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FIRE DEPARTMENT

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SCHOOL BUS SAFETY TIPS FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Community Risk Reduction – Know the law when approaching a stopped school bus

MUSCATINE, Iowa – It is important for parents to talk with their children about bus stop safety. Here are some tips from the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](https://www.nhtsa.gov/).

Before the Bus Arrives

Your child should arrive at the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus arrives. Ahead of the new school year, visit the bus stop and show your child where to wait for the bus, at least ten feet — five giant steps — away from the curb. Remind your child that the bus stop is not a place to run or play.

Getting 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 to get on or off. Your child should use the handrails to avoid falling.



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Always 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 them to walk on a sidewalk or along the side of the street to a place at least ten feet — five giant steps — 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 that they're crossing to avoid the danger zone. If your child drops something near the school bus, like a phone 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 them.

Each school year yellow buses wind their way through Iowa's cities, towns and rural areas. It's critical for Iowa's drivers to be extra cautious in watching students heading to and from the buses. Here are some reminders from the [Iowa Department of Transportation](#).

Reminders for drivers:

- When the bus's yellow flashers turn on, that signifies that it is preparing to have a child get on or off the bus. All vehicles behind the bus must come to a complete stop.
- If you are approaching a bus from the opposite direction, slow your speed to 20 mph when the bus turns on its yellow flashers.
- On a two-lane road, traffic in both directions must come to a full stop when the lights are flashing red.
- On a four-lane road, traffic moving in the opposite direction must slow down and proceed with caution when either red or yellow flashers are present.
- Stop your vehicle at least 15 feet from the bus.
- Remain stopped until the flashing lights are turned off and the stop arm is pulled back in.
- Failure to comply could result in a fine of \$250 plus court costs.

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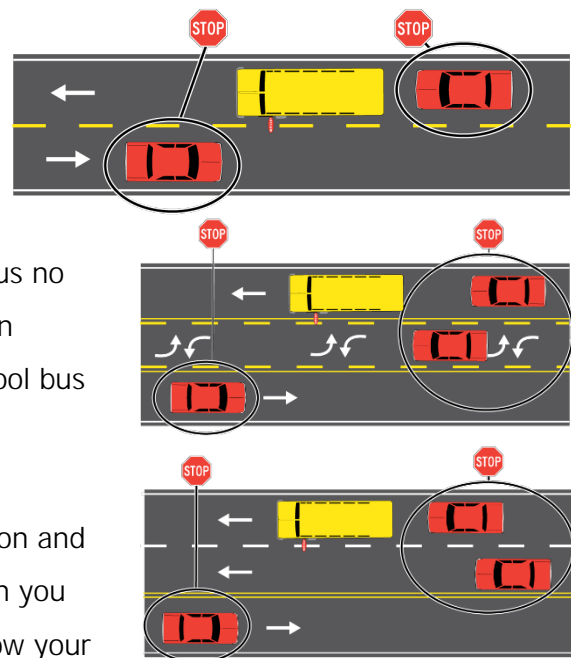
- Reminders for students:
- Stop and look both ways before crossing a street.
- Make sure your bus driver can see you when you are crossing in front of the bus. If you can't see the driver, the driver cannot see you.
- Never cross behind the bus.
- When getting on or off the bus, never cross the street until the bus driver signals it's OK to cross.
- If you drop something near the bus, do not pick it up. Instead, tell the bus driver what you dropped, and let the driver instruct you on what to do.

Required stopping for school buses

You are traveling on a two- or three-lane road when you approach a school bus. Do you know what you are required to do? Iowa law specifically states what drivers can and cannot do. Violating this law may result in your license being suspended for up to 180 days.

So what are the requirements when approaching the school bus from the rear? When you see flashing red or amber warning lights, you are not permitted to pass the school bus and should be prepared to stop. When the school bus stops and the stop arm is extended, stop behind the school bus no closer than 15 feet from the rear of the bus. Remain stopped until the stop arm is retracted and the school bus starts moving again. Then proceed with caution.

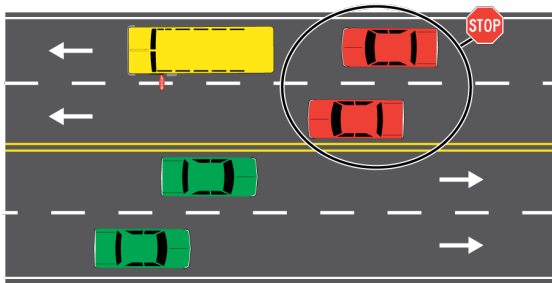
But what if you are traveling in the opposite direction and meeting the school bus from the front? Again, when you see the amber warning lights flashing, you must slow your



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vehicle to no more than 20 mph and be prepared to stop. Once the school bus stops and extends the stop arm, stop your vehicle no closer than 15 feet in front of the school bus. Remain stopped until the stop arm is retracted and the school bus starts moving again. Then proceed with caution.

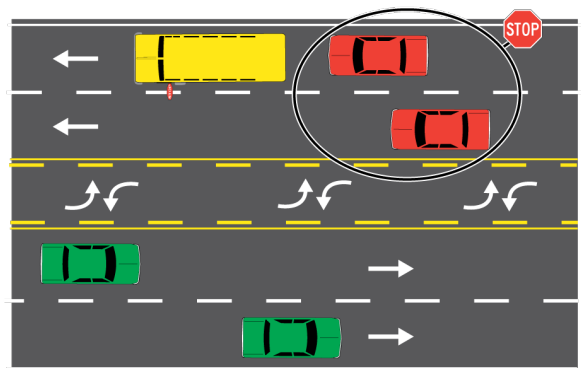
The rules are similar when traveling on a road with two or more lanes in each direction.



When you see flashing red or amber warning lights, you are not permitted to pass the school bus and should be prepared to stop. When the school bus stops and the stop arm is extended, stop behind the school bus no closer than 15 feet from the rear of the bus. Remain stopped

until the stop arm is retracted and the school bus starts moving again. Then proceed with caution.

The difference comes when meeting the bus from the front. When meeting the bus in one of the opposite two lanes (or more), you do not need to stop, even if the bus has stopped with lights flashing and stop arm out. The bus is not permitted to load or unload children who must cross this type of roadway, unless there are official traffic control devices or law enforcement present.



This is the only time you may pass a school bus that is stopped and has the stop arm extended.

Understanding School Bus Lights



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Learn the school bus laws in your state and always follow them, as well as the flashing lights that school bus drivers use to alert you.

- Yellow flashing lights indicate the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. You should slow down and prepare to stop your vehicle.
- Red flashing lights and extended stop arms indicate the bus has stopped and children are getting on or off. You must stop your car and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop-arm is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving, before you can start driving again.