



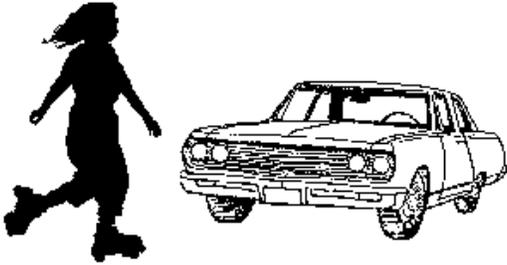
City of El Centro Public Works Department

# CHILDREN AT PLAY

### SAFETY FACTORS RELATING TO CHILDREN AT PLAY

The City of El Centro 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, this should be brought to the attention of the City of El Centro’s Police Department who is responsible for vehicle code enforcement in the City.

### CITY POLICY ON CHILDREN AT PLAY SIGNS

Children and Play and similar signs are not recognized by the State of California or 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 on a residential street (whether posted or not) is 25 mph. If the City posted such residential streets at 10 miles per hour, it is likely that the courts would consider that a “speed trap”, and in accordance state law, any citations issued may be invalid.

## PROHIBITING TRUCKS IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

To help make residential streets safer for children to play on, citizens also frequently requests signs that say: **“Commercial Vehicles Over 2 Axles Prohibited”**.

Whenever such signs are installed, not all vehicles over 2 axles are prohibited from using these posted streets. Exemptions to posted axle restrictions include:

- ◇ Emergency Vehicles
- ◇ Vehicles used in transporting passengers such as buses
- ◇ Vehicles used in conjunction with building construction or delivery
- ◇ Vehicles used by local businesses to gain access to and from the business



It requires a City Council resolution to establish axle restrictions 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 disrespect for all signs, but signs in accordance with the State of California’s Department of Transportation regulations 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 vehicles used for local pick-up and delivery; playing in or near roadways and strongly discourage them from doing so.

The City provides neighborhood parks where children can play safely with proper supervision. Safe playgrounds are also provided at many elementary school sites.

## CITIZEN CONCERN

The City takes its role in solving traffic problems very seriously, yet the ultimate burden of safety rests with you, the citizens of El Centro.

Since we receive many 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.

## REQUESTS AND INQUIRES

If you have any questions, requests or suggestions concerning crosswalks or traffic in general, please call the Engineering Division of the Public Works Department at **(760) 337-5182** or submit your request via the Online Request for City Service Form.