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A few recent reports of suspicious activity near schools have parents asking what they can do to keep their children safe. The Midland Police Department offers some suggestions.

First, some important facts:

- Abductors are rarely strangers; they could be a family friend, neighbor, school official, friend's parent, or family member.
- Abductors generally appear friendly, like to appeal to a child's self-esteem, and address the child by name, if they know it.
- Common tactics for approaching children can include:
 - Asking a child for directions;
 - Asking them for help finding a pet or another child;
 - Asking for help carrying something into a building or vehicle;
 - Offering a child gifts or money; and
 - Saying that a parent sent them to pick up the child.

Talk to your child about who they can and cannot trust:

- Children should ask themselves if they know the person, and if their parents know and approve of the person.
- Kids should be cautious of those who pay extra attention to them, want something from them, or ask them to keep secrets.
- Children should trust their instincts – if they feel uncomfortable around someone, they should run away from them.
- Kids should tell their parents if someone made them feel uncomfortable or looked out of place.

Give your child instructions on what to do if approached:

- Tell children it's okay to say no to an adult.
- If a child feels threatened, he or she should run and yell, "I do not know this person."
- Pick a predetermined safe spot to which your child can run.
- The child should call 911 on a cell or other available phone.

Other helpful tips for parents:

- Do not leave children unattended. Make sure there are adults present when children travel or play outdoors, especially at night.
- Never put your child's name on the outside of his or her clothing or personal items such as backpacks.
- Know your child's friends and their parents.
- Check your child's route to and from school. Make sure they don't take shortcuts.
- Be involved in your child's activities.
- Inform your child's school who is authorized to pick up your child.
- Purchase a DNA kit from the Midland Police Department. More accurate than traditional fingerprinting, DNA kits allow parents to keep a sample of their child's DNA for identification purposes if a child comes up missing.

Make sure to have recent, high-quality color photos of your child.

Call 989-631-5716 for more information.