



## Safeguarding children outside the school bus

The Annual School Bus Safety Awareness Campaign (October 20-24) is just one of the initiatives designed to enhance child safety on and off the school bus. The campaign is coordinated by Safety Services Nova Scotia, a non profit and registered charity.

The theme is "For Kids' Sake, Stop For The School Bus". It's a reminder that vehicles must stop for a school bus that is stopped and displaying flashing red lights. It's illegal to pass the bus at this time. Frequently, children are crossing the street to and from their bus, and can be exposed to any traffic that passes the bus.

The penalty for passing a school bus illegally is \$406.45 and 6 points against the license (first offense, out of court settlement). Nevertheless, the number of illegal passing incidents remains high. There does not seem to be one particular group of drivers which pass the bus more frequently. Both men and women, in almost equal numbers, and drivers of all ages pass the bus illegally.

Most of the incidents occur when vehicles are driving toward the bus in the oncoming lane. Vehicles driving behind the bus in the same lane

are more likely to remain behind the bus and stop when it does.

A more recent initiative to combat illegal passing is the presence of exterior cameras on school buses. School boards have been installing the cameras, which can capture a vehicle and driver description, and license plate. This evidence is provided to police.

Schools remind children of the safer way to cross the street to and from the bus. One of the ways this is done is with orientation day for the Grade Primary students.

The procedure for children boarding a school bus in the morning is for all the children at the bus stop to walk onto the bus in single file. If they have to cross the street to board their bus, they can look for the bus driver's signal that it is okay to cross, and do so well in front of the bus.

At the end of the school day, children exit the bus and walk 3 metres (10 feet or "giant steps") ahead of the bus, on the shoulder of the road. Then they turn and walk in single file to the yellow line. They stop, look up at the bus driver, and wait for the bus driver's signal that it's safe to cross the



with their younger children to the bus stop in the morning. This helps ensure that the children don't play in the road, aren't bullied by other children, and stay warm while waiting for the bus.

School bus campaign activities that have taken place in September and October, leading up to the official campaign week include school bus safety information cards, distributed by police, a video contest, and safety messaging in local media and online. School bus safety information can also be found on the campaign website at [www.schoolbussafety.ca](http://www.schoolbussafety.ca)

remaining lane.

Young children, regardless of intelligence, are typically not able to judge how fast traffic is approaching. They may be excited about starting or finishing their school day, and impulsively dash across the street, forgetting the procedure. They may run behind the bus or stop and pick up their toy or book which they have dropped.

Parents of young children wait at the bus stop in the afternoon, and walk with them across the street, setting an example for their children.

Parents also walk



## Drivers have big role to play in school bus safety

### School Bus Safety Awareness Campaign Week runs Oct. 20-24

By Darrell Cole — TC Media

HALIFAX – While many safeguards have been put in place, the manager of community safety for Safety Services Nova Scotia says it only takes a momentary distraction to end up in tragedy.

"School bus safety in Nova Scotia is well managed and many safeguards have been put in place to protect the children, but our campaign is about raising awareness among the public to remind them to watch out for school buses, especially children crossing streets to and from their bus," Arminta Kennedy said. "There has never been a fatality on a school bus in Nova Scotia since they started running in the 1950s, but when children are outside the bus and vehicles are passing illegally there is obviously a greater risk for something to go very wrong."

"Children are usually very excited about going to school or they're excited to be getting home to tell their parents all about their school day. It's easy for them to forget the procedure and dash across the road without looking for traffic. That's why it's so important for drivers to stop. The onus is on them."

The annual School Bus Safety Awareness



Campaign runs between Oct. 20 and 24 and is just one of numerous initiatives designed to enhance child safety both on and off the school bus.

It's against the law to pass a school bus that is stopped with its red lights flashing and it comes with a \$406.45 fine and six demerit points against the driver of the offending vehicle. Still, bus drivers across the province continue to report instances where drivers have continued to pass.

Kennedy said situations in which a car passes a stopped bus from behind are bad enough, but there continue to be cases where oncoming vehicles fail to stop even though the bus has stopped and deployed its red safety lights.

"The focus of our campaign is illegal passing of school buses because it's a message we believe we need to continue raising awareness of," Kennedy said. "More people pass the school bus illegally than most people think. Most of the incidents occur when the vehicle is traveling

toward the school bus in the other lane."

The issue has led to a number of school boards putting cameras on buses to capture those vehicles that fail to stop.

"The bus drivers are looking out for the kids as they are crossing the street and it's often difficult for them to also try to catch licence plate numbers of vehicles that don't stop," she said. "School boards have a protocol that requires students to get off the bus to walk ahead of the bus on the shoulder, turn and cross the lane in front of the bus to the yellow line and look up for the driver's signal that it's OK to cross the remaining lane. The bus driver is occupied in doing that so it's difficult for him to get a licence plate number and vehicle description to give to police. The red light cameras may be useful in collecting some of that evidence that can be given to police."

Safety Services Nova Scotia has been co-ordinating school bus campaign activities for the months of September and October. During the campaign week, video contest winners will be announced, police will distribute school bus safety information cards, as well as safety messaging in local media and online and there will be a campaign launch on October 20.

The cards have also been made available at Access Nova Scotia centres and public libraries across the province.

Additional information on school bus safety is available at [www.schoolbussafety.ca](http://www.schoolbussafety.ca)



## DID YOU KNOW?

- There are 8 public school boards in Nova Scotia.
- The "rural" boards contain towns, villages and countryside within their coverage areas.
- The Halifax Regional School Board and Cape Breton-Victoria also have one or more cities within their coverage areas
- Most boards own and operate their own school buses.
- Stock Transportation provides busing on behalf of the Halifax Regional School Board and in Kings County on behalf of the Annapolis Valley Regional School Board.
- The "rural" boards operate approximately 85-118 buses each. The buses at each Board may travel about 2.1-2.7 million kilometers annually.
- Stock Transportation operates 457 buses, which travel about 12 million kilometers annually.
- Regulations require no more than 3 bus stops per 1.6 kilometres (1 mile)
- Buses operated by each Board make several thousand bus stops daily.
- School bus safety information:
  - Safety Services Nova Scotia [www.schoolbussafety.ca](http://www.schoolbussafety.ca)
  - Transport Canada <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/tp-tp2436-rs200407-menu-130.htm>

**Please Practice School Bus Safety Every Day!**

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**"Keep our children safe. Do not pass when red lights are flashing."**

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