

Start Seeing School Buses

OSF HealthCare Newsroom

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As an Indiana family prepares to bury their three children, the conversation about school bus safety and distracted driving is at the forefront.

A 9-year-old girl and her 6-year-old twin brothers were killed in late October after being struck as they crossed the street to board their school bus in Rochester, Indiana. A fourth child was struck and seriously injured.

The school bus was stopped with its lights flashing and stop arm lowered when a pickup truck struck the children. The pickup's 24-year-old driver was arrested and charged with three counts of reckless homicide and one count of passing a school bus when arm signal device is extended, causing bodily injury.

For children and their families, the tragedy is a reminder they need to always be vigilant at the bus stop.

Dr. Allen Neese, a pediatrician with years of experience offers some tips for parents, and drivers. "We're expecting the kids to provide their own safety. Stay off the street, and the country roads where there are no curbs that's even a little bit tougher. But stay away from the road, wait for the school bus to stop, for the arm to come out, and look. Make sure nobody's coming and then you can cross and get on the school bus. The driver's not gonna leave before you get on the bus."

While the Indiana case has to work its way through the legal system, Dr. Neese is troubled by what he sees as an increasing trend on the roads these days – distracted drivers. He urges everyone to slow down around areas known to have kids, and show some patience. He also reminds us that kids can be kids, and may not think of you, so drivers need to be alert for them.

"We have all kinds of signs that say 'see motorcycles' and that's important, it's important for drivers to see school buses and watch for the kids. I always expect the kids to do something foolish. If they're along the side of the road, if there's two or three of them – particularly if it's a couple boys they're going to be horsing around and somebody's going to get shoved. Even when the school bus is not there, if you see some kids along-side the road, just expect they'll do something ridiculous and keep your foot on the brake and take your time."

Dr. Neese encourages parents to have conversations with their children about the need to be extra careful along roadways or at the bus stop. He also recommends putting reflective straps on their backpacks or other visible areas of clothing as an extra alert to drivers.