

What You Need To Know About **CHILDREN AT PLAY**



**TRAFFIC ENGINEERING DIVISION
CITY OF LAWRENCE**

SAFETY FACTORS RELATING TO CHILDREN AT PLAY

The City of Lawrence receives requests to install signs warning drivers of the possible presence of children at play. Concerned citizens fail to realize that these signs are deceiving and ineffective.

Drivers already expect the presence of children in residential areas, especially at certain times, and studies show that devices attempting to warn motorists of normal conditions or conditions that are not always present fail to achieve the desired safety benefits.

FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

"WATCH FOR CHILDREN" signs also tend to create a false sense of security for parents and children who believe the signs provide an added degree of protection when motorists, particularly local ones, actually pay little attention to them. The use of "WATCH FOR CHILDREN" and similar signs such as "SLOW" has long been discouraged since these signs are a direct and open suggestion to small children that playing in or beside the



roadway is acceptable.

Parents also seem to believe such signs may help reduce speeds. There is no evidence that these signs prevent accidents or reduce the speed of vehicles. If problems with speeding exist, stricter enforcement should be sought from the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

CITY POLICY ON "WATCH FOR CHILDREN"

"WATCH FOR CHILDREN" and similar signs are not recognized by the State of Kansas or the Federal Highway Administration as official traffic control devices and, therefore, are not installed by the City of Lawrence on public streets.

LOWER SPEED LIMITS

Citizens frequently request 20 mph speed limit signs on residential streets where children are playing. The unposted speed limit on a residential street in the State of Kansas is automatically 30 mph and can be enforced. By state law, the city can post 20



mph speed limits within a residence district, however, they must be based on an engineering and traffic investigation.

ADDRESSING THE SAFETY OF YOUNG CHILDREN

Unnecessary signs confuse and annoy drivers and foster a disrespect for all signs, but signs in accordance with the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* can and should be posted for school zones and pedestrian crossings as well as playgrounds and other recreational areas where a need exists.

Most importantly, parents should teach children the dangers of playing in or near roadways and strongly discourage them from doing so.



LAWRENCE-DOUGLAS COUNTY
**Metropolitan
Planning
Office**

Citizen Concern

The City takes its role in solving traffic problems very seriously, yet the ultimate burden of safety rests with you, the citizen in Lawrence. Due to the number of citizen requests per year, we cannot always investigate your request as quickly as we would like to. However, we will respond after carefully evaluating your request. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

Become Involved!

If you are concerned about the quality of your child's walk-to school, or your neighborhood sidewalks, please visit www.lawrenceplanning.org, and click on Transportation. Under the Pedestrian Section, you can download an easy to use Neighborhood Sidewalk Survey. Your valuable input will help City Staff improve the quality of your neighborhood!

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, REQUESTS OR SUGGESTIONS CONCERNING TRAFFIC, PLEASE CALL THE TRAFFIC ENGINEERING DIVISION AT (785) 832-3034.