



## DRAFT MEDIA RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MR# 2018049**

**DATE: 20 June 2018**

**RE: Heads up! Helmets On! Amherst police encouraging use of helmets**

**AMHERST, Nova Scotia – Heads up!**

Amherst police officers are on the lookout this summer for young cyclists, skateboarders, in-line skaters and scooter drivers who have their helmets on.

If they pull you over, you will be given a coupon for a free ice-cream treat from either McDonald's or Dairy Queen.

“Our objective is to reward children who are serving as good examples for their peers by wearing their helmet properly, which includes it being buckled up,” said Const. Tom Wood, the co-ordinator of the local police department's annual Heads Up! Helmets On! program.

The program runs from now until Sept. 8.

Using helmets while skateboarding, cycling or in-line skating can reduce the chance of brain injury by up to 85 per cent, Wood, citing a Government of Nova Scotia Health and Wellness report on injury prevention, said.

The report also notes a single brain injury can cost taxpayers \$6 million to \$8 million, and leaves long-term, life-changing effects on individuals, their families and communities.

Other studies indicate more than 500 Canadian children are hospitalized with head injuries each



**Constables Michelle Harrison, Tom Wood and other Amherst police officers will be handing out coupons for an ice-cream treat this summer when they spot young cyclists, skateboarders, in-line skaters and scooter drivers wearing their helmets properly. (Town of Amherst photo)**



year as a result of bike crashes alone.

The Nova Scotia Motor Vehicle Act has required the use of helmets while cycling, skateboarding or in-line skating since Jan. 12, 2007. The act says helmets are mandatory when participating in those activities, whether they're carried out on public or private lands and roads, playgrounds or skate parks.

Town officials have become particularly concerned about the lack of helmet use at the Amherst Lions Club Skate Park, which is located next to the Amherst Stadium. As a result, the park will be monitored a little more closely than it has been.

If stadium staff sees someone using the facility without a helmet, they will ask them to put one on. Should the person refuse, police will be called.

Officers will also be randomly dropping by the skate park to check the site out as well.

Users of the skate park need not go helmetless, said Corey Crocker, the town's facility manager, said.

"Any time the stadium is open, we have helmets that we can loan out," Crocker said.

If an officer discovers someone without a helmet riding a bike, skateboarding or in-line skating, they will take action, whether they are at the skate park or anywhere else in town.

If the child is under 12 years old, the child will be told their parents will be contacted. They will also be offered a ride home, or to another appropriate location should they indicate there is no one home. When the officer speaks with the parents, the parents will be informed that their child was not wearing a helmet. Officers will also urge the parent to encourage their child to wear one.

If the child is between 12 and 15 years old, the skateboard, bicycle, scooter or in-line skates will be seized. The child will be driven home or to another appropriate location should they indicate there is no one home. They will be offered an opportunity to prevent any further enforcement action by attending a Heads Up! Helmets On! information session that is designed to teach participants the risks associated with not wearing a helmet and encourages them to comply with helmet safety laws.

Police will also contact their parents and make them aware of what has occurred and of the option for their child to attend the information session. This will be followed up with a formal letter.

If the person is 16 years old or older, they will be treated the same as those between the ages of 12 and 15, but the youth won't be offered a ride home and the parents will not be contacted.

The information sessions are held in partnership with the Cumberland Restorative Justice Society, which handles registration for the sessions. The society can be contacted at 902-667-



4414. The youth session, for those 15 and younger, will be held on Sept. 14 at 6 p.m. in the community room in the police station, which is located at 21 Havelock St.

The adult sessions will be held on the same date and location, but will begin at 8 p.m.

Those who choose not to accept the letter or fail to attend the session may be issued a summary offence ticket for failing to wear a helmet. The fine for a first offence is \$151.25.

Seized items will be held for a minimum of five days, but it could be longer. The items will be returned on Thursdays between noon and 4 p.m. The owner of the equipment is responsible for making arrangements with Const. Wood ahead of time to arrange the pickup. He can be contacted at 902-667-7227.

“We really hope that we give out many more coupons for ice cream than we do tickets and letters,” Wood said.

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