

Passing a School Bus in Michigan: Laws, Fines, and Safety Tips

The fine for passing a stopped school bus in Michigan is anywhere from \$100 to \$500, and that doesn't include court costs.

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By Beth Dalbey (Patch National Staff) _ Updated September 4, 2016 9:45 pm ET

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Students across Michigan will be heading back to school in the next few weeks, and for many of them, their school days will begin and end on a bus. It's a good time to review the state law on passing school buses that are stopped to load and unload children.

A law signed by Gov. Rick Snyder in 2012 eliminated an earlier provision that allowed motorists to pass a stopped school bus in an intersection where traffic is controlled by a motorist.

Under the new law, motorists must come to a complete stop at least 20 feet from a school bus whenever a bus is stopped and employing the use of its two red flashing signals. The stop arm is usually extended during these times. The driver may only proceed once the bus resumes motion.

“The safety of our students always comes first and this will eliminate any confusion as to when it is and is not okay to pass a parked school bus,” Snyder said in a statement at the time he signed the legislation into law.

Those who pass stopped school buses may be charged with civil infractions carrying a civil fine of between \$100 and \$500 and up to \$100 in costs. Violators may also be required to perform up to 100 hours of community service at a school.

When yellow hazard warning lights are flashing on a moving or stopped bus: Drive with caution and be prepared to stop. The bus driver activates the yellow lights when the bus is slowing down and preparing to stop.

Here are some additional safety tips from the [Michigan State Police](#) and the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#):

Drivers

- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch out for children walking or bicycling to school.
- When driving in neighborhoods with school zones, watch out for young people who may be thinking about getting to school, but may not be thinking of getting there safely.
- Slow down. Watch for children walking in the street, especially if there are no sidewalks in neighborhood.
- Slow down. Watch for children playing and congregating near bus stops.
- Be alert. Children arriving late for the bus may dart into the street without looking for traffic.

Children

- Get to the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive.
- When the bus approaches, stand at least three giant steps (6 feet) away from the curb, and line up away from the street.
- Wait until the bus stops, the door opens, and the driver says that it's okay before stepping onto the bus.
- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk on the sidewalk or along the side of the road to a point at least five giant steps (10 feet) ahead of the bus before you cross. Be sure that the bus driver can see you, and you can see the bus driver.
- Use the handrails to avoid falls. When exiting the bus, be careful that clothing with drawstrings, and book bags with straps don't get caught in the handrails or doors.
- Never walk behind the bus.
- Walk at least three giant steps away from the side of the bus.
- If you drop something near the bus, tell the bus driver. Never try to pick it up because the driver may not be able to see you.

Parents

- Teach children to follow these common sense practices to make school bus transportation safer.
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Teachers

- Teach young children the safety rules for walking, bicycling, or riding in a car or bus.
- Use free resources from the NHTSA, such as "Kids, the School Bus and You," or NHTSA's safety series, "Getting to School Safely" series for free downloads and classroom handouts.