CHILDREN AT PLAY

SAFETY FACTORS RELATING TO CHILDREN AT PLAY

The City of Rio Rancho 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 Department of Public Safety (DPS) who is responsible for vehicle code enforcement within the city limits.

CITY POLICY ON CHILDREN AT PLAY SIGNS

"**Children at Play**" and similar signs are not recognized by the State of New Mexico 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 with 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 request signs that say:

"COMMERCIAL VEHICLES OVER 5 TONS PROHIBITED"

Whenever such signs are installed, not all vehicles over 5 tons 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 for local pick-up or delivery; and
- ✓ Vehicles used by local businesses to gain access to and from the business.

It requires a Governing Body ordinance to establish weight 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 roadways and 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 current Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) 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.

Neighborhood parks are provided throughout the City 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 citizen in Rio Rancho. Since we receive numerous 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.

REQUESTS AND INQUIRIES

If you have questions, requests or suggestions concerning traffic please call the Department of Public Works Engineering Division at: **(505) 896-8770** or through the "Citizen Concern" link at: www.ci.rio-rancho.nm.us .

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City of Vision

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