



TDCJ Risk Management's Training Circular

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School's Started Slow Down Know the Rules



It's that time of year again!! Tell the kids

I know you are wondering what does this have to do with TDCJ?.

Do you know the rules of traveling through a school zone?

school is starting and most will say, "No, the summer can't be over".

The kids are sad and the parents are glad. It also means school buses, school bus stops, car rider lines, bicycle riders, and parking lots full of parent vehicles waiting on kids. The school bell rings and the front door opens with kindergarten kids walking out holding onto a rope forming a line and then as you look at the school every door opens with kids coming out of everywhere. Kids are running to cars, buses, bicycles, roads, and crossings.



If you think about it TDCJ has a lot of employees who are coming to and from work traveling thru school zones. We even have buses, vans, cars, 18-wheelers, and trucks that may be traveling through school zones daily to get from one place to another. Some Units have state housing and employees who live there may have children who will be going to school. The agency wants everyone to be reminded that school has started. School buses will be traveling the roads again and making frequent stops, causing heavy traffic in areas. children will be running and playing at bus stops.



- * Slow down and drive more carefully when you are in a school zone.
- * Be extra vigilant for children crossing the road as they may be easily blocked from your view due to their height.
- * **Be patient** when you encounter heavy traffic at school zones. If you are rushed for time, take other routes if you can.
- * School zones will be designated by signs and may include flashing lights.
- * Signs designating school zones will indicate the maximum speed limit applicable.
- * School crossing guards are there for one reason; to protect our school children. The State of Texas has given school crossing guards who are performing their duties the same authority as that of a police officer.



- * **Failing to obey a crossing guard in a school zone is the same as failing to obey a police officer!!.**



Not obeying school zones can be a tragedy but also one that will hit you in the pocket book. According to the Texas Department of Public Safety, fines for speeding through a school zone will begin around \$150.00. Keep this in mind when traveling through a school zone and take that extra



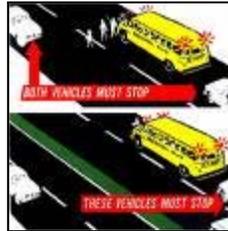
minute to be careful, and slow-down.

Rules you need to know

- * It is **against the law** to pass a stopped school bus while its lights are flashing and its stop arm is extended. This fine can cost you up to \$1,000.00.
- * On undivided roadways, with no physical barrier or median, vehicles **must** stop on both sides of the roadway.



- * Yellow flashing lights indicate that the bus is preparing to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles.
- * Red flashing lights and extended stop arms indicate that the bus has stopped, and children are getting on or off. Motorist approaching from either direction must wait until the red lights stop flashing before proceeding.
- * School bus drivers may report violations.



Interesting facts about School Buses

A school bus is required to follow the same limits as other vehicles, with the following exceptions:

- * If the bus is on a highway that is not an Interstate highway, the maximum speed limit is **50** miles per hour.
- * If the bus is on an Interstate Highway, its maximum speed limit is **55** miles per hour.



When you approach a school bus on the highway, please keep these speed limits in

mind. The school bus is going to be going slower than other traffic.

Why are school buses yellow?.

- * Texas law actually requires school buses to meet many requirements and to have special features, including color. The State of Texas requires that the exterior color of the school bus be "school bus yellow". The State also requires that the lettering on the bus be decals or be painted with a "first quality black enamel" paint.

What kind of vehicle is considered a "school bus"?

- * Under Texas Law, a "school bus" is "a bus designed to transport more than 15 passengers, including the operator, and used for the purpose that include regularly transporting students to and from school or school-related events"

School Signs



The **School Advance** sign is used several hundred feet in advance of a school safety zone to warn the drivers of the approaching zone.



The **School Crossing** sign is placed next to or as close as possible to an established crosswalk. This sign is used in advance of every school crossing.



The **School Bus Stop Ahead** sign is used in advance of a location where school buses stop, load or unload students. It is only used when the bus stop is not visible from a distance of 500 feet.



The **No U-Turn** sign may be posted to restrict vehicles from making u-turns in school zones.



The **No Parking During School Hours** sign may be posted to restrict vehicles from parking in area that may be a hazardous to children entering or existing the school, a vehicle may park in these areas during non-school days or hours.



The **No Stopping or Standing** sign may be posted to restrict parking or standing to ensure safe visibility of school children on the sidewalk area to all drivers on the public road.

Disabled School Buses



Like all vehicles, school buses sometimes break down on the road.

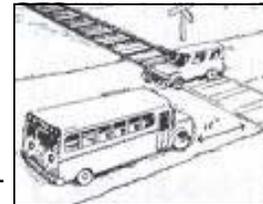
Please keep this in mind if you see a disabled school bus on the roadway or shoulder. Although you are not required to stop when approaching a disabled school bus, please slow down and be very cautious when you pass the bus. Children may be unloading to transfer into a substitute vehicles, and may attempt to cross the road. At that time, they would be at great risk, and need your thoughtfulness to protect them.



Railroad Crossing



School buses stop for **ALL** Railroad crossings! A school bus operator is required by law to stop at railroad crossings, even if there are no trains in sight. The driver is required to listen and to look both directions before proceeding through the crossing.



Every year, approximately 450,000 public school buses travel 4.3 billion miles to transport 24 million children to and from school and school related activities according to the School Bus Information Council. School buses continue to be the safest form of highway transportation accounting for less than one-half of one percent of all injury traffic crashes in the state. The Texas Department of Public Safety oversees the testing and licensing of school bus drivers, who are required to have a commercial driver license to drive a school bus.

Walking To and From Bus Stops



- * Children should always walk on the sidewalk to the bus stop, never run, if there is no sidewalk, they should walk on the far left side, facing the traffic.
- * Children should go directly to the bus stop.
- * They should go to the bus stop about 5 minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. While at the bus stop, children should wait quietly in a safe place well away from the road. They should not run and play.
- * Never accept a ride from a stranger.
- * They should be extra careful during times of sunrise and sunset, bad weather and during darkness.
- * Not only should small children but older children should be reminded about bus safety, the older children may have a lot of other things on their mind.



Exiting the Bus



- * Children should always cross the street in front of the bus. They should never go behind the bus. If they drop something next to the bus, instruct them to tell the bus driver before they attempt to pick it up, so the driver will know where they are.
- * Remind children if they leave something on the bus, never go back to the bus to get it. The driver may not see them come back and the bus may begin to move.



As we drive to and from work and see those big familiar yellow buses rumbling down the street, we need to stop and remember the school bus and school zone laws. Everyone driving a vehicle needs to be aware of their surroundings. Lets make this a happy and safe school year for our children.



If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader

John Quincy Adams

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