

Ohio State Highway Patrol

Monthly Commander's Column



Patrol offers school bus safety tips for drivers, parents and students

Summer break ends for thousands of Ohio children this month who will be heading back to school. For many, the trip to and from school involves riding on a school bus.

This month I want to remind motorists, parents and children alike of some helpful tips to ensure school bus safety in our community.

Motorists should remember that they are required to stop for stopped school buses that are displaying flashing red lights and an extended stop arm. When buses are stopped, kids are either getting on or off the school bus and motorists need to pay extra attention to children crossing the roadways.

Motorists approaching from either direction are required to stop at least 10 feet from a stopped school bus until the bus resumes motion. If a school bus is stopped on a road divided into four or more lanes, only traffic driving in the same direction as the bus must stop.

Motorists can do their part by starting to think about school bus safety the moment the car is started. When backing out of a garage or driveway, watch for children walking to the school bus. Many times children who are walking or riding their bicycle are paying more attention to getting to school and less attention to their personal safety.

Although drivers of all vehicles are required to stop for a school bus when it is stopped to load or unload passengers, children should not rely on them to do so. The following school bus safety tips from the National Safety Council are intended for parents to teach their children.

Getting on the school bus

- When waiting for the bus, stay away from traffic and avoid roughhousing or other behavior that can lead to carelessness. Do not stray onto streets, alleys or private property.
- Line up away from the street or road as the school bus approaches.
- Wait until the bus has stopped and the door opens before stepping onto the roadway.
- Use the handrail when stepping onto the bus.

Behavior on the bus

- When on the bus, find a seat and sit down. Loud talking or other noise can distract the bus driver and is not allowed.
- Never put head, arms or hands out of the window.
- Keep aisles clear – books or bags are tripping hazards and can block the way in an emergency.
- Before you reach your stop, get ready to leave by getting your books and belongings together.
- At your stop, wait for the bus to stop completely before getting up from your seat, then walk to the front door and exit, using the handrail.

Getting off the school bus

- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk at least 10 feet ahead of the bus along the side of the road until you can turn around and see the driver.
- Make sure that the driver can see you.
- Wait for a signal from the driver before beginning to cross.
- When the driver signals, walk across the road keeping an eye out for sudden traffic changes.
- Do not cross the center line of the road until the driver has signaled that it is safe for you to begin walking.
- Stay away from the bus' rear wheels at all times.

Correct way to cross the street

- Children should always stop at the curb or the edge of the road and look left, then right, and then left again before crossing.
- They should continue looking in this manner until they are safely across.
- If student's vision is blocked by a parked car or other obstacle, they should move out to where drivers can see them and they can see other vehicles -- then stop, and look left-right-and left again.

With the cooperation of motorists, parents, and children, we can all help make the bus ride to and from school as safe as possible for our children, and make this a safe school year.