

# SAFETY MATTERS

RISK  
MANAGEMENT  
NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE

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- The Danger Zone
- Motorist Safety Awareness
- Route Planning
- Behavior Management

## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

**OBJECTIVE** To keep students, drivers, faculty, and staff safe while traveling to and from school extracurricular events.

School bus transportation plays a critical role in the education of our nation's students and is the direct link between a neighborhood and the classroom. Between 2000 and 2022, there were 55 fatalities resulting from crashes where a driver illegally passed a stopped school bus. More than 25 million children ride the yellow school bus every day. From October 21-25, 2024, we will observe National School Bus Safety Week, serving as a reminder for students, parents, teachers, and the community to prioritize school bus safety. The following information includes tips from the National Association for Pupil Transportation to ensure our children's safety during routes and at bus stops.





## KNOW THE DANGER ZONE

The **Danger Zone** is defined as the area surrounding a bus where children are at the highest risk of being struck by the bus or another vehicle. This zone encompasses all sides of the bus, with the front and back being particularly hazardous areas.

By dimension, the danger zone extends from all sides of the bus, including:

- **Front:** 30 feet from the front bumper, with the first 12 feet being the most dangerous
- **Sides:** 12 feet from the left and right sides
- **Rear:** 12 feet behind the rear bumper
- **Left side:** Always considered dangerous due to passing cars

The danger zone is particularly dangerous because it's difficult for the driver to see in this area. Some tips for staying safe in the danger zone include:

- Arriving 5-10 minutes early at a bus stop.
- Staying in view of the bus operator at all times.
- **NEVER** cross behind or in front of the bus within the danger zone.

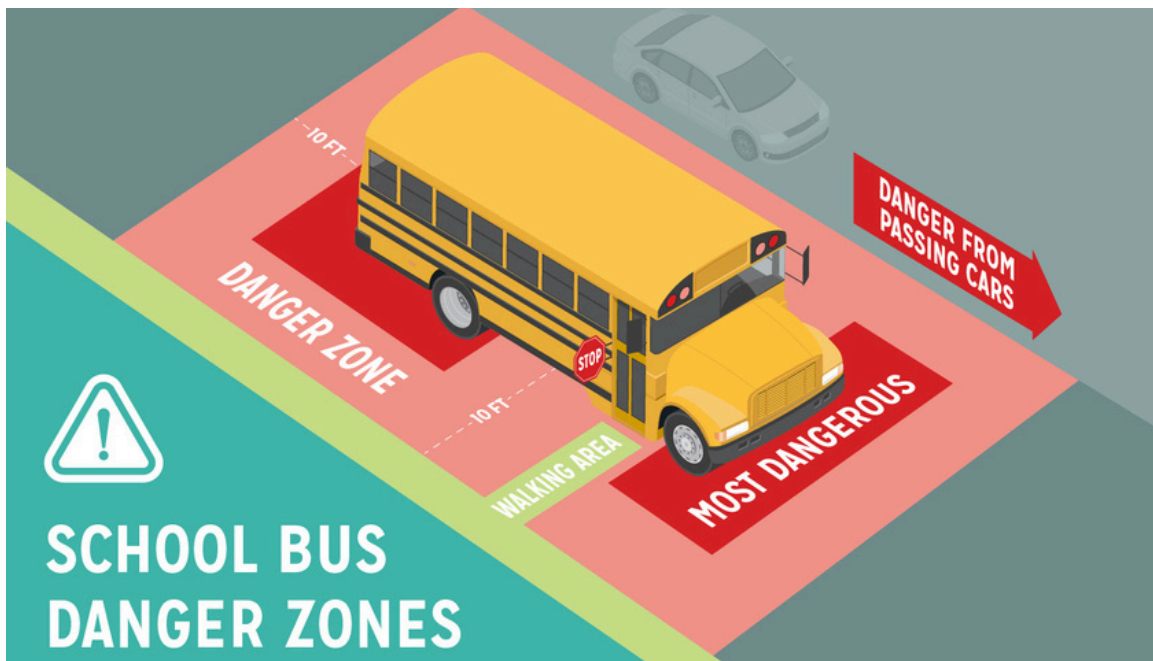
At the School Bus Stop:

- For the safety of everyone involved, students are advised to wait in a visible location for the driver as they approach. Try to avoid waiting in a house or car.
- Students should not play in the street. Playing with balls or other toys that could roll into the street is also dangerous.

When boarding and exiting the bus, it is important to remind students to:

- Wait for the bus to come to a complete stop prior entering or exiting
- Use the handrails
- Follow the instructions of the driver.

If a student drops something in the danger zone, they should alert the driver instead of trying to retrieve it themselves. Additionally, put everything in a backpack or school bag and secure any loose drawstrings and belongings.







## MOTORIST SAFETY AWARENESS

Motorists can practice safe driving around school buses by following these tips:

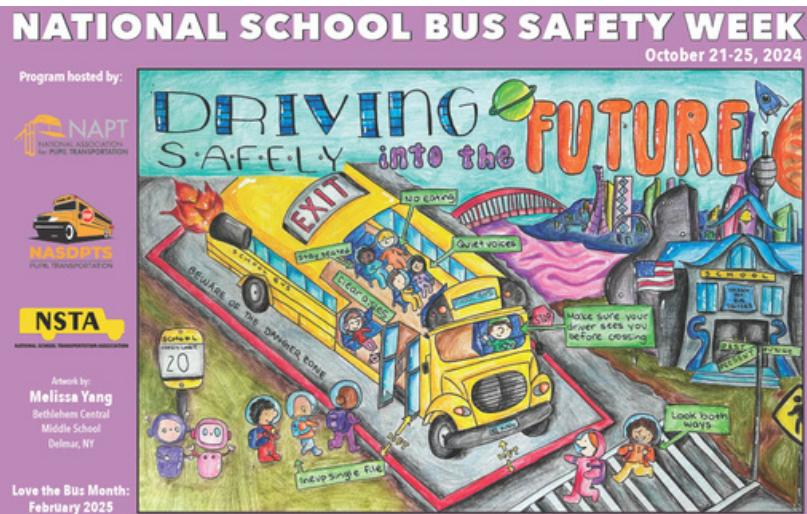
- **Be patient and slow down:** School buses stop frequently and travel at slower speeds.
- **Follow the lights:** Yellow flashing lights mean the bus is preparing to stop, and red flashing lights and an extended stop arm mean the bus has stopped.
- **Don't pass:** It's illegal to pass a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing.
- **Stop:** Come to a complete stop at least 20 feet behind the bus.
- **Be aware of children:** Watch for children at bus stops and crossing in front of the bus.
- **Be distraction-free:** Don't use electronic devices while driving.
- **Be aware of blind spots:** School buses have blind spots behind the driver's seat and behind the rear bumper.
- **Maintain space:** Leave space around the bus to react to unpredictable behavior.
- **Know the laws:** Learn the school bus laws in your state.

## PLANNING BUS ROUTES

Student safety should be the top priority when determining school bus routes and stops. While riding a school bus remains the safest way to travel to school, mitigating safety risks throughout the school bus journey is essential to making this the case. Determining bus routes and stops that effectively reduce safety risks for students, and also meet operational goals, takes planning. Many people and organizations are involved with safe school bus routes, such as school administration, the transportation department, local law enforcement, and even parents and board members. Planning safer bus routes and stops involves processes that incorporate consideration for each of the following aspects of school travel.

Planning safe school bus routes:

- **Consider student needs**
  - Assess the transportation needs of students, including the number of students, coverage area, and special needs.
- **Choose safe stops**
  - Avoid dangerous intersections and high traffic areas and select stops in safe areas like parks or squares.
- **Consider stop location**
  - Ensure there's enough waiting space for the anticipated number of students at each stop. Stops should also be within walking distance of students' homes or schools.
- **Consider road conditions**
  - Consider road curvature, hills, and other blind spots.
- **Plan for flexibility**
  - Consider implementing flexible routes that can adapt to changes like roadwork or unexpected events.





## BUS BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Many administrators understand the importance of encouraging positive behavior in school because it creates an environment that is conducive to learning. Monitoring student behavior on the school bus reduces distractions for the driver and makes for a safer environment on the ride to and from school.

Strategies for managing student behavior on a school bus:

- **Establish clear rules:** Develop rules that align with the district's code of conduct and communicate them to students, parents, and drivers.
- **Use assigned seating:** Assigning specific seating arrangements can be an effective strategy for maintaining control and addressing disruptive behavior on the school bus.
- **Use positive reinforcement:** Compliment students who display good behavior in front of their peers.
- **Be calm and speak clearly:** A calm and clear attitude can help influence children's expectations.
- **Maintain control of yourself:** If there is an incident, speak calmly and clearly to the students involved, move them to a safe seat, and report the incident as required.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- School buses are the safest form of highway transportation.
- The most dangerous part of the school bus ride is getting on and off the school bus.
- Pedestrian fatalities (while loading and unloading school buses) account for approximately three times as many school bus-related fatalities, when compared to school bus occupant fatalities.

## RESOURCES

- National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT) - 800-989-6278 • [info@napt.org](mailto:info@napt.org) [www.napt.org](http://www.napt.org)
- [California Department of Motor Vehicles - School Buses](#)
- [NHTSA Planning Safer School Bus Stops and Routes](#)

*This California Schools JPA fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.*

