 2008 – Child Safety Seat Fitting Station**

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Located at the Broome County Sheriff's Office

Please call (607) 778-2807 to make an appointment to have your child safety seat inspected.

## **Saturday, August 23 and Sunday, August, 24, 2008 – 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Chris Thater Memorial**

Located at Recreation Park, Binghamton

Presented by Broome County STOP DWI

## **Wednesday, August 27, 2008 – Broome County Traffic Safety Board Meeting**

4:00 p.m.

Located at the Broome County Health Department

## **Tuesday, September 16, 2008 – Child Safety Seat Fitting Station**

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Located at the Broome County Sheriff's Office

Please call (607) 778-2807 to make an appointment to have your child safety seat inspected.

## **Saturday, September 20, 2008 – Child Safety Seat Check Event**

10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

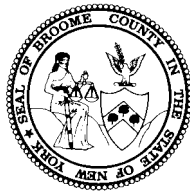
Located at Empower Federal Credit Union, 760 Harry L. Drive, Johnson City

Free child safety seat inspections by Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians

No appointment necessary!

## **Wednesday, September 24 – Friday, September 26, 2008 – 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Child Passenger Safety Technical Conference in Atlantic City, NJ**

Please visit [www.safeny.com](http://www.safeny.com) for more information.



**Barbara J. Fiala, Broome County Executive**

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