

School Bus Stops: Why students can be in danger!

What is the most dangerous part of the school bus ride? The bus stop!

Millions of children in the United States ride safely to and from school on school buses each day. Although school buses are the safest way to get them to school, an average of 33 school-age children die in school bus-related traffic crashes each year. Most of those killed are pedestrians, five to seven years old. They are hit in the danger zone around the bus (A), either by a passing vehicle or by the school bus itself. It is illegal for a car to pass a bus with its red light flashing.

Elementary school children:

1. Become easily distracted and may start across the street without warning,
2. Don't understand the danger of moving vehicles and can't judge speed or distance,
3. Hurry to get on or off the bus and have little experience with traffic,
4. Assume motorists will see them and will wait for them to cross,
5. Don't always stay within the bus driver's sight and may be blocked from view by the bus.
6. **Most importantly, children expect vehicles to stop for them at the school bus stop.**

Safety steps parents can take:

1. Supervise children to make sure they get to the stop on time, wait far away from the road, and avoid rough play.
2. Teach your child to ask the driver for help if he drops something near the bus (B). If a child stoops to pick up something, the driver cannot see him. Then he could be hit by the bus. A book bag or backpack helps keep loose items together.
3. Make sure clothing has no loose drawstrings and backpack straps are short, so they don't get caught in the handrail or bus door. Encourage safe school bus loading and unloading.
4. If you think a bus stop is in a dangerous place, talk with your bus driver, the transportation director, or the school office about changing the location.

Teach your child to get on and off the bus safely:

1. When loading, stay away from the danger zone and wait for the driver's signal. Board the bus in single file. When unloading, look before stepping off the bus to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road). Move away from the bus (C).
2. Before crossing the street, take five "giant steps" out from the front of the bus, or until the driver's face can be seen. Wait for the driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
3. Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is stopped. Continue to watch for traffic when crossing.

Standard school bus stop laws: Learn and follow the school bus laws for motorists. Laws exist to protect children getting on and off the bus AND to protect you from a tragedy. Here are standard rules:

1. Motorists coming to a school bus from any direction must stop 20 feet from the bus when the bus displays flashing red warning lights and extends the stop signal arm (D and E). These signals show that children are getting on or off the school bus.
2. Vehicles may not pass until the flashing red lights and signals are turned off.
3. Drivers traveling in the same direction as the bus are always required to stop. Never pass on the right side of the bus, where children enter or exit. This is illegal and can have tragic results.
4. Violation of these laws can result in a citation and fine.

School bus drivers must report passing vehicles!

