



They're Back – School Bus Safety Tips



As many schools go back in session, the familiar yellow school buses will be back on the roadways, along with the students that ride them. So it's time for motorists and parents to take a refresher course on school bus safety.

Pennsylvania has some special rules that motorists must follow when driving near a school bus. For example, when a school bus is preparing to stop, its amber lights will begin flashing. At that time, you must prepare to stop. Do not speed up to pass the bus.

When a school bus stops, its red lights are flashing and its stop arm is extended, you must stop at least 10 feet away from the bus. You should stop if you are behind the bus, coming toward it on the same roadway or approaching an intersection at which the school bus is stopped. That ten foot area around a school bus is called the "danger zone" where the bus driver cannot see people or objects. Remain stopped until the red lights stop flashing, the stop arm has been withdrawn and the children have reached a safe place. Then double check around you and proceed with caution.

The one exception to the school bus stopping requirement is when you are driving on a separate roadway or the opposite side of a divided highway. Because of the divided highway, you do not have to stop. Reduce your speed and continue driving with caution. The definition of a divided roadway is roads that are divided by physical barriers such as metal median barriers (guardrails), concrete median barriers and non-mountable curbs. Other examples of divided highways include separate roadways that have clearly indicated dividing sections such as strips of grass, a stream, trees and shrubs, rocks and boulders or concrete mountable curbs.

Parents should also remind their children of simple bus safety. Be sure the children arrive five minutes early to their bus stop and place all their belongings in a backpack or bookbag with retro-reflective strips. Children should never stop to pick up books or objects that have fallen in the street. Parents should remind children to avoid pushing or game playing when entering or exiting the bus and wait for it to come to a complete stop before boarding or exiting.

By following these few safety tips, students and motorists can enjoy a happy and safe school year.