

121 W. Broadway St.
Prosper, TX 75078



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Celso Martinez, 972-623-8836

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Police urge extra caution, alertness in school zones *New PISD school zones come online, some lack sidewalks*

PROSPER (August 17, 2010) The end of August marks both the beginning of school as well as the strict enforcement of school zone speed limits. Classes officially start on Monday, Aug. 23, and officers of the Prosper Police Department will be paying particular attention to these areas during the first weeks of the semester to heighten awareness of driver responsibility, according to Prosper Chief of Police Kirk McFarlin.

“This year, the building that previously served as Prosper High School and now houses Reynolds Middle School will be brought back into use, and to accommodate its students, school zones have been reestablished for Coleman St., 7th Street, 8th Street, and Church St. Drivers are responsible for obeying all speed and right-of-way laws; there will be no grace period for violators. So, watch for the signs,” warned the Chief.

While school safety zones exist to enhance the security and protection around the immediate vicinity of the school, drivers also need to be aware of children walking outside the posted zones as well. For example, students walking or riding bikes to Prosper High School and Reynolds Middle School will likely use Coleman St., which has long stretches where no sidewalks exist yet. Even though the speed limit increases outside the posted school zone, drivers should nevertheless be watching for students and slow down accordingly.

“Regardless of the reason, and I think I’ve heard them all, driving fast can never be explained away when someone is injured or killed. The Police department urges all drivers to plan their morning with sufficient time to drive safely to their destination while taking into consideration the school zones and increased traffic,” he said.

Additionally, House Bill 55, the law that prohibits the use of mobile communication devices within a school zone, became effective on Sept. 1, 2009. Despite the fact that there is a hands-free exemption in the law, research shows that even the hands-free use of these devices causes a significant distraction. “No conversation or message is worth the risk of injuring a child, so please refrain from using these devices while driving through the school zone,” advised the Chief.

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At the beginning of each school year, traffic congestion is inevitable, and even more so with new schools and new school zones in place.

“With so many people trying to get to the same destination in a short period of time, a funnel effect is created. There are just so many cars that can be in front of the school at one time. And, contrary to popular belief, officers directing traffic cannot control or accelerate the rate of cars dropping off students,” he said.

For that reason, drivers should practice patience and proper planning when approaching schools. Above all, drivers must exercise care and courtesy when behind the wheel.

“This is a perfect time to be role models for our children by planning the drop off and pick up to allow for the delays that will surely occur and by demonstrating patience as we drive. You can be sure they’re watching how we react,” he concluded.

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ABOUT THE TOWN OF PROSPER – The Town of Prosper is a fast-growing suburb with small town charm, located 30 miles north of Dallas at the crossroads of U.S. 380, Preston Road and the Dallas North Tollway in Collin and Denton Counties. Prosper sits on 27 square miles and is home to more than 9,000 people. A home-rule municipality, governed by a council-manager form of government, the town has full-time fire and police departments, including its own dispatch service. As the Town grows to its projected build-out population of 90,000 residents, Prosper’s vision is to remain a “Place Where Everyone Matters.”