Back-to-School basics: Ways to stay safe during school year

By the National Association of School Psychologists

Approximately 400,000 yellow school buses serve American elementary and high school students. In all, about 22.5 million school-age children ride yellow school buses to and from school. After school activities provide an estimated 5 million additional daily student rides. The American Public Transit Association also estimates that public transportation provides an additional 900 million student rides per year. This makes school transportation the single largest system of public transportation in the United States, resulting in over 94.2 billion total pupil-passenger miles per year.

Most of us can recall at least one incident in which a student was harmed from some avoidable mishap that occurred while riding or walking to the school bus. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, an average of 41 school-age children are killed in school bus-related traffic accidents each year. Numerous injuries also have occurred when riding, boarding or unloading from a school bus.

While many regard school bus transportation as one of the safest forms of transportation, accidents do happen. Children are typically not under the supervision of teachers or parents when riding the school bus. Such unstructured situations often lead to misbehavior and episodes of poor judgment on the part of some students. Disruptive behavior may distract the driver or may encourage a student to take unnecessary risks, such as waving an arm out a school bus window.

School bus drivers often report that they are overwhelmed by what they see as students' lack of respect and failure to follow school bus rules and regulations. Typically, a large school bus transports 54 students, a number of students far in excess of what a certified teacher would be permitted to supervise without assistance. Yet, school bus drivers are confronted with this task on a daily basis across the country.

Of students who have died in school bus-related incidents, almost two-thirds were killed by school buses, 6 percent by vehicles functioning as school buses and 30 percent by other vehicles involved in crashes with school buses. Five-and six-year-olds represented more than half of all school-aged pedestrians killed by school buses over the past 10 years. Of all school-aged children killed in school bus accidents, nearly half died enroute home from school. "Inattention" and "failure to yield" were factors most often reported by police for school bus drivers striking school-age pedestrians.

The federal government mandates seat belts in all small buses (under 10,000 lb.), and some states now mandate seat belts on the larger school busses as well. Ironically, studies dating back to 1969 have repeatedly concluded that compartmentalization provides better protection in accidents than two-point seat belts on school buses. To date, there have been no studies conducted on three-point seat belts and safety.

Prevention is the best solution to the issue of school bus safety. Children and their parents, as well as educators and community members, need to be aware of the risks involved with children and school buses. Motorists also need to obey all regulations regarding driving in the vicinity of school buses and their designated drop-off zones.

The following is a few simple school bus safety rules educators, parents and children should know:

On the way to the bus:

• Be alert, arrive at your stop at least five minutes early.

• Always obey all traffic lights and signals.

• Plan to walk with schoolmates whenever possible, facing the traffic.

• When crossing streets, always cross at crosswalks and intersections.

• Look both ways before crossing the street.

At the bus stop:

• Stand back from the curb.

• Don't push or shove when entering or exiting and always use the steps and hand rail.

• Always obey the bus driver and wait for the driver's signal before crossing.

• Always cross at least 10 feet in front of the school bus.

• Never, never crawl under the bus.

When riding the bus:

• Take your seat quietly and quickly, remain seated when the bus is moving and don't get out of your seat when the bus is moving.

• Keep your feet on the floor and never ever extend your hands, arms, head or any object out the window of a bus.

• Always talk in a quiet voice, be courteous to the driver and schoolmates and try not to distract the driver through misbehavior.

"Moneywise" seminars coming to Yokosuka

By CFAY Public Affairs

"Moneywise in the Military" financial experts, including Kelvin Boston, host of the PBS series "Moneywise" and author of "Who's afraid to be a Millionaire" will visit Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) Sept. 21-24 to discuss money management and other financial topics to help improve the financial literacy of the Navy community.

According to Boston, if Sailors set aside just a few dollars every month and made a few investments, they can become financially successful.

"Between the money that you accumulate in your Thrift Savings Plan and the equity from your condominium or home, when you leave the military, let's say that's 15 or 20 years from now, you can become a millionaire," said Boston.

In addition to Boston, financial planners Young America's Financial Coach Peter Bielagus, Better Business Bureau Military Line Director Holly Petraeus and Defense Credit Union Council President Arty Arteaga will be providing their expertise to help attendees learn techiques to become more financially stable and independent.

Military members from all branches of the service, reservists, Department of Defense civilians, family members and retirees are invited to attend the free seminars brought to you by Commander Naval Installations Command, Personal Financial Management Program and CFAY Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC).

Contact FFSC Financial Educator Theron Nolen at 243-3372/9910 or by e-mail to theron.nolen.ctr@fe.navy.mil for more information.

Financial expert Kelvin Boston, host of the PBS series "Moneywise" and author of "Who's Afraid to be a Millionaire" explains to Sailors the importance of saving money and getting out of – and avoiding – debt, during a seminar aboard *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) October 11, 2007. Financial experts including Boston will return to CFAY for a series of "Moneywise in the Military" seminars Sept. 21-24. Contact CFAY FFSC at 243-9910 for more information.

U.S. Navy file photo by MCSN Michael Calloway

The Chief says:

"Did you know the only umbrella authorized in uniform is a plain, solid black, collapsible umbrella?

It may be carried when weather conditions warrant, provided safety regulations or practices are not violated.

The umbrella should be carried in the left hand to permit saluting. The umbrella shall not be carried during military formations.

If you didn't know, now you know." - MCC(SW/AW) Eric Hannah, CFAY Public Affairs