NEWS RELEASE
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ALABAMA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RECOGNIZES
NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK
October also marks 10th anniversary of School Bus Passing Law

Montgomery, Ala. – More than 374,000 of Alabama’s elementary and secondary students are transported to and from school each day of the year, and the safety of these students should be of the utmost importance to all. This year, National School Bus Safety Week is October 17-21, 2016. This special emphasis is an active, continuing public education program designed to promote school bus safety, and prevent crashes, injuries and fatalities.

“Alabama has a school bus safety record of which we can all be proud; however, maintaining this excellent record requires the combined efforts of the entire education family including school staff, students, parents, and other citizens,” said State Superintendent of Education Michael Sentance. “During National School Bus Safety Week, I encourage support of activities in our schools and communities that will emphasize school bus safety and also recognize school bus drivers and other transportation personnel who help ensure that our children are transported safely.”

October also marks the 10th anniversary of the state law that requires all traffic from both directions on a two-lane roadway to stop when school buses stop for passengers. According to the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE) Pupil Transportation Section, the most dangerous part of a school bus ride is when the bus stops to load or unload students. All too often, students are placed in danger by careless or distracted motorists who illegally pass a stopped school bus.

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The following rules should be adhered to year-round:

- On a two-lane road or street, motorists approaching a school bus from either direction must stop when the bus displays flashing red warning lights and extends the stop signal arm.

- Vehicles may not pass until the flashing red lights and signals are turned off.

- Drivers traveling in the same direction as the bus are always required to stop.

- On a divided (separate roadways with median) highway of at least four lanes, drivers traveling in the opposite direction of the bus are not required to stop. However, they should proceed with all due caution and always watch for children.

- NEVER pass on the right side of a school bus where children enter or exit.

Stiff penalties are also in effect for motorists identified as illegally passing a stopped school bus. A driver who illegally passes a stopped school bus can expect a fine of no less than $150 and not exceeding $300.

An activity booklet for National School Bus Safety Week and other school bus safety information can be found on the Pupil Transportation page on the ALSDE website.

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