

# SCHOOL BUS SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a child's greatest risk is not in riding a school bus, but in getting to the bus and entering and leaving it. Below are some safety steps to teach children how to be safe in and around school buses.



Have your children put everything they have to carry in a **backpack or school bag** so they won't drop things along the way.



If it is raining, have your children wear **raincoats** that are colored something **other than yellow** so they won't blend in with the school bus.



Make sure your children **leave home on time** so they can walk to the bus stop and arrive before the bus is due. Running can be dangerous.



Go to the bus stop with a young child and have older children **walk in groups**. There is safety in numbers because groups are easier for bus drivers to see.



Make sure your children stand **at least 10 feet** (five giant steps) from the road while waiting for the school bus. Have younger children practice taking five giant steps to become familiar with 10 feet.



Warn your children that, if they drop something near the bus, they should *never* pick it up. Instead, they should **tell the driver** and follow the driver's instructions.



Teach your children to **secure loose** drawstrings, scarves, loose fitting or baggy clothing, and other **objects** that could get caught in the handrail or the door of the school bus as they are exiting.



## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY TIPS FOR KIDS



Arrive at the bus stop about **5 minutes before the bus** is scheduled to arrive.



While at the bus stop, **wait quietly** in a safe place well away from the road. Do not run and play while waiting for the bus.



Always cross the street in **front of the bus**. Never go behind the bus.



Respect the **"Danger Zone"** surrounding the bus. The "Danger Zone" is the 10-foot wide area on all sides of the bus.



Always remain **10 feet (five giant steps)** away from the school bus to be out of the "Danger Zone" and where the driver can see you.



When entering the bus, **go directly to a seat**. Remain seated and facing forward for the entire ride.



Keep the **aisles clear** at all times. Feet should be directly in front of you, on the floor, and book bags should be kept on your lap.



Never play with the emergency exits. If there is an **emergency**, listen to the driver and follow instructions.



Always make sure that drawstrings and other **loose objects are secure** before getting off the bus so they do not get caught on the handrail or the door.



If you leave something on the bus, **never return to the bus** to get it. The driver may not see you come back and may begin moving the bus.



If you drop something near the bus, do not pick it up. Instead, **tell the bus driver** and follow the driver's instructions.

## **SCHOOL BUS SAFETY TIPS FOR BUS DRIVERS**



Turn your yellow lights on 150-300 feet before every stop. These lights tell waiting children and other motorists that you intend to stop.



Always stop the bus as close to the right side of the road as possible to prevent cars from sneaking by on the right. If children must cross the street to get to the bus, stop 10 feet before the spot where the children have to cross.



After stopping, crack the door to activate the flashing red lights and to release the stop signal arm. Open the door fully when cars from both directions have stopped.



If children must cross the street to the bus, signal when it is safe for them to do so. Make sure each child crosses at least 10 feet in front of the bus and stays out of the danger zones.



Signal when it is safe for children to board the bus. If children were standing closer than 6 feet to the side of the bus as it pulled up, remind them to stay out of the danger zone while waiting for the bus to stop.



Before you leave the bus stop, take one last look for stragglers.



On the bus route home, activate the yellow flashing lights from 150-300 feet prior to each bus stop. Be alert for drawstrings and other loose items as each child exits the bus.



Any child that must cross the street should wait for you to signal that it is safe. Never permit a child to cross the street behind the bus.



Remind children that if they drop something near the bus, they are to tell you and to follow your directions.



## WINTER SCHOOL BUS SAFETY TIPS



- ◆ Leave some **extra time** in the morning to get to your bus on time.
- ◆ Wear **bright clothing** so the bus driver can see you in the early morning and late evening.
- ◆ Wear **raincoats** that are colored something **other than yellow** so you will not blend in with the school bus.
- ◆ **Stand away** from where the bus stops. Buses need extra room to stop when there is snow and ice.
- ◆ **Do not slide** on the snow or ice patches in driveways or on the street. You could slide under the wheel of the bus and get hurt.
- ◆ **Do not push or shove** around the bus. Someone could fall down on the ice and get hurt.

*Information provided by the Institute for Transportation Research and Education, North Carolina State University, 2000.*



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# “What’s Your Hurry?”

Center for the Advancement of Public Health • George Mason University • North PE Module (MS 1F5) • Fairfax, VA 22030-4444 • (703) 993-3697

The following facts about drivers and school bus safety in the Commonwealth of Virginia to help to substantiate the need for the “What’s Your Hurry?” program. Conducted by the Center for the Advancement of Public Health (CAPH) located at George Mason University, “What’s Your Hurry?” provides information to schools, parents and the community at large on the dangers of speeding when school buses are present as well as general school bus safety issues.

## **Virginia Drivers and Roads:**

In the Commonwealth of Virginia, there are:

- More than 4,884,271 licensed drivers
- Approximately 5.4 million registered vehicles
- 70,491,000,000 estimated vehicle miles traveled a year

## **Virginia School Buses and the Law:**

During 1995 (the most recent year for which complete statistics are available):

- No school bus occupants were killed
- 367 school bus occupants were injured
- 538 school bus crashes occurred
  - 3 fatal crashes
  - 203 personal injuries
  - 332 property damages

## **National Level:**

- Since 1977, 2,508 people have died in school bus-related crashes.
  - 56% were occupants of other vehicles
- During the last 10 years, 300 school-age pedestrians (under the age of 19) have died in school bus-related crashes.
  - 64% killed by school buses
  - 30% killed by vehicle involved in the crash
- Half of the school-aged pedestrians killed by school buses in the past 10 years were 5 and 6 year olds.
- On average, 21 school-aged pedestrians are killed by school buses each year.

# “What’s Your Hurry?”

## KIDS, THE SCHOOL BUS & YOU

For twenty-three million students nationwide, the school day begins and ends with a trip on a school bus. The greatest risk is not in riding the bus, but with approaching or leaving the bus. To help children’s safety, it is essential that adults and children know traffic safety rules.

### Drivers:

- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch out for children walking or bicycling to school.
- When driving in neighborhoods with school zones, watch out for young people who may be thinking about getting to school, but may not be thinking about getting there safely.
- Slow down. Watch for children walking in the street, especially if there are no sidewalks in the neighborhood.
- Slow down. Watch for children playing and congregating near bus stops.
- Be alert. Children arriving late for the bus may dart into the street without looking for traffic.
- Learn and obey the school bus laws in the state. Learn the “flashing signal light system” that school bus drivers use to alert motorists of pending actions:
  - *Yellow Flashing Lights* indicate that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles.
  - *Red Light and Extended Stop Arms* indicate that the bus has stopped, and that children are getting on or off. Motorists must stop their cars and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended arm is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before they start driving again.

### Children:

- Get to the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. When the bus approaches, stand at least three giant steps (6 feet) away from the curb, and line up away from the street.
- Wait until the bus stops, the door opens, and the driver says that it’s okay before stepping onto the bus.
- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk on the sidewalk or along the side of the road to a point at least five giant steps (10 feet) ahead of the bus before you cross.
- Be sure that the bus driver can see you, and you can see the bus driver.

- Use the handrails to avoid falls.
- When exiting the bus, be careful that clothing with drawstrings and book bags with straps don't get caught in the handrails or doors.
- Never walk behind the bus.
- Walk at least three giant steps away from the side of the bus.
- If you drop something near the bus, tell the bus driver. Never try to pick it up because the driver may not be able to see you.

**Parents:**

- Teach children to follow these common sense practices to make school bus transportation safer.

Information provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, every year approximately

**440,000 school buses**

travel approximately

**4.3 billion miles**

to transport

**23.5 million children**

to and from school and school-related activities.

Between 1988 and 1998, there were

**416,000 fatal traffic**

**crashes**

in the United States. Of those, only

**1,265 were school bus-related.**

**While school bus transportation is one of the safest forms of transportation in the United States, there are things that citizens can do to make them even safer.**

**For further information, please contact:**

George Mason University  
Center for the Advancement of Public Health  
MS 1F5

Fairfax, VA 22030-4444  
(703) 993-3697 FAX (703) 993-3763

Check out our safety web site at:  
[www.safety.gmu.edu](http://www.safety.gmu.edu)

**For local information, please contact:**

Your local Police Department  
or Sheriff's Office

*Northern Virginia:*

Bob Weakley

Community Transportation Safety Program  
Transportation Safety Services

6308 Grovedale Drive  
Alexandria, VA 22310  
(703) 313-9443

*Shenandoah Valley:*

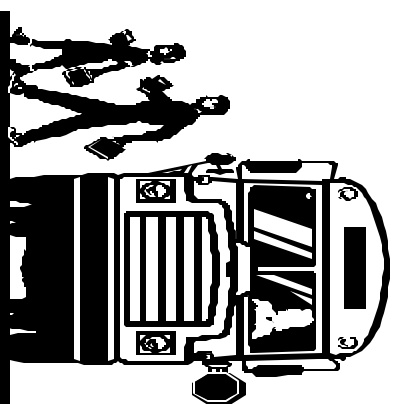
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THE  
**SAFEST**  
WAY



TO  
SCHOOL

## FOR STUDENTS

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration...

Most of the school-age children killed in school bus-related crashes each year are pedestrians that are hit in the "Danger Zone" around the bus.



The Danger Zone is a 10-foot wide area on all sides of a school bus – an area where children are in the most danger of being hit. In order to be safe around a school bus students should:

- ◆ Stay **10 feet** away from the school bus while waiting for, or after exiting, the school bus.
- ◆ Never **cross the street** behind a school bus.
- ◆ Take **five giant steps** from the front of the bus before crossing the street so the driver can see you.
- ◆ Before boarding, or after exiting the bus, always **stay within** the bus **driver's sight**.
- ◆ If you leave something near the bus, **never return to the bus** to get it. The driver may not see you come back and may begin moving the bus.
- ◆ If you drop something near the bus, do not pick it up. Instead, **tell the bus driver** and follow the driver's instructions.

## FOR PARENTS

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration...

Pedestrian fatalities that occur while loading or unloading school buses account for about 2.5 times as many school bus-related fatalities annually as school bus occupant fatalities.



According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 23.5 million children begin and end their school day with a trip on a school bus. Their greatest risk is **not in riding** the bus, but in **getting to** the bus and **entering and leaving** the bus. Here are some things that you can do to help make your child's bus trip a safe one.

- ◆ Have your children put everything they carry in a **backpack or school bag** so they won't drop things along the way.
- ◆ If it is raining, make sure your children wear **raincoats** that are colored something **other than yellow** so they won't blend in with the school bus.
- ◆ Make sure your children **leave home on time** so they can walk to the bus stop and arrive before the bus is due.



Your behavior is as important as your child's. Wait for your child at the bus stop after school, not across the street. Children can be so excited to see you that they dash across the street and forget the safety

## FOR OTHER MOTORISTS

According to the Virginia Driver's Manual...

Since 1998, 64% of the people who lost their lives in school-bus related crashes were occupants of other vehicles involved.



If you are approaching, from any direction, a stopped school bus with flashing signals and an extended stop sign, you must stop a safe distance from the bus. You must remain stopped until all children are clear of the roadway, the signals stop flashing, the stop sign is retracted, and the bus begins to move.

You must also stop if the bus is loading or unloading children and the signal devices are not functioning properly.



You do not have to stop if you are traveling in the opposite direction of a school bus on a highway divided by a physical barrier or an unpaved median area.



In Virginia, if you are convicted of passing a school bus that is stopped to load or unload passengers, you will receive a six-point violation that will stay on your driving record for 11 years.

