



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 27, 2004

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Randy Nehrt

Dave Druker

WHITE ISSUES WINTER WEATHER PRECAUTIONS FOR SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Wintry weather has introduced a new dimension to school bus safety and children and motorists alike need to take extra time to ensure the kids get to and from school safely.

Secretary of State Jesse White, Illinois' vehicular safety expert, says kids and parents need to prepare for school a little differently when the winds blow cold and the snow starts to fall.

"More than a million Illinois children ride school buses every day and most of them will encounter severe weather in the coming weeks," White said. "It only takes a few minutes for students and their parents to get ready for the students' winter rides on the bus so that the kids will be safe in the snow, the sleet and the cold."

Secretary White says common sense is the most important ingredient in preparing for winter school bus travel.

"It gets a little more difficult for the kids to get to the school bus five minutes before the bus arrives, so parents need to work with their children to make sure students aren't chasing after their bus."

Secretary White said these winter preparation rules should be studied and implemented to ensure school bus safety:

- It's important children dress for the weather. A child who is cold will be distracted and could easily forget the basic rules of school bus safety, such as maintaining a safe distance from the roadway while waiting for the bus.
- In rain or snow, a child is better equipped to stay warm and dry by wearing a rain coat instead of carrying an umbrella. Kids tend to forget that umbrellas can be dangerous. Help them avoid the temptation by leaving the umbrella at home. Umbrellas in the hands of small children are hard to manage and can easily become a distraction and cause them to forget the basic safety rules of student transportation.
- Make sure the kids are wearing waterproof footwear. A child who is more interested in jumping over a puddle to keep his feet dry can easily find himself in the path of a motor vehicle.
- Remind your child that good behavior on the bus is even more important during bad weather. The school bus driver's job is a hard one and the fewer the distractions, the safer the children.
- Have a plan. Parents need to talk with their children about problems that might develop in bad weather. For example, parents need to work on alternatives in the event their child misses a bus on either end of the trip.
- Tell your child never to exit the bus into a snow bank. If the bus stops and the child is unable to get out because the exit is blocked by snow, have your child tell the driver the path is not clear.
- Make sure children stay off snow banks piled near the street. While they are attractive nuisances, those snow banks can cause a child to fall into the roadway and in front of oncoming traffic.

"The safety of our young people should be our top priority each and every day," Secretary White said. "By taking just a few minutes to talk about winter traffic safety and the school bus, we all can do our part to keep kids safe while riding the school bus. School bus safety is everyone's responsibility and everyone in the community can help keep our young people strong and safe."

(Note To Editors: Secretary White will be available for interviews.)

###