

7 Simple Words for Safe Back-to-School Driving

As an estimated 480,000 school buses return to U.S. roads over the next few weeks, it's time for professional drivers to brush up on their own lesson plan: How to drive with care during back-to-school season. Remember these 7 words that can help you avoid an accident and potentially save a life.

Stop

When you see a bus with flashing red lights and a stop arm extended, you must stop no matter which direction you are heading. It's illegal in all 50 states to pass a school bus that's loading and unloading children unless the bus is on the other side of a divided road. When you stop, leave plenty of room so children can get to and from a bus. The space 10 feet around a bus is considered the most dangerous for children because bus drivers cannot see children walking in that zone.

Slow

Always obey the flashing lights and posted speed limits within school zones. Most have posted speeds of 10, 15 or 20 mph during student drop-off and pickup times. Avoid changing lanes, passing or making U-turns in school zones. Also, always obey signals from crossing guards. In some states they carry the same authority as law enforcement officers.

Plan

Know the location of every school zone on your route and plan for extra travel time. Also, expect delays whenever you travel on residential roads between 6 – 9 a.m. or 2 – 5 p.m. They're the most frequent times for bus traffic.

Scan

Look twice for pedestrians when approaching any crosswalk or intersection during peak school travel times. Also, remember that children may not use crosswalks. Scan the side of the road between parked cars and other places where children may appear unexpectedly and attempt to cross the street.



Watch

School-time driving safety isn't just about buses. Teenagers are also driving to school in their own cars. Some are driving for the first time and may not follow all traffic laws. Back-to-school season also means an increase in bicyclists. Be on the lookout and share the road.

Know

Your truck's horn sounds much louder to children outside the truck than it does to you in the cab. Don't honk the horn at children walking across the street or on bicycles. The noise may startle them and cause them to fall or get hurt.

Focus

Put the cell phone down and keep your focus on the road. Avoid eating, changing radio stations or adjusting the navigation system in your truck.