

Citizen Concern

The City takes our role in solving transportation problems very seriously, yet the ultimate burden of safety rests with you, the citizen in Newport News. Since we receive hundreds of citizen requests per year, we cannot always investigate your request as quickly as we would like to.

However, we will respond after carefully evaluating your request. We appreciate your patience and understanding.

Other Traffic Information Brochures Available:

- The Residential Traffic Calming Program
- Roundabouts – A Users Guide
- Neighborhood Traffic Safety
- Parking Practices, Helpful Hints and Avoiding Penalties

If you have questions, requests or suggestions concerning traffic, Please call the Department of Engineering at 926-8611

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The City of Newport News
Department of Engineering
2400 Washington Avenue
Newport News, VA 23607

Children at Play

A Citizen Information Brochure

What You Need To Know About Safety Factors Relating to Children at Play



City of Newport News
Department of Engineering
(757) 926-8611

The City of Newport News often receives requests to install signs warning drivers of the possible presence of children at play. Concerned citizens fail to realize that these signs are deceiving and ineffective.

Drivers already expect the presence of children in residential areas, especially at certain times, and studies show that devices attempting to warn motorists of normal conditions or conditions that are not always present fail to achieve the desired safety benefits.

False Sense of Security

"Children at Play" signs also tend to create a false sense of security for parents and children who believe the signs provide an added degree of protection when motorists, particularly local ones, actually pay little attention to them. The use of Children at Play and similar signs such as "Slow" or "Slow - Entering Residential Area" has long been discouraged since these signs are a direct and open suggestion to small children that playing in or beside the roadway is acceptable. Parents also seem to believe such signs may help reduce speeds. There is no evidence that these signs prevent accidents or reduce the speed of vehicles. If problems with speeding exist, stricter enforcement should be sought from the appropriate law enforcement authorities.

City Code

Current City Code, Section 38-13, prohibits playing on any through street. **"Sec. 38-13. Playing on through streets – No Person Shall play on a through street in the City."**

"I have seen these signs in other places" - City Policy on "Children At Play" Signs

You will see these types of signs within the City, however they are placed in private communities in which the community not the City owns the street. As of July 1997 the state has allowed there use in the Counties on residential streets. However, Children at Play and similar signs are not recognized by the Federal Highway Administration as official traffic control devices and, therefore, are not installed by the City on public streets.

Lower Speed Limits

Citizens frequently request 10 mph speed limit signs on residential streets where children are playing. The speed limit, unless otherwise posted, on a residential street is automatically 25 mph and can be enforced. The City cannot post 10 mph speed limits because the posting of such signs by a local government agency is considered a speed trap and therefore makes enforcement of such limits illegal.

Prohibiting Trucks in Residential Areas

To help make residential streets safer for children to play on, citizens also frequently request signs that say:

"THROUGH TRUCKS PROHIBITED"

Whenever such signs are installed, not all vehicles classified as a truck are prohibited from using these posted streets.

Exemptions to posted streets include: emergency vehicles; vehicles used in transporting passengers such as buses; vehicles used in conjunction with building construction or delivery; vehicles used for local pickup or delivery; vehicles used by local businesses to gain access to and from the business. It requires an Engineering study on a street and high visibility enforcement to make such signs effective. Therefore the City posts such signs only on streets where there is a documented large volume of heavy traffic that does not have a legitimate reason to use such streets.

Addressing the Safety of Young Children

Unnecessary signs confuse and annoy drivers and foster a disrespect for all signs, but signs in accordance with the Federal Traffic Manual can and should be posted for school zones and pedestrian crossings as well as playgrounds and other recreational areas where a need exists.

Most importantly, parents should teach children the dangers of playing in or near roadways and strongly discourage them from doing so. The City provides neighborhood parks where children can play safely when properly supervised. Safe playgrounds are also provided at many elementary school sites.