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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 3, 2026

TRENTON – As students head back to school, the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOL) is launching a new campaign to better protect crossing guards with a clear message to Garden State drivers: **“School’s Back, Slow Down in the Zone — Get Kids & Guards Safely Home.”**

NJDOL’s [Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health](#) (PEOSH) program is spearheading the department’s latest public awareness effort as part of its ongoing commitment to improve safety for crossing guards and New Jersey’s school communities by increasing driver awareness.

The campaign comes at a critical time. During the last three years, three school crossing guards were killed and nine were injured while protecting children in cities and towns across New Jersey.

“Our crossing guards are heroes who stand between our children and danger every single school day,” **said Acting Labor Commissioner Kevin D. Jarvis.** “After the devastating loss of several members of our crossing guard community, we doubled down on our commitment to urge every driver to do their part; lives depend on it. Slow down in the zone — get our guards and kids safely home.”

NJDOL’s PEOSH plays a crucial role in setting and enforcing safety standards for New Jersey public employees to promote safer work environments across the state.

This campaign supports Governor Sherill’s broader commitment to children’s safety and the [Target Zero Commission’s](#) goal to eliminate all traffic deaths and serious injuries in New Jersey by 2040.

Multi-Channel Campaign Reaches Drivers Throughout New Jersey

Eye-catching billboards featuring the campaign’s message are strategically placed in high-traffic locations during the month of September, ensuring maximum visibility during morning and evening commutes.

Motorists can see the reminders for safe driving during the back-to-school season on the following New Jersey roadways:

- Route 440 Outerbridge Crossing, where New Jersey connects to Staten Island
- Route 1 South at Promenade Boulevard in South Brunswick
- Route 15 North, south of I-80 in Wharton
- Route 4 W, west of Route 17 in Paramus
- Route 46, west of New Road in Parsippany

The campaign features a robust digital presence with prominent placement on the NJDOL website homepage, including graphics, messaging, and direct links to safety resources. A coordinated social media strategy across all department channels — including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn — will deliver targeted messages to all New Jersey motorists to keep Garden state crossing guards, children, families, and communities safe.

Critical Safety Reminders for All Drivers

As schools reopen, NJDOL urges all motorists to commit to these essential practices in school zones to protect crossing guards and the community:

- Slow down immediately — Reduced speed limits are strictly enforced and save lives

- Put phones away — No call or text is worth a child's life
- Stop completely for crossing guards — Their signals carry the same legal authority as traffic lights
- Watch for children at all times — Kids can dart into crosswalks without warning
- Never pass a stopped school bus — It's illegal, dangerous, and deadly
- Eliminate all distractions — Eating, adjusting the radio, or programming GPS takes your eyes off the road
- Observe the Move Over Law — Make room for emergency vehicles, school buses, and crossing guards
- Be patient — Leave early rather than rushing through school zones
- Watch for pedestrian and bicycle traffic — More students walk and bike to school in early fall

This campaign builds on NJDOL's ongoing year-round initiatives to protect crossing guards that include enhanced inspection programs and awareness campaigns.

The department's focus intensified following tragic incidents that resulted in two fatalities and five serious injuries among New Jersey crossing guards in 2025. Earlier this year in May, an 80-year-old crossing guard was killed, and two students were injured when they were struck by an SUV in a marked crosswalk in Woodland Park.

From 1993 through May 2026, 19 New Jersey crossing guards lost their lives after being hit by drivers who either ignored or were oblivious to their directions to stop, with more than 390 other crossing guards injured on the job as a result of motor vehicle accidents during the same period, according to data from the state Department of Health and recent reporting by [NJ.com](#).

In direct response to these tragedies, NJDOL launched a comprehensive statewide safety initiative through PEOSH that reached 5,327 crossing guards across 490 municipalities — marking a significant milestone in the state's efforts to protect the dedicated public employees who keep children safe.

"Every worker deserves to come home safe and sound at the end of the day," **said Acting Commissioner Jarvis**. "We have an obligation to do all we can to try to prevent these tragedies. It starts with every driver staying focused when they are behind the wheel, especially around our neighborhood schools."

Through its crossing guard Local Emphasis Program (LEP), PEOSH conducted 198 inspections affecting 1,508 crossing guards statewide to ensure they were equipped with:

- High-visibility gear meeting ANSI 107/207 standards, including weather-appropriate attire
- Reflective STOP paddles for clear communication in all light conditions
- Comprehensive training, including classroom and field instruction
- Safe, well-maintained crosswalks free from slip, trip, and fall hazards

The inspections resulted in 79 hazard awareness letters, 13 personal protective equipment citations, and eight training violations — ensuring municipalities were held accountable for crossing guard safety.

These efforts also addressed troubling statewide traffic trends including a 14 percent increase in traffic deaths during 2024, marking a 30-year high for pedestrian fatalities. In 2023, New Jersey reported 688 traffic-related deaths.

In April, PEOSH spearheaded its [first public awareness billboard campaign](#) during National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, featuring billboards in high-traffic corridors and raising awareness about New Jersey's "[Move Over Law](#)."

Back to School, Back to Work for Many Teens

As students settle into the school year, many teenagers will seek after-school jobs. NJDOL reminds families that most young workers in New Jersey need working papers before starting employment. To apply for working papers or learn more, visit: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/youngworkers/>.

For minors in the entertainment industry or parents/guardians seeking a theatrical permit for a minor, visit [My Work Rights | Minors in Theatrical Production](#) to learn about the new process and apply.

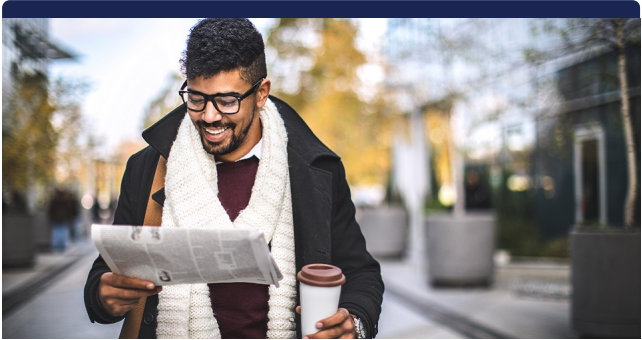
Parents Can Use Earned Sick Leave for School Meetings

New Jersey's Earned Sick Leave law allows parents to use earned sick leave to attend parent-teacher conferences, back-to-school nights, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and other school-related activities.

For more information on Earned Sick Leave, visit: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/myworkrights/leave-benefits/sick-leave/>.

Additional NJDOL crossing guard resources can be found at: www.nj.gov/labor/safetyandhealth.
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