Back to School—School Bus Safety—
As the first school bell rings, Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) officials are urging motorists to be ready to stop for school buses and be watchful for children exiting school buses and crossing streets. Last year in Minnesota, there were 615 bus crashes that resulted in one death (no children) and 214 injuries (of which 75 were student bus occupants). In the last five years, crashes involving school buses resulted in 21 traffic deaths of which four were school bus student occupants and three were children who were outside a bus and hit by other vehicles. In Minnesota, school buses make at least 10,000 school bus trips daily. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, children are eight times safer riding in a bus to school than any other vehicle.

DPS reminds motorists to anticipate children, especially in a school bus “danger zone” — the area around a bus where children are at greatest risk. Parents should also discuss and demonstrate pedestrian safety with their children and reinforce safe crossing after exiting a bus.

In Minnesota, motorists must stop for red flashing lights and when stop arms are extended — both when driving behind a bus and when coming toward a bus on undivided roads.

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Officer Laddie Bata Awarded Commendation—
On August 13th, Officer Laddie Bata initiated an investigation relating to a sexually suggestive note found in the yard at a residence in the northeast portion of the city. With little information to follow-up on to identify the author or to even legitimize the note, Officer Bata followed-up with a telephone number written on the note. His communication efforts proved successful in contacting a subject and obtaining his description, but he was unable to track the number back to identify the suspect. Instead of giving up, Bata conducted a surveillance operation near the home where the note was located and attempted contact again. As Bata was attempting contact, he observed a male juvenile riding a bike near the surveillance location. As Bata was sending a message, the juvenile stopped and appeared to be reading a text message he just received; Bata believed he was reading the text message he just sent. Bata approached the juvenile who later admitted he was the author of the note. The juvenile was arrested and is awaiting formal charges. Bata was awarded a Class “E” Commendation by Chief Keith Hiller for the innovated work he did on this case from start to finish. A Class “E” Commendation is awarded to department members for exceptional performance under circumstances not traditionally considered to be a standard component of the member’s job description.

Crossing the Center Line Leads to Drug Arrest—
During the early morning hours on Thursday, an Owatonna officer stopped a vehicle for crossing the center line and rolling through a stop sign near the intersection of Bixby Road and East School Street. When the officer met with the driver, he noticed the driver was showing signs of intoxication—he had red, bloodshot eyes and smelled of alcohol. After failing roadside sobriety tests, the driver was placed under arrest for suspicion of drunk driving. Subsequent to the arrest, an assisting officer was searching the driver’s vehicle and located a small plastic bag that contained a white powdery substance which tested presumptively as cocaine. Christopher L. Cameron, age 25, was transported to the Steele County Detention Center for further DWI testing which he later refused. Cameron was formally charged in District Court with 5th Degree Possession of a Controlled Substance, 3rd Degree DWI-Refusal to Test, and 4th Degree DWI. Interestingly, Cameron was arrested the following evening for violating the condition of his release when he was found inside the “Just One More” bar.