



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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Howard County police focus on safety in school zones

As students prepare to return to school next week, Howard County police are working to ensure that children, parents and teachers arrive safely. Through a continuing back-to-school program known as H.A.S.T.E. (Helping Arriving Students Through Enforcement), officers will focus on enforcing speed, seat belt and child safety seat laws in school zones.

Targeted patrols will be in place on roadways surrounding elementary, middle and high schools for the first two weeks of the school year. Officers will be working to identify drivers who are speeding in those areas. They will be checking for seat belt and child safety seat use to ensure that all occupants are properly restrained. A reference list of school zone locations is available at hcpd.org. Drivers should use extra caution in these areas throughout the school year.

Officers in covert vehicles will follow school buses looking for other drivers who fail to stop appropriately. The fine for failing to stop for a school bus's red flashing lights is \$570.

"We hope that police presence around the schools will send a message to drivers to slow down," said Police Chief Gary Gardner. "We want everyone to arrive safely, whether they are walking to school or riding in a school bus or car."

Police will continue to use two vans equipped with cameras as part of the county's speed camera program. Three additional portable camera units will be rotated among school zones throughout the county. The portable units are used on roads with speeding concerns, but where speed enforcement vans cannot be safely used. A list of roads scheduled for automated speed enforcement is posted in advance on our website.

In addition to their work on the road, officers will be inside the schools as well. Police are again conducting mandatory traffic safety seminars for students applying for school parking permits, who must attend with their parents. The police department will continue to conduct traffic safety education and enforcement efforts throughout the school year.

A popular education program, Collision Avoidance Training (CAT) will continue monthly through the end of the year. The CAT program is a defensive driving and vehicle control program for young drivers developed by the National Traffic Safety Academy. During the one-day course, adapted from law enforcement training, young drivers learn how to better handle their vehicles in various situations. Participants must be ages 16-20, possess a valid Maryland "Class C" driver's license (no learner's permit) and bring a vehicle to drive during the practical exercises. To sign up, contact program coordinator Jessica Beram at JBeram@howardcountymd.gov.

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