

Back to School

Key Messages

- Slow down in school zones. The limit varies between communities but the concept remains the same: reducing your speed allows you more time to react and brake in the event of an emergency.
- Stay alert and drive with care. Pay special attention to children waiting to cross the street or stepping out from between parked cars.
- Obey crossing guards and bus signs and lights at all times.
- Passing motorists are the single biggest threat to children as they enter or leave a school bus.
- Penalties for speeding in school zones include a fine of at least \$200 and 3 demerit points under SGI's Safe Driver Recognition program.

Safety Messages

For children and parents:

- Follow the bus safety rules - make sure you always ride the bus safely.
- Stop. Look. Listen. Be alert at intersections and always look out for danger when crossing the street.
- No helmet, no bike! Always wear your helmet when riding your bike.
- Always wear your safety gear when rollerblading, skateboarding, or riding your scooter.
- Cross the street at a corner or crosswalk when it is safe to do so.

For drivers:

- Everybody has a role to play in keeping our children safe.
- Always watch for children crossing roads. Be prepared to stop or slow down.
- Alternating flashing yellow or amber lights means a bus is slowing down to stop. Do the same. The only exception to this rule is when the bus is on the opposite side of a highway divided by a median.
- Stop when the school bus activates its alternately flashing red lights. On a single lane highway you are required to stop in both directions.
- Know and obey the speed limits in school and playground zones.

Fact Sheet

- ✓ Drivers play a large role in back to school safety. Be alert and cautious. Watch out for children and school buses.
- ✓ Young students need to be aware of traffic safety rules as pedestrians, bicyclists, skateboarders and as school bus passengers.

Facts to Know

- In 2015, approximately 55 children (18.7%) under 15 were injured or killed as pedestrians in Saskatchewan.
- In Saskatchewan, most pedestrian collisions occurred in late afternoon and early evening. The highest hourly total occurred between 3 and 4 p.m.
- Friday is the worst day for pedestrian collisions and August was the worst month.
- About 30% of the other drivers involved in collisions with school buses committed a driver error. The most common driver error committed by other drivers was driving without due care and attention.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

When are school and playground zones in effect? What is the speed limit?

When travelling in school and playground zones, drivers must pay attention to the posted signs. The speed limit in both urban and rural school zones ranges from 30 km/h to 50km/h and is in effect all days unless the municipality posts other times and days.

What should I do when approaching a school bus?

Motorists need to respect the flashing lights on a school bus, which create a safe area for children around the vehicle and are often the children's only defense when they get on or off the bus.

Why do school buses have strobe lights?

Strobe lights are to be used during conditions of reduced visibility, for example during a blizzard or in fog, to increase the conspicuity of the school bus.

Strobe lights must also be active whenever a student is on board and the bus is not in a municipality that prohibits its use.

What do flashing amber lights mean?

Watch out for alternating flashing amber lights. They mean a school bus is slowing to stop and students will either be getting on or off the bus.

What do alternately flashing red lights mean?

Red means stop! The penalty for passing a school bus with its alternating flashing red lights activated starts at a \$360 fine and 4 demerit points.

- ✓ Slow down and stop when the school bus activates its alternately flashing red lights and stop arm. This means you must stop whether you are approaching an oncoming bus or following one. The only exception to this rule is when the bus is on the opposite side of a highway divided by a median.
- ✓ Some municipalities have passed bylaws not requiring school buses to activate their alternating flashing red lights and stop arm when they stop. In this case, motorists do not need to stop but should still be cautious and watch for pedestrians when the buses are loading or unloading students.
- ✓ Proceed only when the red lights on the bus have stopped flashing.
- ✓ Watch for school buses loading and unloading children, even if the lights aren't flashing and the stop arm is not in use.

How can children cross the road safely?

Practice the Stop, Look, and Listen crossing system: look in all directions before crossing the street; scan for danger left, right, ahead and behind; then proceed when you can safely do so. In rural areas, bus drivers activate the front school bus crossing arm and direct students to cross the highway in front of the crossing arm. This prevents children from occupying the blind spot directly in front of the bus and allows the bus driver to see the children.

What can I teach my children about getting to school or the school bus stop safely?

Walk on the sidewalk; if there is no sidewalk, walk on the left side of the street facing traffic, staying as far away from the vehicles as possible.

- ✓ Be at the bus stop before the school bus is scheduled to arrive. Never run after the school bus to try to catch up.

- ✓ Wait for the bus at a safe place at least 10 giant steps away from the road. Have younger children practise the steps to become familiar with this rule and pick a designated spot.
- ✓ Remember that if you can't see the driver, the driver can't see you either.
- ✓ Practise walking your child to school, so you can make sure they are taking the safest route or have an older child accompany them every day.

What about seatbelts on school buses?

Many parents wonder why school buses don't have seatbelts. This is a valid concern, but in fact, studies have found that lap belts in school buses may cause severe head and neck injuries in children during a collision. Transport Canada has more information available online at <https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/safevehicles-busesvans-index-409.htm>