



# School Bus Safety

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## Overview

The school bus is the safest vehicle on the road—your child is much safer taking a bus to and from school than traveling by car. Although four to six school-age children die each year on school transportation vehicles, that’s less than one percent of all traffic fatalities nationwide. NHTSA believes school buses should be as safe as possible. That’s why our safety standards for school buses are above and beyond those for regular buses.

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## Bus Safety Facts

70x

STUDENTS ARE ABOUT 70 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO GET TO SCHOOL SAFELY WHEN TAKING A SCHOOL BUS INSTEAD OF TRAVELING BY CAR.



# **Talk to Your Child About School Bus Safety**

## THE TOPIC

# Bus Safety

### SCHOOL BUS SAFETY INFOGRAPHICS

[SAFETY BENEFITS OF SCHOOL BUSES \(PDF, 662 KB\)](#)

[SAFETY FEATURES OF SCHOOL BUSES \(PDF, 659 KB\)](#)

[SAFETY REQUIREMENTS OF SCHOOL BUSES \(PDF, 987 KB\)](#)

Students are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a bus instead of traveling by car. That's because school buses are [the most regulated vehicles on the road](#); they're designed to be safer than passenger vehicles in preventing crashes and injuries; and in every State, stop-arm laws protect children from other motorists.

- **Different by Design:** School buses are designed so that they're highly visible and include safety features such as flashing red lights, cross-view mirrors and stop-sign arms. They also include protective seating, high crush standards and rollover protection features.
- **Protected by the Law:** Laws protect students who are getting off and on a school bus by making it illegal for drivers to pass a school bus while dropping off or picking up passengers, regardless of the direction of approach.

### SEAT BELTS ON SCHOOL BUSES

Seat belts have been required on passenger cars since 1968; and 49 States and the District of Columbia have enacted laws requiring the use of seat belts in passenger cars and light trucks. There is no question that seat belts play an important role in keeping passengers safe in these vehicles. But school buses are different by design, including a different kind of safety restraint system that works extremely well.

Large school buses are heavier and distribute crash forces differently than passenger cars and light trucks do. Because of these differences, bus passengers experience much less crash force than those in passenger cars, light trucks and vans.

NHTSA decided the best way to provide crash protection to passengers of large school buses is through a concept called "compartmentalization." This requires that the interior of large buses protect children without them needing to buckle up. Through compartmentalization, children are

protected from crashes by strong, closely-spaced seats that have energy-absorbing seat backs.

## School Bus Safety ▾

of small school buses are closer to those of passenger cars and trucks, seat belts in those vehicles are necessary to provide occupant protection.

### THE TOPIC

# Bus Stop Safety

## BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

### REDUCING THE ILLEGAL PASSING OF SCHOOL BUSES

The greatest risk to your child is not riding a bus, but approaching or leaving one. Before your child goes back to school or starts school for the first time, it's important for you and your child to know traffic safety rules. Teach your child to follow these practices to make school bus transportation safer.

### FOR PARENTS

#### Safety Starts at the Bus Stop

Your child should arrive at the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. Visit the bus stop and show your child where to wait for the bus: at least three giant steps (six feet) away from the curb. Remind your child that the bus stop is not a place to run or play.

#### Get On and Off Safely

When the school bus arrives, your child should wait until the bus comes to a complete stop, the door opens, and the driver says it's okay before approaching the bus door. Your child should use the handrails to avoid falling.

#### Use Caution Around the Bus

Your child should never walk behind a school bus. If your child must cross the street in front of the bus, tell him/her to walk on a sidewalk or along the side of the street to a place at least five giant steps (10 feet) in front of the bus before crossing. Your child should also make eye contact with the bus driver before crossing to make sure the driver can see him/her. If your child drops

something near the school bus, like a ball or book, the safest thing is for your child to tell the bus driver right away. Your child should not try to pick up the item, because the driver might not be able to see him/her.

## FOR DRIVERS

Make school bus transportation safer for everyone by following these practices:

- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch out for children walking or bicycling to school.
- When driving in neighborhoods with school zones, watch out for young people who may be thinking about getting to school, but may not be thinking of getting there safely.
- Slow down. Watch for children walking in the street, especially if there are no sidewalks in neighborhood.
- Watch for children playing and congregating near bus stops.
- Be alert. Children arriving late for the bus may dart into the street without looking for traffic.
- Learn and obey the school bus laws in your State, as well as the "flashing signal light system" that school bus drivers use to alert motorists of pending actions:
  - **Yellow flashing lights** indicate the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles.
  - **Red flashing lights and extended stop arms** indicate the bus has stopped and children are getting on or off. Motorists must stop their cars and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop-arm is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before they can start driving again.
- [School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series](#) - This refresher training provides nine lesson modules on driving a school bus, which is frequently requested by school bus drivers and pupil transportation supervisors.

## THE TOPIC

# School Bus Regulations

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following FAQs will help you understand how NHTSA's regulations define school buses, multifunction school activity buses, school-related events, and much more.

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**What is a school bus?**

**What is a multifunction school activity bus?**

**What is a school, for the purposes of NHTSA's school bus regulations?**

**What is a school-related event, for the purposes of NHTSA's school bus regulations?**

**Does NHTSA consider a private school a "school" for the purposes of its school bus regulations?**

**Does NHTSA consider a college or university a "school" for the purposes of its school bus regulations?**

**Does NHTSA consider a daycare, childcare center, or preschool a "school" for the purposes of its school bus regulations?**

**When are you required to use a school bus?**

**Do NHTSA's school bus regulations apply to sales of new vehicles to entities that are not schools, but that provide student transportation to or from school or related events?**

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**May schools purchase or lease new 15-passenger vans?**



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**May 15-passenger vans be used to transport students to or from school or school-related events?**



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**How do NHTSA's school bus regulations apply to vehicle dealers?**



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**Does Federal law require school buses to be yellow?**



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#### **OTHER SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION REGULATIONS**

- **Use of Nonconforming Vehicles for School Transportation**

Federal requirements regulate new vehicles that carry 11 or more people, which are sold for transporting students to or from school or school-related events. Those vehicles are required to meet all FMVSSs for school buses. The FMVSSs applicable to school buses require that school buses have stop arms along with many other safety features over and above those of other passenger vehicles. Under 49 U.S.C. 30101, *et seq.*, a vehicle is regarded as being sold for use as a school bus if, at the time of sale, it is evident that the vehicle is likely to be significantly used to transport students to or from school or school-related events. This statute applies to school buses sold to public and parochial schools. For example, a dealer selling a new 15-passenger van to be used for school transportation must ensure that the van is certified as meeting our school bus FMVSSs.

Federal regulations do not prohibit the use of vans by schools, but require any van (with a capacity of more than 10) sold or leased for use as a school bus to meet the safety standards applicable to school buses. Federal regulations apply only to the manufacture and sale/lease of new vehicles. Each State prescribes its own regulations that apply to the use of any vehicle that is used to transport students.

- **The Number of People Who Can Safely Sit on a School Bus Seat**

Federal regulation does not specify the number of people who can sit on a school bus seat. The school bus manufacturers determine the maximum seating capacity of a school bus. The manufacturers use this number, which is based on sitting three small elementary school students per typical 39-inch school bus seat, in the calculations for determining the gross vehicle weight rating and the number of emergency exits. School transportation providers generally determine the number of people they can safely fit into a school bus seat. Generally, they fit three smaller elementary school students or two adult high school students into a typical 39-inch school bus seat.

NHTSA recommends that all passengers be seated entirely within the confines of the school bus seats while the bus is in motion. Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 222, "School Bus Passenger Seating and Crash Protection" requires that the interior of large buses provide occupant protection so that children are protected without the need to buckle-up. Occupant crash protection is provided by a protective envelope consisting of strong, closely-spaced seats that have energy-absorbing seat backs. Persons not sitting or sitting partially outside of the school bus seats will not be afforded the occupant protection provided by the school bus seats.

#### **NHTSA IN ACTION**

# **NHTSA is dedicated to promoting safe behaviors on our nation's roads**

NHTSA is responsible for establishing Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSSs) to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes.

Demonstrating our commitment to children's safety on school buses, we have established [minimum safety standards](#) for school buses that are above and beyond those for regular buses because we believe school buses should be as safe as possible. We also offer parents safety information about school buses and traffic safety rules for drivers and children to follow near bus stops and school zones.



RESOURCES

# Web Resources

- [Child Safety Restraint Systems \(CSRS\) on School Buses National Training](#) – These six training videos demonstrate the steps necessary for school bus drivers and school bus monitors to properly install three types of CSRSs (rear-facing, front-facing, and safety vest) on a school bus seat, as well as the proper placement of a child in the CSRS.
- [National Association for Pupil Transportation \(NAPT\)](#)
- [School Bus Fleet](#)
- [Pupil Transportation Safety Institute](#)
- [School Transportation News](#)
- [National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services](#)
- [The American School Bus Council](#)
- [National School Transportation Association \(NSTA\)](#)

RESOURCES

# Resources

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34 Results

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TITLE	TYPE	AUDIENCE	DATE	LANGUAGE
<a href="#">Traffic Safety Facts: 2006-2015 Data School-Transportation-Related Crashes PDF, 343.47 KB</a>	Document	Advocacy Groups	01/01/2017	
<a href="#">Back to School Safety Advisory: NHTSA Encourages Everyone to Be Responsible for Getting Children To and From School Safely</a>	Press Release	Advocacy Groups	08/25/2015	
<a href="#">School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series: Administrator Guide PDF, 265.08 KB</a>	Document		10/01/2011	
<a href="#">School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series: Pupil Transportation Supervisor Guide PDF, 344.12 KB</a>	Document		10/01/2011	
<a href="#">Selecting School Bus Stop Locations PDF, 918.23 KB</a>	Document	Federal Government	07/01/2010	

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## **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

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