

# Precious cargo back on the road

## Drivers reminded to follow posted speed limits in school zones as classes begin

With Manitoba students settling back into their school routines, the RCMP and Manitoba Public Insurance (MPI) are sending a reminder to all drivers to stay vigilant in watching for children and driving with caution.

As of Sept. 1, school-zone restrictions in Manitoba have taken effect. RCMP ask all drivers to slow down in these areas and remain alert when approaching school zones.

Along with reduced speeds, parents and motorists need to remember that children are sometimes unpredictable. Drivers are reminded to use extra precautions in and around schools including waiting for children to cross intersections and roadways completely before proceeding.

Whether it's pedestrian traffic or parents dropping off their children, school zones can be very busy. Slowing down can make everyone safer.

"Parents and guardians across Manitoba have reported seeing unsafe driving behaviours in school zones, including double parking, speeding and stopping in moving traffic. Not only are these behaviours dangerous, they also could come with stiff penalties," says Ewald Friesen, Manager, Government and Community Relations for CAA Manitoba.

The province introduced legislation in 2013 to give local authorities the power to create reduced speed zones for schools. As a result, many municipalities throughout Manitoba have taken the

opportunity to reduce speed limits in these areas.

Drivers throughout the North Eastman area are reminded to reduce their speeds to 30 km/hr while in designated areas.

MPI advised that over the last five years, more than 5,000 provincial offence notices for various infractions, ranging from speeding to use of a handheld electronic devices while driving, failure to stop at pedestrian crosswalks and other traffic control devices, have been issued to drivers.

The return of students also brings the return of the School Safety Patrol Program. First introduced in 1936, the program now has over 300 Manitoba schools, nearly 100 of those being rural schools. Approximately 12,000 young patrollers participate each year, committing to at least 200 hours per school term. That includes spending up to an hour on duty every school day, helping students travel to and from school in all kinds of weather.

The program instills responsibility, introduced

volunteerism and leadership, and is one of the most valuable tools on our streets to help kids get to school safely every day.

Drivers are also reminded to stop at least five metres behind a school bus when its lights are flashing. If the roadway is not divided by a median, vehicles in both directions must stop until the 'stop sign' is closed.

Buses in school zones and surrounding areas are common this time of year, and some drivers will be tempted to pass a stopped school bus when the vehi-

cle's arm is activated and lights are flashing.

"Passing a school bus is not only illegal, but it also puts young lives at risk and is grounds for potential conviction of the driver," says Friesen. "If convicted, a driver can face a hefty fine of \$674 and two demerit points."

Parents are encouraged to drop their children off in designated areas, away from traffic and to remind their children about road safety rules including crossing only at designated crossing or intersections.

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Drivers are reminded to use extra precautions in and around schools as students head back to class.

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