



# BROOME COUNTY TRAFFIC SAFETY BOARD

## NEWSLETTER *Feb/Mar 2012*

Broome County Health Department 225 Front St. / Binghamton, NY 13905

Christine Muss, Traffic Safety Coordinator

Telephone: 607-778-2807 / Fax: 607-778-3998 / Email: [CMuss@co.broome.ny.us](mailto:CMuss@co.broome.ny.us)

## Cold Weather and Child Passenger Safety

This time of year brings many challenges in the area of traffic safety. Not only do we need to be more conscientious drivers in inclement weather, but we also need to take a few more things into consideration when protecting our children in the vehicle. Heavy coats, snow suits and car seat bunting are all items we use to keep our little ones warm in the car but did you know it can actually increase a child's risk of injury in a crash? It may appear that your child is secure all bundled up in their car seat; however, these thick layers make it very difficult to achieve a snug harness fit. In a crash these heavy layers will end up compressing which will leave the harness loose on your child's body. Movement and even ejection can be a result of a loose harness. Car seat bunting also poses a problem because it is placed behind the child's body. Child safety seats are designed to have the child's back and bottom sit flat against the seat. Products like these that are added onto the car seat are considered non-regulated products and should be avoided since they are not crash-tested with the seat.

### Here are some tips and tricks for keeping your child warm AND safe:

- **Wear a jacket backwards.** The National CPS certification student manual suggests this technique for safe jacket use in a car seat. Take off the jacket at the car, and buckle in the child. After the chest clip is positioned and the harness pulled snug, put the jacket on the child backwards and tuck the edges behind the child's arms. This method lets the child remove the jacket if he or she gets too warm.
- **Zip around the straps.** Place the child in the car seat while he or she is wearing the jacket. Open the front of the jacket, pull it out of the way on both sides, and position and buckle the straps and chest clip. Once the harness is tight, zip or snap the jacket closed over the harness straps. It will be hard for the child to adjust the jacket, so pay attention to how warm he or she gets in the car.
- **Cover with a bathrobe or poncho.** A warm bathrobe, wearable blanket (a blanket with sleeves), or poncho can be used to safely cover a properly restrained child in a car seat. After the child is buckled in with the chest clip positioned and the harness pulled snug, cover the child up and tuck in the sides. Using this method lets the child move or remove the cover if he or she gets too warm.

### Some Dos and Don'ts

#### Do:

- Warm up the car before putting the child in, when possible.
- Dress the child in a reasonable amount of warm clothing (well-fitting and no thicker than polar fleece).
- Put a hat or hood, gloves, and socks on the child.
- Put a blanket, jacket, or poncho on the child over the harness straps after the straps are buckled and tightened.

#### Don't:

- Dress the child in snowsuits, buntings, or other bulky clothing.
- Put blankets, buntings, or other warm car seat liners/covers behind the child's back or head.
- Let the child wear thick, puffy jackets under the harness straps.
- Use heating pads or other heat sources between the child's body and the car seat.



# Be Healthy, Walk Safely



Walking is a healthy activity and a great alternative to driving but only when it is done safely. It only takes a few hours a week to experience the benefits of walking such as increased strength, endurance, flexibility and balance. For many people, walking is a routine part of everyday life and it may be easy to forget the safety aspects. When it comes to walking safely in or around a roadway, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reminds walkers to **See and Be Seen**. The best way to be seen particularly if you are walking at dusk or dawn is to wear light or bright clothing. If you are walking at night, be

sure to use a flashlight to make yourself more visible to drivers and to help light your path. Wearing reflective or retroreflective materials will give off light when headlights shine on them and can be seen by drivers three times farther than white clothing. Surprisingly walkers are especially at risk during the winter. The lower angle of the winter sun increases the shadows cast by buildings and trees. Decreased daylight, shadows and nightfall make it difficult to see walkers wearing dark or non-reflective clothing.

Some other safety tips for walkers include:

- **Wear sturdy shoes that will give you proper footing.** A running or walking shoe that supports your foot from side to side is best.
- **Use paths and sidewalks whenever available.** If you must walk on or near a road, remember to walk facing oncoming traffic, so that both you and the driver can see each other. If there's a smooth stable surface alongside the roadway, that's also a good place to walk – just stay as far to the side as possible and look for oncoming traffic.
- **Cars and other objects can obscure a driver's view.** Cars, buses, hedges, or mounds of snow can block a driver's view. Even if a driver has stopped to let you cross the street, don't blindly accept the driver's offer because there may be another vehicle in the next lane overtaking the stopped vehicle, who may not be able to see you because of the stopped vehicle.
- **Plan routes to avoid hazardous crossings.** The safest crossing points will have:
  - enough room for you to stand back from the roadway
  - crosswalks that are clearly defined on the pavement
  - crossing signals that indicate when you should cross

Wide avenues that require pedestrians to cross in phases should have an island where you can stand until the next "fresh green" (a fresh green is a newly changed green light on the traffic signal in front of you as you stand facing the direction you want to cross) or walk signal phase.

- **Stop and look for traffic in all directions before crossing the street, and look to the left, right and left again** – even on a one-way street. And always look left last because that is the direction that cars will be coming from when you first step off the curb.
- **Don't rely only on traffic signs and signals.** Assuming that a signal will stop traffic puts you at risk. You must look for traffic even if you are in a crosswalk and you are crossing with the light or with the walk signal. A driver who does not see or obey a sign or signal may also not be paying enough attention to see you.
- **Allow plenty of time to cross streets.** If you're not sure how long a signal gives you to cross, observe one light cycle so you'll know how much time you have. If the signal does not provide enough time, find another place to cross the street. Otherwise, cross the street when you get a "fresh green."
- **Intersections are especially difficult for older pedestrians.** You are most at risk when first stepping off the curb, because drivers may not see you until you're actually in the roadway. Always stop at the curb and look left, right, then left again for cars before entering the roadway. Don't assume the driver sees you unless they signal for you to cross.

# Safe Walking – Understanding Crosswalk Signals

To make learning crosswalk signals easier, let's compare them to the traffic lights we use when driving.



The steady DON'T WALK signal is like the red light, it means that you should stop at the curb and wait for the next WALK signal or green light.



The flashing DON'T WALK signal, like the yellow caution light, means that you shouldn't start to cross the street. However, if you are in the street when the signal begins flashing, don't stop or return to the curb. Continue to walk as fast as you can, comfortably, until you reach the other side or a pedestrian island.



The WALK signal, like the green light, does not mean that it is safe for you to start crossing without looking. It is best, even on a WALK signal, to check traffic for turning vehicles or oncoming cars. Before crossing at an intersection, you may want to wait for a "fresh green" light because it will give you the most crossing time. If there is a push button, press the button and wait for the WALK signal to come on.



Some areas are using a new WALK signal that counts down the seconds remaining for you to cross the intersection safely. When the seconds run out, a steady DON'T WALK light will come on because the traffic light is about to change.

## Don't Forget To:

- **Walk with a friend.** Walking with a friend will add to the pleasure of your walk and increase your safety as well, as long as you are watching out for each other. Enjoy your conversation, but don't let it distract you from watching out for road and traffic hazards as you walk.
- **Be especially careful in parking lots.** Parking lots create special hazards because cars may be turning quickly or backing out of a parking space. Be sure to look for backup lights and listen for engine noise.
- **Wait for a "fresh green" when crossing at signals.** Don't start to cross the street unless the traffic signal has just turned green. By waiting for a fresh green, you allow yourself the most time to cross the intersection safely.
- **And remember,** as adults age, gradual losses in their hearing, vision, reflexes, and flexibility put older pedestrians at risk. For instance, stiff joints may make it harder to turn your head, neck, and shoulders and you may not see vehicles that are turning or backing up. So, turn your whole body, not just your neck, when looking for traffic



## Broome County Traffic Safety Events

### Child Passenger Safety Programs

Broome County Fitting Stations provide **FREE** child safety seat inspections for families and caregivers as well as provide education and guidance on child passenger safety. We also provide **FREE** replacement child safety seats in the event a seat is expired, recalled or deemed unsafe.

#### Fitting Station:

February 21<sup>st</sup>, 2012            1 p.m. – 5 p.m.  
March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012            1 p.m. – 5 p.m.

#### Located at:

Broome County Sheriff's Office  
155 Lt. Van Winkle Drive, Binghamton, NY  
Upper garage area, look for large yellow sign

#### Please bring:

- Your vehicle
- Your child
- Your car seat
- Car seat manual
- Vehicle manual.



Appointments can range anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour depending on the number of car seats we are checking and the compatibility of your seats with your vehicle.

*Inspections are done on an appointment basis.*

**Please call Christine Muss at (607) 778-2807 to schedule an appointment.**

### Broome County Traffic Safety Board Meeting

Wednesday, February 15, 2012  
Broome County Health Department  
Conference Room A - 4 p.m.

## National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's National Child Passenger Safety Certification Training Course

This course is intended for those who wish to become a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician.

#### Course Details:

Broome County Sheriff's Office  
155 Lt. Van Winkle Drive, Binghamton  
April 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>  
8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.  
\$75 payable fee to Safe Kids Worldwide

To register for the course, go to [www.cpsboard.org](http://www.cpsboard.org), click on "Class Registration & CPS Certification," then "Find a Course," "New Signup," select Course ID **NY2012011050** and complete the registration process.

To become certified as a CPS Technician, Technician Candidates must register for this course online, pay the course fee and attend the **entire** course, which includes participating in class discussions and hands-on activities, passing all skills evaluations and open-book quizzes and attending the checkup event.

Upon successful completion of the course, new technicians will receive a two-year national certification through Safe Kids Worldwide.

For more information please contact  
**Christine Muss at the  
Broome County Health Department at  
(607) 778-2807.**

Sponsored by The New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee and the Broome County Health Department in partnership with the Broome County Sheriff's Office.



**Debra Preston, Broome County Executive**

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