

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER APPRECIATION WEEK

Thank You Drivers for transporting students safely!



Minnesota
Department of Public Safety

Safe as houses: School bus regulation in Minnesota *Jan. 26*

If you're the parent of school-aged children, you likely know the routine of watching their too-large backpacks disappear around the corner as they climb onto their school bus, only to see their faces reappear again in the window. Maybe, if it doesn't embarrass them too much, you blow kisses. Maybe it's just a tiny wave goodbye. No matter the routine, you've likely spent a slightly panicky moment or two worried about their safety as they get on or off the bus and ride to and from school.



Photo: School bus safety takes a village: motorists, kids, and the Minnesota State Patrol. Read on about how they help keep your school bus rider safe.

Fortunately, there are things you can do to ensure [school bus safety](#). When you drop your kids off at the school bus, remind them of these safety precautions:

- When getting off a bus, look to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder.
- Wait for the bus driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
- When crossing the street to get on the bus or to go home, make eye contact with motorists before proceeding.

There are things you can do as a motorist to ensure the safety of kids riding the school bus, too:

- Stop at least 20 feet from a school bus that is displaying red flashing lights or a stop arm when approaching from the rear and from the opposite direction on undivided roads.
- Slow down, pay attention and anticipate school children and buses, especially in neighborhoods and school zones.
- Be aware of your surroundings at all times by putting distractions away.

But it may be comforting to remember that another piece of that safety puzzle is school transportation regulation. After all, when you entrust your most precious commodities to a moving vehicle, you need to know said vehicle is as safe as it can be. The Minnesota State Patrol plays a major role in school transportation safety here in Minnesota, and we don't take it lightly. For starters, we inspect every school bus in the entire state every year. We also audit the bus driver files of school districts and contractors to make sure their drivers are properly trained and licensed.

So what exactly do we mean by "properly trained and licensed?" Yellow school bus drivers are required to have a Class B or C driver's license — that depends on the size of the bus they drive. They also need both a passenger endorsement and a school bus endorsement on the license, which they can get by passing a written test and a skills test. In addition to the license with the proper endorsements, school bus drivers must be medically qualified and must pass a criminal background check.

Occasionally, DPS discovers violations of these school bus driver training and licensing requirements. When that happens, DPS can file charges against the carrier or district that made the violation. These violations get forwarded to the commissioners of public safety and education. And school transportation isn't only regulated at the state level. For example, there are federal sanctions if a school bus contractor or school district violates drug and alcohol testing and policy requirements.

If the worst happens and a school bus is involved in a crash, the law requires a post-crash inspection to take place if any vehicle has to be towed away from the scene or any person has to be taken from the scene for medical attention.

So next time you feel that concern in the pit of your stomach while you wave goodbye to the school bus, remember that there are laws and regulations in place to help ensure your children's safety.

Making the grade: It's time to get an education on school bus safety. *August 29*

School is back in session for many students and that means drivers have to once again get used to sharing the road with those big yellow buses.



Photo: With school starting up in Minnesota the next few weeks, motorists and students need to think about school bus safety.

You'd think it would be easy to safely travel in the same space with such a large and heavy vehicle. They're easy to see. They have flashing lights. We know they're carrying precious cargo. Motorists should proceed with caution, right?

Problem is, drivers are more distracted. So are the kids getting on and off those buses. Everyone is rushing from point A to point B. All the more reason motorists and students need to take bus safety seriously as the school year kicks into gear.

School bus crashes in Minnesota increased 14 percent last year, up from 806 in 2014 to 690 in 2015. Not surprisingly, 70 percent of school bus crashes last year happened between 6 and 9 a.m. and 3 to 6 p.m. during the months of September through May.

Here is some info for you to study up on. There won't be a pop quiz, don't worry, but knowing this information and passing it along the students and young people you care about could save a life.

Motorists

- In Minnesota, motorists must stop at least 20 feet from a school bus that is displaying red flashing lights or a stop arm when approaching from the rear and from the opposite direction on undivided roads.
- Motorists should slow down, pay attention and anticipate school children and buses, especially in neighborhoods and school zones.
- The best way to be aware of your surroundings at all times is to put the distractions away.

Students

- When getting off a bus, look to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder.
- Wait for the bus driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
- When crossing the street to get on the bus or to go home, make eye contact with motorists before proceeding

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THANKS FOR GETTING US HERE SAFELY!