

RM News & Notes

PERSONAL SAFETY TIPS

What you can do . . .

CHILDREN AND THE DRIVEWAY

- If children play in your driveway, park your car at the end of the driveway close to the street.
- Teach children not to play in, under, or around vehicles — ever.
- Show your children how hard it is to see out the back of your car. Let them see you disappear into the blind spot.
- Just before backing up your vehicle, walk behind it to make sure your path is clear.
- Be sure children are not so close as to be able to dart behind you.
- Look in your mirrors before you put the car in reverse to monitor the rear area.
- Look around while backing up, using all mirrors and looking over both shoulders.
- Back up slowly.
- If you're driving an SUV or truck, remember that the blind spot behind your vehicle can be especially large: use extreme care whenever you back up.
- If you have a backup aid, pay attention to its audible or visual warnings but don't rely solely on the aid.

Finally, talk with neighborhood parents about back over incidents and ask them to teach their children not to play in or around any vehicle or driveway. By working together to promote awareness and protective home and neighborhood environments, we can help to keep all our children safe.

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Web Page

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Message from the Risk Manager

The information presented in this month's "Safety Officer's Corner" comes from William Hickmon, Juvenile Court Probation Officer. Unfortunately, we can only include a small portion of the information on gangs that William presented; however, if anyone wants a copy of the handouts from this meeting, Risk Management will be glad to send them to you. Additionally, your departmental safety officer should have more information from this meeting and can make that available.

After his presentation, I asked Officer Hickmon what a parent could do if they suspected their child was involved in a gang. His first suggestion was to go ahead and call him or one of the other Juvenile Court officers. They are a tremendous resource and can offer invaluable assistance and advice even before law enforcement and the courts are involved.

If gang involvement is a problem, it won't get better if you ignore it. You must deal with the situation but, you don't have to do it alone. Use all available resources including the knowledgeable employees in Juvenile Court.

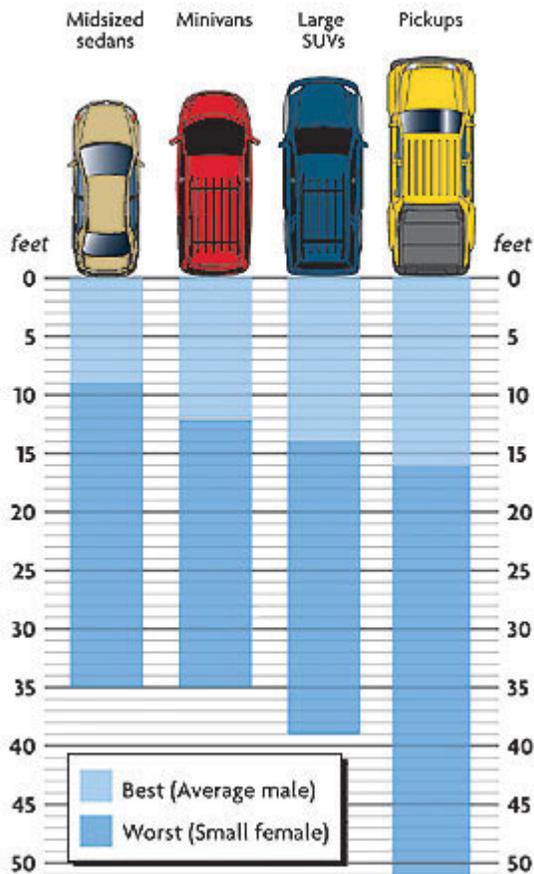
Darlene

All Vehicles Have Blind Spots

In the case of a back over incident, the blind spot is the place behind your vehicle that you cannot see in the rear or side view mirrors — or even by craning your neck out the driver's side window. Generally speaking, the larger the vehicle, the larger the blind spot.

Blind spots for shorter drivers tend to be significantly larger as well. In addition, the elevation of the driver's seat, the shape of a vehicle's windows and mirrors, and the slope of a driveway can affect the size of the blind spot behind a vehicle.

This chart shows the length of the blind zone of each listed vehicle. The distance noted is how far behind the vehicle a 28-inch traffic cone had to be before the person, sitting in the driver's seat, could see its top by looking through the rear window.



Avoiding Backing Collisions

Plan ahead:

- Park in areas that are easier to get out of: Parking spaces angled at less than 90 degrees tend to be safer
- For 90 degree angled parking spaces: Can you pull through or back into the space to make exiting easier?
- Choose a less congested area to park

Ready to exit:

- As you approach your vehicle, walk all the way around it. You'll see anything that is on the side or rear that is low and "out of sight" from the driver's seat
- Check side and rearview mirrors and turn your head to look behind your vehicle, making sure the way is clear
- Back slowly and carefully: don't forget to keep a check on the front of your vehicle to avoid hitting other vehicles parked beside you
- Visibility partially or completely blocked by other parked vehicles or obstructions
 - Sound horn to alert others that you are backing
 - Look for shadows or reflections in other parked vehicles to indicate an approaching car
 - Have a passenger from your vehicle or a responsible pedestrian assist you by guiding you back but always be aware that the driver is responsible for driving safely – even if someone else is guiding you.
- Unsure of clearance: put your vehicle in park, engage the emergency brake, get out of your vehicle and go look.
- Never assume that pedestrians or approaching drivers see you backing and will courteously stop and allow you to complete your exit: be prepared to stop and possibly pull back into the parking space if necessary



Policy Highlight

Combined Policy Handbook / Health and Safety Section

Policy Number 508.1 / Vehicle Safety / Page 5 of 13

11) Drivers must be particularly alert while driving near children. Children must be kept from playing in or around Columbia County owned vehicles. While working areas such as schools, parks, playgrounds, swimming pools or community centers drivers will be especially watchful for children and will drive carefully and slowly at all times.

Discussion points regarding this Policy:

Let's face it, children are busy being children. They are laughing, playing and generally not paying you any attention as you come through the area. That is why you must always make the extra effort to watch out for them. Even if the evidence indicated you were not at fault, can you imagine anything much worse than hitting a child with your vehicle?

Then there are those inquisitive kids who think your boring, routine job is totally interesting and exciting and they can't wait to get a close up look. They love those flashing lights and moving equipment. While it may be flattering and tempting to allow them to hang around and perhaps even "show off" or demonstrate some of your equipment for them, your job site is no place for children. Ask them to move back from the area or leave. Enlist the assistance of parents, teachers or other adults to keep them away from the work area and out of harm's way. Even if they comply and leave the area; always watch for those that might "sneak" back to see what is going on. Now they not only are in the work area, but they are hiding because they know they aren't supposed to be there. If you don't check, their hiding place might be directly in your blind spot. Make the extra effort to walk around your vehicles and equipment before starting up or moving to make certain no one is there.

Safety Officer Corner

Gangs: A street gang is a structured, cohesive group of individuals, usually between the ages of eleven and twenty-five, who generally operate under some form of leadership while claiming a territory or turf. Gang members wear distinctive clothing, use special street names and symbols, and commit organized and spontaneous criminal acts within the community.

Some gang identifiers:

- Gang slang used in everyday conversation
- Excessive amounts of clothes in two color combinations, such as blue and black or gold and black
- Wearing gold or silver pendants and rings with the shapes of dollar signs, automatic guns, crowns, etc.
- Too much secrecy, or your child refusing to tell you where they are going or with whom
- Your son or daughter not wanting you to meet their "new friends"
- Your son or daughter having large amounts of unexplained cash
- Gang graffiti written on books, clothing, or even inside the brim of a baseball cap
- A sudden drop in school performance

There are gangs in Columbia County. Some parents either through ignorance or denial find out their son or daughter is in a gang when they get a phone call from a police department, hospital or morgue. A child getting into a gang is not an overnight decision. Parents should look, listen and turn their awareness up a notch. Look at what your child is wearing, who he or she is associating with and whether there is an overall change in attitude towards you or life in general. Listen to what your child says and especially to what others say. Many parents turn a deaf ear or bristle when they hear from neighbors, other parents, and school personnel that their child may be in a gang. Your child may present him or herself one way in your presence, and have a totally *hidden gang life* outside the home. Ignorance is no excuse. Look for the signs and then address the issue. Solicit help from others, and then take control. It can be done.

Up Coming Events

Each program is advertised by Risk Management and is available to employees of Columbia County Board of Commissioners and the city employees of Grovetown and Harlem. Additionally, the Defensive Driving Courses may be attended by immediate family members of employees, on a space available basis, for a nominal fee.

Pre-registration is required.

For additional information or to register contact Risk Management. 706-312-7475

Safety Review Board October 8, 2009

Defensive Driving October 27, 2009
Course – 8 hour November 17, 2009
December 11, 2009

Defensive Driving October 6, 2009
Course – 4 hour

CPR/AED/First Aid November 3, 2009
(Child/Infant)

County Offices Closed: November 11, 2009
November 26-27, 2009
December 24-25, 2009



**Remember our
Veterans**



Happy Thanksgiving

OCTOBER 2009

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DECEMBER 2009

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**Happy Halloween
October 31, 2009**

