

Operation Safe Stop Fact Sheet

October 17-21, 2022

This voluntary enforcement campaign is running during national School Bus Safety Week. School buses are the safest way for children to get to school. Their design is meant to be safer than any passenger vehicle in avoiding crashes and preventing injuries. And even with some schools utilizing remote and hybrid learning, many school buses are still on the road.

According to the Michigan State Police Criminal Justice Information Center

- School bus involved crashes increased 70 percent, from 461 in 2020 to 785 in 2021.
- Fatalities involving a school bus also increased from 0 in 2020 to 4 in 2021.
- September 2021 had the highest number of school bus-involved crashes with 133, while October had 132 such crashes.
- Mondays had the highest number of school bus-involved crashes.
- Most of the school bus-involved crashes occurred between 6 a.m. and 8:59 a.m.

According to the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services

- A one-day survey conducted by 1,373 Michigan bus drivers in May 2019 (the last release of survey results), found 508 times a motorist passed a school bus illegally.
- Over the last three years of the survey, this one-day survey has averaged 622 instances of motorists illegally passing a school bus.

In Michigan

- Drivers who pass stopped school buses may be charged with civil infractions carrying a fine up to \$500, and up to \$100 in costs.
- Drivers who pass a stopped school bus and cause a death are subject to a felony with either a fine up to \$7,500 or up to 15 years in jail.
- Drivers who pass a stopped school bus and cause an injury face a misdemeanor charge and either a fine up to \$1,000 or up to one year in jail.
- Effective October 11, 2021, a school that uses a stop-arm camera system shall provide a video or photograph recorded by a stop-arm camera system for use as evidence in a proceeding for a violation of illegal passing of a school bus if requested by an investigating law enforcement agency. A photograph or video recorded by a stop-arm camera system is admissible as evidence in a proceeding for a violation to the extent permitted by the rules of evidence of this state. However, a photograph or video recorded by a stop-arm camera system is not required for the prosecution of a violation.

Safety Tips for Driving

- Prepare to stop when a slowing school bus has its overhead yellow lights flashing.
- Stop at least 20 feet away for buses when red lights are flashing, **unless driving in the opposite direction on a divided highway.**
- Slow down in or near school and residential areas.
- Look for clues - such as safety patrols, crossing guards, bicycles, and playgrounds - that indicate children might be in the area.
- Watch for children between parked cars and other objects.

