



Press Release

2014 Survey Shows Motorists Continue to Pass Stopped School Buses

August 12, 2014

Des Moines, Iowa- Today, the national association representing state directors of pupil transportation released the results of its 4th annual survey on illegal passing of school buses. In 29 states throughout the country, 20 percent of the nation's school bus drivers participated in a one-day survey to report how many times motorists passed their stopped school buses illegally. Over 97,000 school bus drivers reported that 75,966 vehicles passed their buses illegally on a single day. Throughout a 180-day school year, these sample results point to more than 13 million violations by private motorists.

“We know that students are far safer in school buses, but when they are outside the bus, they are more vulnerable to injury or death,” said Max Christensen, president of the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services. “There are nearly a half million school buses on the road each day in the United States. This survey captured only a fraction of the violations that bus drivers and traffic officers know all too well are occurring each and every day.” Added Christensen, “Any driver who passes a stopped school bus illegally is endangering children and his or her future. These results highlight the potentially tragic consequences of saving a few seconds by passing a school bus. It can be devastating not only for the victims and their families, but also for the motorist who hits a child and will have to live with the sad consequences.”

NASDPTS first coordinated the annual survey in 2011, and the results have been unfortunately consistent. In 2011, 76,685 illegal passes were documented during the one-day survey. In 2012, 88,025 illegal passes were reported, and in 2013, 85,279 were reported. To counter the problem, some states are adopting more stringent safety countermeasures, such as improved motorist education, increased fines, and more law enforcement, including increasing use of photo evidence from cameras mounted on the sides of school buses. There is no single solution. A comprehensive approach, involving education, frequent, visible enforcement, and engineering improvements, is necessary to reduce illegal passing and ensure children the safest possible trip to and from school.

As part of its efforts to counter illegal passing, in 2013 NASDPTS compiled state laws and rules to provide a nationwide inventory of required procedures specifying when motorists must stop for school buses. The research documented the consequences in different states for violations, whether video evidence is admissible in each state, and, what types of evidence are necessary for law enforcement agencies to issue citations. The goal was to highlight best practices and provide benchmarks that states can use to evaluate their own laws and rules and determine if they need to be strengthened.

NASDPTS encourages state directors, local school districts, law enforcement agencies, legislators, and all motorists to continue their efforts to solve this ongoing threat to the safety of students.

Complete information on the project, including the detailed 2014 survey results and the 2013 compendium of state laws, can be found at www.nasdpts.org/stoparm or by contacting North Carolina's State Director, Derek Graham (Derek.Graham@dpi.nc.gov), or NASDPTS Executive Director, Charlie Hood (ExecDir@nasdpts.org).

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