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NEWS RELEASE

Date: 08/21/09

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NR #:09-168

School Begins August 24th – Drive Carefully

The new school year begins Monday, August 24, 2009, and the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office reminds all motorists to use extra caution and obey speed limits, particularly in school zones.

Many students walk or ride bicycles to school or the bus stop, and this may be new to some children, or they may be unfamiliar with a new neighborhood. Drivers should always be vigilant and never allow distractions to take their eyes off the road.

Motorists must stop for all school buses when the stop sign is out and lights are flashing, even if the bus is on the opposite side of the street, unless a median more than four feet wide divides the road.

Deputies will strictly enforce all traffic laws near schools - giving citations that carry greater fines than regular speeding fines. Current fines in school zones are:

1-9 miles over the posted limit	\$139
10-14 miles over the posted limit	\$289
15-19 miles over the posted limit	\$364
20-29 miles over the posted limit	\$414
30+ miles over the posted limit	Mandatory Court Appearance
Failure to stop for a school bus	\$189
Passing a school bus on the exit side	Mandatory Court Appearance

It is also important to note that these fines will increase on September 1, 2009.