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MaineDOT Flash Facts, Topic : School Bus Safety, 2008

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MaineDOT Flash Facts

Topic: School Bus Safety

When the hours of daylight get shorter, many school buses are traveling in the dark, both in the morning and afternoon, so be especially on the lookout for students during these hard-to-see times.

Approximately 24 million elementary and secondary school children ride school buses every day in the US.

Approximately 80 percent of Maine children ride the big yellow school bus between home and school and for school related activities.

School buses are by far the safest form of highway transportation available but, In Maine; we still average 130 crashes involving school buses each year, resulting in nearly 60 injuries. The MaineDOT reminds you of the following Maine laws concerning school buses and school zones.

- Passing a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing is a criminal violation punishable by a \$250 minimum fine for the first offense and a mandatory license suspension for the second offense.
- A vehicle may not proceed until the school bus resumes motion or until signaled by the bus operator that it is okay to proceed.
- A school bus operator who observes someone illegally passing a stopped school bus can report violations to a law enforcement officer.
- Unless otherwise posted, the school zone speed limit is 15 miles per hour during school opening or closing hours, and recess.

Here are some additional reminders:



- Remember to stand back when waiting for an arriving bus and only approach the door after the bus has come to a complete stop and the bus driver signals that it is okay to board.
- When riding the bus, students should stay seated throughout the ride, keep the noise level low so the driver can hear and concentrate, and ALWAYS listen to the driver's instructions.
- Any time you are crossing in front of a school bus, always make eye contact with the driver so that they know you are there. Wait for the bus drivers signal that you may cross.
- Look both ways, and **walk**, do not run, when crossing the street.
- Be aware of all traffic. Even though all drivers should be paying attention and following the rules of the road, sometimes they do not.
- Wear reflective clothing and backpacks to help drivers see you during hours of darkness and twilight.

Parents:

- If you're driving your kids to school do not rush. Give yourself enough time and drive safely EVERY trip. Remember, kids learn from watching adults-and that includes your driving and safety belt habits.
- Follow the school's rules about loading and unloading passengers.

Approximately 50% of crashes involving school buses are Rear End collisions, so:

- Pay attention to your driving
- Be ready for the bus to stop
- Maintain a safe following distance. (Maintaining a safe following distance behind school buses not only helps prevent rear end crashes but also gives you a more open view of the road and traffic activity ahead.)

Driver inattention is a factor in approximately 25% of crashes involving school buses - so give full attention to the driving task.

Approximately 15% of the crashes were the result of drivers failing to yield the right of way.

- Watch for traffic control signs and signals,
- Carefully check traffic conditions before proceeding from traffic lights, stop or yield signs, or driveways.



A Maine fatality a few years ago involving a student traveling on a school bus resulted from another vehicle passing the school bus while the bus was stopped discharging students. Please remember – caution on yellow, stop on red flashing lights.

Be a Road Model: When Driving know the facts to keep our school children safe. Practice safe student travel every day.