

City improving traffic safety around school zones

The City of Edmonton is using new technology and a parking enforcement campaign to make school zones safer.

The City recently set up video cameras to monitor traffic and road activity at Dr. Donald Massey School, which has one of the city's most problematic school zones. The two-month study showed that jaywalking, improper student drop off and illegal parking were the most prevalent traffic safety violations at the school.

"The study pinpointed several issues and opportunities to make the school zone safer," said Gerry Shimko, Executive Director of the Office of Traffic Safety. "This school serves as our prototype. Using this technology, and as part of our five-year Road Safety Strategy, we plan to review 108 schools."

Safety improvements include new lane and crosswalk markings, new rapid flashing beacons at the two main crosswalks and improved visibility of stop signs and school zone signs using retroreflective poles. Enhanced parking enforcement and education is also being implemented to help prevent unsafe behaviour.

"The first few weeks of school are extremely chaotic," said Councillor Dave Loken, co-chair of Edmonton City Council's Traffic Safety Initiative. "Illegal parking and drop-offs can block sightlines and cause obstructions, turning school zones into danger zones for children. School zone safety is a high priority for the City of Edmonton."

A new parking enforcement campaign began last week and will run until ticket numbers begin to decline. A dedicated team of parking enforcement officers will take a heavier-handed approach to enforcement during the campaign, especially in kindergarten to grade nine school zones. Illegally-parked cars could be ticketed and towed without warning and owners could face fines starting at \$50, plus any towing and impound fees. Parking enforcement officers will also be educating violators of the dangers of illegal parking.

"There are a lot of parents who do park responsibly," said Brendan Bolstad, parking enforcement program analyst with the City of Edmonton. "They take the time to find legal parking – even parking down the street and walking their kids to school. These parents get an A in our report card and ones we want to recognize. A quick decision to park in a no stopping zone, on a crosswalk or in a school or bus zone for example can have potentially terrible consequences for children trying to cross the street."

Parents are encouraged to park further away and walk small children to the door rather than trying to park in front of the school to drop them off.

For more information:

Visit edmonton.ca/schoolparking and edmonton.ca/trafficsafety.

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