



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
CITY OF CHICAGO

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**CONTACT:**

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

[press@cityofchicago.org](mailto:press@cityofchicago.org)

Melissa Stratton | OEMC

(312) 746-9454

**MAYOR EMANUEL, OEMC, CPS AND CHICAGO ARCHDIOCESE CELEBRATE CROSSING GUARD  
APPRECIATION MONTH IN CHICAGO**

*"Stay Alert, Don't Get Hurt" Campaign Promotes Student and Crossing Guard Safety Chicagoans Have  
Until March 31st to Nominate Crossing Guard of the Year*

In recognition of the significance of crossing guards in pedestrian safety, the Mayor's Office, together with the Office of Emergency Management and Communications (OEMC), Chicago Department of Transportation, the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Chicago Archdiocese launched the second year of the "Stay Alert, Don't Get Hurt" public awareness campaign aimed at keeping students and crossing guards safe under the City's Vision Zero Plan.

"I want to thank our dedicated crossing guards who work tirelessly in the rain, sun, and snow to make sure that thousands of Chicago's students arrive at school safely every day," said Mayor Emanuel. "This month, and year-round, Chicago recognizes and celebrates our crossing guards for being a crucial part of the city's team that provides the support our students need so they can remain focused on their studies and not their safety."

As part of the campaign, the City is asking schools and residents to acknowledge their crossing guards as vital members of the community throughout the month. Chicagoans can also nominate their choice for the Crossing Guard of the Year Award at [www.surveymonkey.com/r/2BNLSM7](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2BNLSM7). Nominations are due by March 31.

On February 14, 2018, Mayor Emanuel proclaimed February 14 to March 14 annual Crossing Guard Appreciation Month in Chicago, highlighting the important role crossing guards play in helping Chicago children back and forth to school safely.

"We are pleased to partner with our school communities on this campaign, which serves to remind motorists about safe driving behavior near schools, and to heed the direction of crossing guards as they cross children and community members during bell times," said OEMC Acting Executive Director Rich Guidice. "We also encourage students, schools and community residents to nominate their favorite crossing guards for the Crossing Guard the Year Award."

Nationally, approximately 12 percent of students walk or bike to school. Crossing guards help students develop safe pedestrian and bicycling habits, such as looking both ways before crossing roads, navigating intersections and using crosswalks.

“Crossing guards are friendly faces and positive role models that provide peace of mind to the whole school community – principals and teachers, parents and children – every day,” said CPS Chief Safety and Security Officer Jadine Chou. “During Crossing Guard Appreciation Month, and all year long, we urge drivers to slow down and respect the crossing guards when they enter school zones.”

Under the campaign, the City issued the following safety reminders for motorists:

- **Check crosswalks when turning.**
  - Don’t just look for oncoming traffic– check for people walking
- **Stop for people in crosswalks.**
  - State law: Drivers MUST STOP for people walking at crosswalks not just intersections with traffic lights or stop signs.
- **Slow down.**
  - School zones have lower speed limits – Keep to 20MPH in around schools.
  - Allow enough time for pick-up and drop-off. When you’re running late, you’re running a risk. Rushing is dangerous.
- **Just drive.**
  - Texting and talking on a cell phone while driving slows reaction time. Additionally, beginning July 1, 2019, drivers caught texting behind the wheel will be issued a moving violation that will go on their driving record.
- **Never maneuver around stopped traffic in a school zone.**
  - Double parking around school zones decreases safety for everyone. Check with your school about pick-up and drop-off policies.
- **Be aware of crossing guards and obey their directions.**
  - Crossing guards wear brightly colored and highly reflective clothing while on duty so that they are visible in traffic and during inclement weather.
  - Crossing guards use hand-held stop signs while walking out in the street to alert drivers that children and pedestrians of all ages are crossing.
- **Drive according to conditions.**
  - Overall visibility is limited in bad weather conditions. Not only is it more difficult for drivers to see oncoming pedestrians, it also is harder for pedestrians to see you.
  - Make sure your lights are on and you use your signals properly. Use extra caution in these circumstances.

Approximately 450 pedestrians ages 8 to 14 are injured in incidents involving a vehicle every year in Illinois. Under the Vision Zero Chicago City is working to eliminate injuries and traffic fatalities by 2026.

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