

School is starting again so it's a good time for a reminder about safe driving. **During the school year the Police Department pays particular attention to the areas around school sites and we are more aggressive about enforcement than we typically are.** We will be very happy if we never have to write anyone a citation because that means no one was endangered by a careless act. However, that's a little unlikely so we are bringing some of the more common problems to your attention;

**Distracted driving** is at the top of the list, the most common example being **cell phone use while driving**. Talking on them is a distraction but as long as it is "hands free" and the driver is over 18 it's not a violation. Texting is a violation for everyone and carries a fine including penalty assessments and fees totaling about \$140. It doesn't result in a "point" on your driving record but you may be cited for the more serious violation of Unsafe Speed depending on the circumstances. Section 22350 of the California Vehicle Code (called "Unsafe Speed") is applied in circumstances where the driver is operating a motor vehicle at a speed unsafe for the surrounding conditions. If you're texting or even reading your email while driving, particularly where children are present, your safe speed is zero so you may be cited for this section. Fines range from \$360-\$500.

Another problem is **overtaking a school bus that is loading or unloading children**. If the bus is stopped and the red stop sign is displayed cars in **both directions** must stop and remain stopped until the sign is retracted by the bus driver. The only exception to this is on portions of the roadway where the lanes are divided like they are on Tiburon Boulevard west of Blackie's Pasture and some downtown portions between Main Street and Mar West. Cars on the opposite side of the divider do not have to stop but should be especially alert. Fines for this violation are in excess of \$690. We had a lot of complaints about this last year and will be focusing more attention on it this year.

Other problems we see are **parents blocking the driveways of residences** near schools when picking up or dropping off their kids. Up next are those who **double or even triple park** allowing children to enter the roadway between cars. **Jaywalking** is another issue and a bad habit to teach children. The common excuse for any of these behaviors is usually something about getting to school on time. We know that's important but we don't think anyone really believes it is more important than the safety of your child or someone else's.

Most of these problems can be addressed by leaving a little earlier or better yet by putting your child on a school bus. School buses are the safest way to get kids to school. The buses will be much more reliable this year thanks to the introduction of new technology and other improvements that have been made over the summer. The cost is half what it used to be and a real bargain when compared to the hassle of driving, particularly if it results in a traffic fine.

Tiburon Police Chief Mike Cronin & Belvedere Police Chief Trish Seyler