

The federal government is reminding drivers that it's both illegal, and highly dangerous, to pass a school bus while its stop arm is extended.

Passing a stopped school bus is against the law and could have fatal consequences. Nothing is worth the risk," said NHTSA Acting Administrator Ann Carlson. "Children's lives are on the line -- every driver needs to stop when a school-bus stop arm is extended."

Drivers speeding past stopped school buses is a major issue all across the country, with a [recent survey](#) from the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation finding that this reckless behavior occurs roughly 41 million times in the United States during a single school year. And that issue has resulted in deadly consequences for some of the country's youngest, most-vulnerable road users.

From 2011 through 2020, there were 1,009 fatal school bus-related crashes killing 1,125 Americans, 218 of which were school-age children, according to NHTSA data. As might be expected, more school-age pedestrians were killed during morning drop-off and afternoon dismissal, from 7 to 8 a.m. and from 3 to 4 p.m., than during any other time of day.

The NHTSA has provided the following list of safety tips for drivers:

- The overall best practice is to "always stop if there's a school bus."
- Yellow flashing lights indicate the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicle.
- Motorists may begin moving **only** when the red flashing lights are turned off, the stop arm is withdrawn, and the bus begins to move.
- Never pass on the right side of the bus, where children enter or exit. This is illegal and can have tragic results.
- The greatest risk to a child isn't riding a school bus but approaching or leaving one. That's why, as a vehicle driver, it is especially important to pay attention. Students' lives are on the line.
- Slow Down. Watch for children walking in the street, especially if there are no sidewalks in the neighborhood. Watch for children playing and gathering near bus stops.
- Don't drive distracted. Be alert. Children arriving for the bus may dart into the street without looking for traffic.
- Watch out for young people who may be distracted and not paying attention to the traffic around them.