



425 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street Waterloo, Iowa 50703 (319) 291-4359

## PRESS RELEASE

City of Waterloo  
Waterloo Fire Rescue  
Phone: 291-4459  
Contact: Doug Carter, Fire Chief

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### ***Waterloo Fire Rescue Advises Motorists to Drive Slowly in Residential Areas***

As warmer weather approaches, motorists need to be alert to the increasing number of pedestrians and bicyclists on and near the roads. Approximately 64,000 pedestrians are injured in motor vehicle crashes annually, and in 2005 a total of 4,881 pedestrians were killed. Groups that are at higher risk for injuries and death are children of the ages from 0-16 and adults ages 70 and older. In 2005, 69 percent of pedestrian deaths were males. (Highway Loss Data Institute Statistics)

Safety statistics show that pedestrian injuries remain the second leading cause of unintentional injury related deaths among children ages 5 to 14. SAFE KIDS Coalition reports that in the U.S. a child is killed in a pedestrian crash every 90 minutes.

In addition to pedestrian deaths and injuries, each year, more than 130 children die from bicycle-related injuries, and more than 280,000 are treated in emergency rooms. Of these, nearly half (47 percent) have traumatic brain injuries.

Children's size, cognitive ability, and undeveloped vision are some of the factors related to pedestrian and bicycle related injuries. Environmental factors such as speeding drivers can also create a risk. Surveys reveal that two-thirds of drivers speed in school zones. (National Survey of Speeding in School Zones, October 2000)-

Children are at an increased risk for pedestrian and bicycle related injuries for several reasons:

- Their smaller size makes them difficult for drivers to see, especially if they are standing between parked cars on the side of the road.
- Young children are often unable to judge distances and vehicle speeds accurately, so they can easily misjudge whether it is safe to cross a street.

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- Parents can overestimate their child's ability to cross the street or ride bikes in the road. Many elementary school-age children don't understand traffic signals or how to anticipate a driver's actions.
- Drivers and child pedestrians and bicyclists each assume (incorrectly) that the other will yield the right-of-way.

*Waterloo Fire Rescue asks motorists to slow down in residential areas and to be on the look out for children and pets. Consider the following:*

- Know what to expect from young children. Children under the age of ten lack good judgment and need help from an adult to guide them in making good decisions regarding their safety.
- Watch children when they are playing. They do not always think before they act. Many children are injured when they run out into the road to retrieve a toy such as a ball or Frisbee. Some children may run into the road after a pet such as a dog or cat.
- Children falsely believe that their bikes offer them some protection when they are on the road. They underestimate the power of a motor vehicle and because of their lack of experience and common sense they take risks on the road.
- Children are egocentric. They have a difficult time seeing outside of the box. They think that if they can see a car, then the driver must see them.

What can parents do?

- Parents should immerse their children in safety talks. Teach children pedestrian and bicycle safety, review it on a regular basis, and observe your child's outdoor play. Make each moment count. Teach the teachable moments.
- Teach children under the age of ten years old to never enter the street without a grown-up.
- Do not make older children responsible for watching younger siblings. An adult needs to be with a young child at all times.
- Always cross in a crosswalk or at an intersection. Do not cross between parked cars. Walk on sidewalks whenever possible. Be a role model for your children.
- Teach your children to only walk or ride across the street when you see the walk sign.
- Teaching your child to look both ways before crossing is *not* enough. Teach your child to wave to the driver and to make eye contact with him/her to make sure that the driver has seen them.
- When on the road, bicyclists should ride with traffic; pedestrians should walk against traffic.
- Insist that every family member wear a properly fitted bicycle helmet every time they ride their bike, especially small children in bike seats and bike trailers.

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