FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SCHOOL BUS SAFETY
Safety Tips, Statistics and the Law

Montgomery, Ala. - With school starting in school systems throughout Alabama, motorists are cautioned to be especially careful as they travel along Alabama’s streets and roads as school buses will again be on the road loading and unloading students across the state.

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. In far too many instances, students are injured or killed as a result of these illegal passings.

In the ALSDE’s most recent annual survey of illegal school bus passings conducted in April of 2013, 1,713 motorists were recorded as illegally passing Alabama school buses in one day. Over an entire school year, this could result in over 308,000 illegal passings of school buses with each one endangering the life of students.

The following rules are not only important as school starts, but 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. Always watching for children.
- NEVER pass on the right side of a school bus where children enter or exit.

Parents should discuss school bus safety with their children. Here are some safety points for students who ride school buses:

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- Arrive at the school bus stop at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive.
- Stay at least 10-15 feet away from the roadway while waiting on the bus and NO horseplay!
- Wait until the bus stops and the driver signals that it is safe to load the bus or cross the street.
- Respect the rights of others while riding the bus. Cooperate with the driver and remain in your seat.

According to Joe Lightsey, Director of Pupil Transportation, ALSDE, “The most dangerous part of a school bus ride is when the bus stops to load or unload students. We urge motorists to be particularly careful whenever they see a school bus stopping.”

Lightsey continued, “Alabama’s children are our most precious resource. We owe it to them to make sure we do all we can to provide safe transportation to and from school.”

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.

- If convicted twice for this violation, a fine from at least $300 up to $500 will be assessed. In addition, second offenders will have to complete at least 100 hours of community service and have their driving privileges revoked for 30 days.
- On a third conviction, fines from $500 to $1,000 will be given, 200 hours of community services must be completed and the driver’s license will be suspended for 90 days.
- Upon a fourth subsequent conviction, the driver will be charged with a Class C felony, punished by a minimum fine of $1,000, and driver’s license suspended for a period of one year.

For more information on school bus safety, visit the ALSDE Pupil Transportation website.

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