

Safety promotion is a win win for all

As schools across the nation have started their new academic year, apartment building and condominium complex managers can score points with residents and the greater community while protecting children by highlighting a few safety tips.

If your building offers a bus stop for students, you have a built-in gathering place for safety promotion. Consider decorating the area with a banner for the first few weeks to increase driver and resident awareness that school is in session and that extra caution behind the wheel is needed. It might also be a good idea for a property management employee to come meet the children and parents. That puts names with faces and gives all involved an increased level of comfort if later in the year anyone at the bus stop needs to get help from a building employee.

In some parking lots, posting a plastic "Slow Down" sign near bus stops can be helpful since there will be unattended children near moving traffic while they wait for the bus. Often, children will arrive before sun-up, so the extra caution notices can alert drivers who might otherwise be unaware of bus stops. Keep in mind that students these days frequently arrive at the bus stop tired and wearing earphones, both of which can contribute to careless behavior. Anything you can do to boost commuter awareness will be a plus.

Many apartment and condominium communities are also close enough to the school that children can walk. Residential complexes can play an important role in walker and biker safety. Clearly marked pedestrian crossings in and around your parking lots are helpful, and holding a community walker/biker safety walk/bike event could increase neighborhood awareness and education. Such an event could include a short safety briefing on walking and biking to school accompanied by a handout with emergency phone numbers and safety tips from a national organization, such as http://safety.lovetoknow.com/Back_to_School_Safety_Tips.

Some of our students are already driving themselves to school, so don't leave them and their families out of the back-to-school campaign. Teens are known for departing at the last minute and driving distracted. It's important to emphasize to them and their parents the need for attention at the wheel and safe speeds.

There are a few extras property managers can do to enhance the overall back-to-school experience. Those include providing a trash receptacle at bus stops to reduce litter from the inevitable Monster cans or breakfast bar wrappers, as well as having a plan of action for snow and ice removal at bus stops and on all walkways and driveways (Think it's too early to talk about snow? Nevada had its first storm in August!). It would also be wise to have someone assigned to maintaining the areas where students congregate in mornings and afternoons to minimize line-of-sight and trip-and-fall hazards. Staff should also be trained on how to handle behavior problems. Your local police and legal counsel should be consulted since these can be delicate issues.

Even a small back-to-school awareness campaign can yield substantial positive results, so invest a little time to promote safety at your apartment or condominium community and enjoy the benefits! When you partner with schools, police and parents, you enhance your reputation and the day-to-day lives of your residents. Initiate a program today!

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