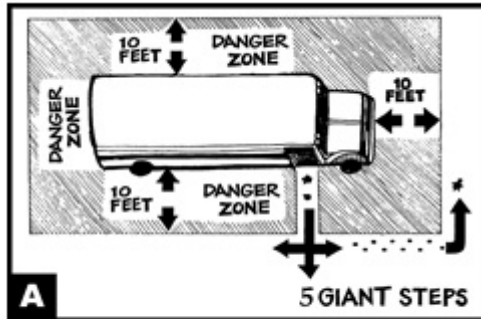


## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

### School Buses Are the Safest Way to Get To School



The Danger Zone is the area on all sides of the bus where children are in the most danger of being hit. Children should stay ten feet away from the bus (or as far away as they can) and never go behind it. They should take five giant steps in front of the bus before crossing, so they can be seen by the driver.

- **FACT:** School buses are designed to be safer than passenger vehicles in avoiding crashes and preventing injury.
- According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) students are about 50 times more likely to arrive at school alive if they take the bus than if they drive themselves or ride with friends and 20 times more likely to arrive at school alive if they take the bus than if a parent drives them.
- According to NHTSA, on average, 20 school-aged children die each year in school bus-related crashes or incidents. Of these 20, five of the children are injured inside the bus, five are struck by other vehicles and ten are struck by the school bus itself. Injuries usually occur in the danger zone around the bus (see figure A).

Young children are most likely to be hit because they:

- Hurry getting on and off the bus,
- Act before they think and have little experience,
- Assume motorists will see them and will wait for them to cross,
- Don't always stay within the bus drivers sight, or
- Drop something as they get off the bus and run into the path of the bus to pick it up.

### Teach Your Child to Get On and Off the School Bus Safely

1. When getting on the bus, stay away from the danger zone and wait for the driver's signal.
2. Board the bus one at a time.

3. When getting off the bus, look before stepping off the bus to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road).
4. Move away from the bus.
5. Before crossing the street, take five “giant steps” out from the bus or until the driver's face can be seen (see *figure A*). Wait for the driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
6. Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is clear before crossing.

### **Safety Steps Parents Can Take**

- Supervise children to make sure they get to the stop on time, wait far away from the road, and avoid rough play.
- Teach your child to ask the driver for help if he/she drops something near the bus. If the child bends down to pick up something, the driver cannot see him/her and the child may be hit by the bus. Have your child use a backpack or book bag to keep loose items together.
- Make sure clothing and backpacks have no loose drawstrings or long straps that could get caught in the handrail or bus door.
- Encourage safe practices for getting on and getting off the school bus.
- If you think a bus stop is in a dangerous place, talk with your school office or transportation director about the location.

### **Learn and Follow School Bus Stop Laws**

Laws exist to protect children getting on and off the bus AND to protect you from a tragedy. Check with your school or local police department for more information. Here is the law:

- Vehicles traveling in the **same** direction as the bus are always required to stop when the bus displays flashing red lights and extends the stop signal arm. Vehicles may not pass until the flashing red warning lights are turned off or the school bus driver waves the vehicles on.
- Vehicles traveling in the **opposite** direction of the bus are required to stop when the bus displays red flashing lights and extends the stop signal arm unless the following conditions exist:
  - The roadway has 4 or more lanes with at least 2 lanes traveling in the opposite direction;

- The roadway is a controlled access highway and the bus is stopped in a loading zone adjacent to the surfaced or improved part of the controlled access highway where pedestrians are not permitted to cross.
- Never pass on the right side of the bus where children are getting on and getting off the bus. This is illegal and can have tragic results.
- Violation of these laws can result in a citation and fines starting at \$150 and possible driver's license suspension.

### **School Bus Hazards: Handrails & Drawstrings**

#### **Drawstrings Can Be Dangerous**

Children's clothing, especially drawstrings, can cause death or injury. A drawstring can catch in a small gap in playground equipment, a bus handrail or a bolt. As a child gets off the bus, doors close and the child isn't seen, he/she could be dragged and ran over by the wheels.

Items that can cause these problems include:

- Jackets, sweaters and other clothing with drawstrings at the neck or waist.
- Backpack straps
- Dangling key chains
- Scarves
- Belt buckles
- Other loose items of clothing

#### **School Bus Improvements Help Reduce the Danger**

- School bus manufacturers and school districts have repaired the handrails on school buses currently in service.
- New buses are designed to make handrails safer.
- Bus drivers are trained to watch children as they get off the bus.

Your child's bus driver should make sure each child has completely cleared the bus when leaving. He/she should also look for clothing that could get caught.

#### **Simple Steps Make Clothing Safer**

- Choose clothing without drawstrings - snaps, Velcro, buttons or elastic are better choices.
- Remove hood and neck strings.
- Warn children about dangling key rings, large buckles and other objects hanging from their backpacks.