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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Keep schoolchildren safe

A new school year is about to begin. The Illinois Insurance Association, a state property casualty trade association, and its member companies encourage motorists to drive carefully in the coming weeks.

Crashes involving children are most common between go-to-school and get-back-home hours. Use extra caution when driving between 7 and 9 a.m. and 3 and 5 p.m.

Be alert to school buses. Children may need to cross the road when getting on or off the bus. Never pass a stopped school bus from either direction unless you are on the opposite side of a divided highway. Slow down in rural areas where higher speeds are often allowed.

Watch for walkers and bicycle riders. Children are unpredictable and may dart into the roadway from between parked vehicles. Reduce speed when children are nearby.

Keep an eye out for beginning motorists. Inexperienced drivers are vulnerable to making

mistakes behind the wheel.

Commit to avoiding distractions each time you slide into the driver's seat. Illinois law prohibits the use of cell phones in school zones, but motorists lose focus for many other reasons. Keep hands on the steering wheel, eyes on the roadway and concentrate only on the task at hand.

Other tips to avoid injuring children on their way to and from school: obey the speed limit - especially in designated school zones; follow crossing guard instructions; never block crosswalks; respect school drop off and pick up rules for students.

Protect Illinois children by making school traffic safety a priority.

- Kevin J. Martin,
 Executive Director, Illinois
 Insurance Association