



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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National School Bus Safety Week is October 16-20

Urge Drivers to Stop Illegal School Bus Passing

Mechanicsburg, PA – National School Bus Safety Week is October 16-20, 2023. The U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and Safe Kids Pennsylvania (SKPA), and many other organizations nationwide are urging drivers to slow down and be aware of school buses in their communities.

Although school buses are one of the safest modes of transportation, injuries and fatalities do occur outside of or near the buses. Statistically, the most dangerous times for children who ride school buses are when they are getting on or off the bus. Most often, these tragedies occur because a motorist has failed to slow down and obey the bus’s stop sign, or to follow local traffic laws. Nationally, school bus passing is illegal and it is a deadly risk to bus riders and their caregivers. Drivers should always come to a complete stop when a school bus stop-arm is extended, and the red lights are flashing.

“When a school bus’s red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended, drivers must slow down and come to a complete stop,” said Jessica Ritter, State Office Coordinator of SKPA. “This is not a suggestion — it’s the law.” In fact, yellow flashing lights indicate the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. This is when motorists should begin to slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles, **not** speed up to try and pass the bus before it stops. “School bus riders and their caregivers are relying on drivers to follow the law to keep them safe,” said Ritter.

The school bus loading and unloading area is called the “Danger Zone.” Specifically, this is any side of the bus where the bus driver can’t see the child and, therefore, the child is in the most danger. These areas include:

- 10 feet in front of the bus, where the driver may be sitting too high to see a child
- 10 feet on either side of the bus, where a child may be in the driver’s blind spots
- Behind the school bus

“Passing a stopped school bus is against the law and could have fatal consequences. Nothing is worth the risk,” said Ritter. “We need every driver to pay attention, because children’s lives are on the line.”

Let’s work together to keep our children safe as they wait to ride the bus to and from school. Slow down and obey the signs. For more information about school bus stop safety, please visit www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/school-bus-safety#the-topic-bus-stop-safety or www.pasafekids.org.

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Safe Kids Pennsylvania (SKPA) is part of Safe Kids Worldwide's global network dedicated to keeping kids safe from preventable childhood injury, which is the number one cause of death among children ages 1 to 19. These injuries range from accidental falls, to poisonings, car crashes, drownings, and many more. SKPA promotes and supports childhood injury prevention activities through education, collaboration, and advocacy throughout Pennsylvania. Safe Kids Pennsylvania is one of many statewide coalitions under Safe Kids Worldwide, and is led by the American Trauma Society, PA Division. For more information on Safe Kids PA, visit our website at <https://www.pasafekids.org/> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/safekidspa/>.