

CRIME WATCH—FALL QUARTER

Back to school is upon us! Children groan and parents smile!!! Soon the hot and languid dog days of summer will transform into autumn colors and the first hints (if we're lucky this year in Plano) of coolness in the air.

With each passing year, new legions of children march off to school. It's time for parents to review some safety and security tips with their children.

Back To School

- Work out a safe route to school with your parents. Chose the quickest way with the fewest street crossings and intersections with crossing guards. Stay away from parks, vacant lots, fields, and other places where there aren't many people around.
- Walk to and from school with a friend, neighbor, brother, or sister, don't go by yourself.
- Be sure you know your home phone number and address, the number of your parents at work and of another trusted adult, and how to use 911 for emergencies.
- Never talk to strangers or accept rides or gifts from strangers. Remember, a stranger is anyone you or your parents don't know well or don't trust.
- If you bike or skateboard to school, wear a helmet. And don't forget to lock up your bike wherever you leave it.
- If you're home alone after school, check in with a parent or neighbor as soon as you walk in the door.
- Let parents and friends know if you stay late after school. Get permission first if you want to play with a friend instead of going home.

If you see anyone doing something that makes you uneasy or you think isn't right--a stranger hanging around the school playground, a bigger kid bullying younger children, vandalism or graffiti for example--tell your parents, a teacher, or another trusted adult.

Bicycle Safety Tips

Did you know that about 75% of all bicycle related deaths result from head injuries? You can prevent most serious head injuries by getting in the helmet-wearing habit.

The helmet should have a label that says it meets "ANSI" or "Snell" or "ASTM" safety standards. The helmet should cover the forehead. Riding a bike of the wrong size make it easier for you to lose control and be injured.

- Both feet should touch the ground when you are sitting on the seat with your hands on the handlebar.

- When straddling the center bar, you should be able to keep both feet flat on the ground with about one-inch between your crotch and the bar.
- If the bike has hand brakes, make sure you can comfortably hold the brakes and apply enough pressure to stop the bike.

Some rules for the road.

- Look in all directions before entering or crossing the street.
- Wear bright colored clothes or helmet or attach a florescent-colored flag on a flexible pole to your bike.
- If you ride on the street ride in the same direction as traffic and stay on the right side of the street near the curb.
- Watch out for parked cars that may pull out into traffic or open their car doors.
- Use hand signals.
- Bicyclist must obey the same rules of the road as automobile drivers.
- Always lock you bike to prevent theft. Never just leave your bike on the front lawn when you go inside or away from the house.
- Keep a description of the bicycle, including the serial number.

"Home Alone Children" Tips

Teach Your "Home Alone" Children:

- To check in with you or a neighbor immediately after arriving home.
- How to call 9-1-1, or your area's emergency number, or call the operator.
- How to give directions to your home, in case of emergency.
- To never accept gifts or rides from people they don't know well.
- How to use the door and window locks, and the alarm system if you have one.
- To never let anyone into your home without asking your permission.
- To never let a caller at the door or on the phone know that they're alone. Teach them to say "Mom can't come to the phone (or door) right now."
- To carry a house key with them in a safe place (inside a shirt pocket or sock). Don't leave it under a mat or on a ledge outside the house.
- How to escape in case of fire.
- Not to go into an empty house or apartment if things don't look right -a broken window, ripped screen, or opened door.

Tips for Working Parents

- If your children are to be in charge of themselves at home, talk about activities they can do and the routines they are to follow. Discuss family policies on entertaining and visiting friends and what to do when the phone or doorbell rings.
- Have children—teens, too--check in with you at work or with a neighbor when they come home from school. Be sure they memorize your work phone number and give this number to a neighbor, too. Post it next to the phone, along with

numbers for a neighbor, police, and fire department. Let your kids know when you will be home.

- Check out baby-sitters and day care centers carefully. Ask for references and call them!
- Instruct children and baby-sitters not to give out any information about who is home, who is out, and for how long.
- Get together with your neighbors, PTA, Boys Club/Girls Club, and schools to provide after school activities as a alternative to leaving a child at home alone.
- Talk to your employer about employer-supported childcare options. These can range from an on-site day care center to summer day camps, information and referral services, and financial assistance.

Never Leave Children Alone In or Around Vehicles--“Not Even For a Minute”

Many caring and responsible parents have left their children alone in a car, not realizing the risks involved.

Some parents think it is okay to leave a child alone in a car while they run into a store, quickly drop off dry cleaning or while dropping off another child at school.

Results of leaving a child alone in or around a vehicle can be deadly!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Did you know?

- The temperature inside a car can reach deadly levels in minutes
- Children can set the vehicle in motion
- Drivers have difficulty seeing small children when backing up
- The child might leave the vehicle to go look for you
- Your child can be abducted

REMEMBER

- A car is not a toy
- A car is not a playground

AND

- A car is certainly not a babysitter.

Safety Tips:

- Children should never be left alone in a vehicle, not even to run a quick errand.
- Keep vehicles locked at all times; even in the garage or driveway.
- Teach your children to never play in or around a vehicle.
- Consider installing cross-view mirrors and/or a backup detector on your vehicle.
- Keys should never be left within reach of children.
- Always make sure that all passengers have left the car after it is parked.
- If a child is locked inside a car, get them out as quickly as possible. If they are very hot or seem sick, call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.
- When a child is missing, check vehicles and car trunks right away.

Rules for Getting On and Off the School Bus

Getting on the school bus

- When waiting for the bus, stay away from traffic and avoid roughhousing or other behavior that can lead to carelessness. Do not stray onto streets, alleys or private property.
- Line up away from the street or road as the school bus approaches.
- Wait until the bus has stopped and the door opens before stepping onto the roadway.
- Use the handrail when stepping onto the bus.

Behavior on the bus

- When on the bus, find a seat and sit down. Loud talking or other noise can distract the bus driver and is not allowed.
- Never put head, arms or hands out of the window.
- Keep aisles clear --books or bags are tripping hazards and can block the way in an emergency.
- Before you reach your stop, get ready to leave by getting your books and belongings together.
- At your stop, wait for the bus to stop completely before getting up from your seat. Then, walk to the front door and exit, using the handrail.

Getting off the school bus

- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk at least ten feet ahead of the bus along the side of the road, until you can turn around and see the driver.
- Make sure that the driver can see you.
- Wait for a signal from the driver before beginning to cross.
- When the driver signals, walk across the road, keeping an eye out for sudden traffic changes.
- Do not cross the centerline of the road until the driver has signaled that it is safe for you to begin walking.
- Stay away from the bus' rear wheels at all times.

For Your Teens: Cyberbullying

If you're like most teenagers, you spend a lot of time on a cell phone or instant messenger chatting with friends and uploading photos, videos, and music to websites.

You may have online friends whom you've never met in person, with whom you play games and exchange messages. Teens' lives exist in a variety of places such as school hallways, part-time jobs, and friends' houses. Now many teens also have lives on the Internet. And bullying has followed teens online.

Online bullying, called cyberbullying, happens when teens use the Internet, cell phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. Cyberbullying is a problem that affects almost half of all American teens.

Whether you've been a victim of cyberbullying, know someone who has been cyberbullied, or have even cyberbullied yourself, there are steps you and your friends can take to stop cyberbullying and stay cyber-safe.

How Are Teens Cyberbullied?

Being a victim of cyberbullying can be a common and painful experience. Some youth who cyberbully

- Pretend they are other people online to trick others
- Spread lies and rumors about victims
- Trick people into revealing personal information
- Send or forward mean text messages
- Post pictures of victims without their consent

When teens were asked why they think others cyberbully, 81 percent said that cyberbullies think it's funny. Other teens believe that youth who cyberbully

- Don't think it's a big deal
- Don't think about the consequences
- Are encouraged by friends
- Think everybody cyberbullies
- Think they won't get caught

How Do Victims React?

Contrary to what cyberbullies may believe, cyberbullying is a big deal, and can cause a variety of reactions in teens. Some teens have reacted in positive ways to try to prevent cyberbullying by

- Blocking communication with the cyberbully
- Deleting messages without reading them
- Talking to a friend about the bullying
- Reporting the problem to an Internet service provider or website moderator

Many youth experience a variety of emotions when they are cyberbullied. Youth who are cyberbullied report feeling angry, hurt, embarrassed, or scared. These emotions can cause victims to react in ways such as

- Seeking revenge on the bully
- Avoiding friends and activities
- Cyberbullying back

Some teens feel threatened because they may not know who is cyberbullying them. Although cyberbullies may think they are anonymous, they can be found. If you are cyberbullied or harassed and need help, save all communication with the cyberbully and talk to a parent, teacher, law enforcement officer, or other adult you trust.

How Can I Prevent Cyberbullying?

Teens have figured out ways to prevent cyberbullying. Follow in the footsteps of other quick-thinking teens and

- Refuse to pass along cyberbullying messages
- Tell friends to stop cyberbullying
- Block communication with cyberbullies
- Report cyberbullying to a trusted adult

You can also help prevent cyberbullying by

- Speaking with other students, as well as teachers and school administrators, to develop rules against cyberbullying
- Raising awareness of the cyberbullying problem in your community by holding an assembly and creating fliers to give to younger kids or parents
- Sharing NCPC's anti-cyberbullying message with friends

Don't forget that even though you can't see a cyberbully or the bully's victim, cyberbullying causes real problems. If you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online. Delete cyberbullying. Don't write it. Don't forward it.

What Else Can I Do To Stay Cyber-safe?

Remember that the Internet is accessed by millions of people all over the world, not just your friends and family. While many Internet users are friendly, some may want to hurt you. Below are some ways to stay cyber-safe:

- Never post or share your personal information online (this includes your full name, address, telephone number, school name, parents' names, credit card number, or Social Security number) or your friends' personal information.
- Never share your Internet passwords with anyone, except your parents.
- Never meet anyone face-to-face whom you only know online.
- Talk to your parents about what you do online.

For More Information

Check out the following resources to learn more about preventing cyberbullying:

- Cyberbullying.us provides cyberbullying research, stories, cases, downloads, fact sheets, tips and strategies, news headlines, a blog, and a number of other helpful resources on their comprehensive public service website.
- www.stopcyberbullying.org has a fun quiz to rate your online behavior, information about why some people cyberbully, and how to stop yourself from cyberbullying.
- www.wiredsafety.com provides information about what to do if you are cyberbullied.
- www.stopbullyingnow.com has information about what you can do to stop bullying.

Finally, let's review the basic year-round crime prevention attitudes:

- **Lock your car when you're not in it (both on the street and in your garage).**
- **Don't leave your automatic garage door opener in your car—take it with you.**
- **Don't leave your garage door open when you're not in the garage.**
- **Lock the door between your garage and your home.**
- **Lock your back gate.**
- **Be situationally aware wherever you are; home, school, supermarket, mall, etc.**
- **Report to the police in a timely manner (as soon as practicable) suspicious people in neighborhood—get full license plate numbers and accurate descriptions of the suspicious persons.**
- **Don't let your house convey the “not home” look—use lights on timers, make arrangements for mail and newspapers, etc.**
- **If a stranger knocks on your front door or rings the doorbell, don't open the door. Instead in a loud, forceful voice say, “Who is it? What do you want.” (The stranger will probably make some lame excuse and then walk away. If he/she hears nothing from inside the house, stand by. In 5 to 15 minutes someone will be in your back yard and trying to kick in your back door!)**

Let's back this year's back to school experience a safe and secure one for you and your children.

Please feel free to e-mail me if you have any questions or suggestions. May we together work to make Kimberlea an even better place to live and raise our families.

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