

# COVID-19 AND INTERNATIONAL WALK TO SCHOOL DAY

For Release

*October 5, 2020*

The onset of COVID-19 has impacted many aspects of our lives including the school system. Students nationwide began the school year accessing resources and studies online. Like so many organizations, the Prince William County Public School System developed a creative way in which to celebrate this year's Walk to School Day activity.

The official Walk to School Day is Wednesday, October 7<sup>th</sup>. However, this year's event will be celebrated during the month of October. As in the past, parents, and students, will walk to their local elementary schools; firefighters and teachers will greet the walkers and provide handouts for kids to enjoy while learning about fire safety and prevention topics. For a list of Prince William County schools participating in this year's Walk to School event, visit <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/registration/whoswalking.php>.

Events celebrating Walk to School Day raise awareness of the need to create safer routes for walking and bicycling and emphasize the importance of issues such as increasing physical activity among children, pedestrian safety, traffic congestion and concern for the environment.

Fire and Rescue Chief Tim Keen, of the Prince William County Fire & Rescue System states, "We thank our partner, Prince William County Public Schools for the support and commitment to the safety and health of our students in Prince William County. To continue that commitment, while maintaining the connections we've built with families, schools and the broader community, the fire and rescue system realizes the importance of highlighting safe routes to and from school throughout the year. During COVID-19, be reassured that fire and rescue members will take every precaution in keeping the community safe as we celebrate Walk to School Day activities.

## **About International Walk to School Day**

- Walk to School Day was established in the United States in 1997 by the Partnership for a Walkable America. Canada and Great Britain already had walk to school programs in place. In 2000, these three countries joined together to create International Walk to School Day.
- In May 2006, the National Center for Safe Routes to School was established to assist communities in enabling and encouraging children to safely walk and bike to school.
- The National Center for Safe Routes to School serves as the national coordinating agency for Walk to School activities in the United States.
- Walk to School Day began as a simple idea – children and parents, school and local officials walking to school together on a designated day. It is an energizing event, reminding everyone of the simple joy of walking to school, the health benefits of regular daily activity, and the need for safe places to walk and bike. Schools focus on health, safety, physical activity, and concern for the environment.
- Organizations supporting International Walk to School Day, in the United States, include America Walks, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Highway Administration, the Institute of Transportation

Engineers, the National Center for Bicycling and Walking, the National Center for Safe Routes to School, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Safe Kids Worldwide, and the Safe Routes to School National Partnership.