

Schools: Police raises red flag on fire safety

By Simon Masaba

Police have issued comprehensive school safety and security guidelines as learners return for the first term, warning that faulty electrical wiring, fire safety gaps, unsafe infrastructure and poor road safety practices pose serious risks to children.

Police warned against negligence on the side of school proprietors, saying they risk criminal liability and legal action.

Addressing the media at Police Headquarters in Naguru, Kampala, on Monday, Police spokesperson Rusoke Kituuma said inspection of schools during third term revealed persistent safety lapses in many learning institutions, exposing learners to preventable dangers.

"Faulty and exposed wiring remains one of our biggest concerns. Children come into contact with live wires, and in some cases, we have registered fatalities," Kituuma said.

He warned that schools with poor electrical installations would be held accountable, stressing that children are naturally playful and often unaware of such danger.

"If a child gets electrocuted because wiring was left exposed, that school will not go away with it. There are legal consequences beyond the reputational damage," he said.

Kituuma also raised concerns over uncovered manholes, broken structures and poorly maintained buildings within school premises. "If a child falls into an uncovered manhole, you will certainly be held responsible. We have seen cases where such negligence escalates into police

investigations and court cases," he said.

FIRE SAFETY GAPS

Fire preparedness was identified as another major risk, particularly in schools with large numbers of learners. "You are a school of more than 3,000 students, what is your capacity to fight a fire? Do you have fire extinguishers? Are they functional? Do teachers and staff know how to use them?" he asked.

According to Kituuma, police have responded to incidents where schools called for fire brigade trucks over small fires that could have been extinguished immediately using basic equipment, describing this as a sign of poor preparedness and weak internal safety systems.

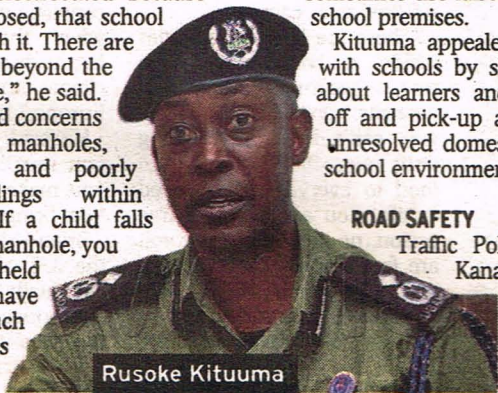
He advised schools to inspect students' luggage to prevent the entry of prohibited and dangerous items such as sharp tools, alcohol and illicit drugs. "Some learners carry dangerous items into school. If schools do not inspect luggage, these items end up threatening the safety of other students."

Police also urged schools to properly identify and record all visitors, warning that intruders sometimes use false identities to gain entry into school premises.

Kituuma appealed to parents to co-operate with schools by sharing medical information about learners and agreeing on clear drop-off and pick-up arrangements, warning that unresolved domestic disputes often spill into school environments and create security risks.

ROAD SAFETY

Traffic Police spokesperson Michael Kananura warned of heightened road safety risks, citing increased traffic volumes and a spike in traffic violations around schools.



Rusoke Kituuma