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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Be aware

Young pedestrians, bicycle riders, and school buses will soon return to Illinois' streets and roads as another school year gets underway. Transportation-related accidents are always heartbreaking. The Illinois Insurance Association urges drivers to be vigilant in the weeks ahead.

Be ready to share the road with students on foot or bicycle. Approach crosswalks, school zones, and designated bus stops with extra caution between 7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. Yield to traffic guards. Never block an intersection crosswalk. Bicycle riders may not maintain proper lookout when preparing to turn. Pay attention and give them plenty of room.

Be ready to share the road with school buses. Slow down and allow extra following distance. Watch for flashing yellow or red lights. Traffic on an undivided highway must stop when school

bus lights are red, and the stop arm is extended. Remain stopped until children are no longer in the area.

Be ready to share the road with parents dropping off or picking up students. Follow school procedures if you are the designated driver. Maintain a single vehicle line, never double parking. Unload and pick up children on the school side of the street.

Avoid distractions that take eyes, hands, or thoughts off the task at hand. Children are unpredictable, and motorists must be ready to respond to an unexpected situation. Make a deliberate decision to drive with focus at the onset of every trip. Let's all do our part to make 2021 a crash-free school year!

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(Editor's note: The writer is executive director of the Illinois Insurance Association.)