

Dept. of Transportation: Wisconsin State Patrol encourages drivers, families to prepare for school bus season

Posted on Wednesday, Aug 2, 2023

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

As school buses across Wisconsin are prepped for the first day of class, the Wisconsin State Patrol reminds all drivers to start planning for the school year to ensure a safe commute for students.

The Wisconsin State Patrol's [August Law of the Month](#) is school bus safety, to remind drivers and parents of their important role.

“School buses are some of the safest vehicles on the roads because they’re specially built to withstand damage in a crash, but our goal is to avoid testing that technology,” Superintendent Tim Carnahan said. “All drivers must maintain the highest level of awareness when traveling near a school bus to avoid crashes and protect children on the way to school.”

Despite many safety measures, there are about 600 crashes involving school buses every year in Wisconsin.

School buses will begin their routes in the coming weeks, so drivers should plan for potential changes in traffic patterns and parents should prepare their kids for safe bus stop habits.

Driving near school buses

School buses make many stops, and children out walking can be unpredictable, so drivers need to use extra caution when they see a yellow bus on the roads. School

buses are the only type of vehicle with a [specific color required by state law](#). The yellow paint allows for high visibility for other drivers on the roads.

The school bus loading and unloading area is the most dangerous for pedestrians, so always pay attention to a bus when the stop arm is extended, or warning lights are engaged.

Wisconsin law requires drivers to use extra caution around school buses:

- Stop at least 20 feet away from a bus when red warning lights are flashing; the only exception is if you are traveling on the other side of a divided road
- Slow down when amber lights are flashing, which signal the bus is about to stop and red lights will soon be activated; drivers can pass a bus with amber lights activated but should do so cautiously
- Yield to pedestrians who have a walk signal or green light, or those who are crossing a road with no signals
- Always follow directions from school crossing guard

When passed illegally, bus drivers are authorized to report violations to law enforcement. A citation for failure to stop for a school bus costs \$326 and four demerit points.

Keeping kids safe at the bus stop

Parents should incorporate safety conversations into their family's back to school plans. Talk with children about bus stop safety and general walking precautions.

Children should always:

- Look both ways before crossing the street
- Follow instructions from bus drivers and crossing guards
- Stay at least three, big steps away from the curb when waiting for the bus; wait until the bus comes to a complete stop and the driver says it's safe to get on the bus

- Make sure the bus driver can see them when crossing in front of the bus; stay at least five, big steps away and look both ways for other traffic

School bus drivers receive special training to safely operate a bus. Drivers must pass the Commercial Driver License (CDL) exam with a school bus endorsement. Some bus companies and school districts also hold regular new driver and continuing education programs to ensure safety rules are followed.

In addition, the Wisconsin State Patrol inspects every Wisconsin school bus annually to ensure the vehicles are ready to safely transport children. They conduct about 10,000 inspections each year, looking at mechanical equipment like steering, brakes and exits, first aid kits and fire extinguishers.

View the August Law of the Month video and news release
online: <https://wisconsindot.gov/Pages/about-wisdot/newsroom/law/lom.aspx>