

Under the Trooper's Hat: Trooper Michael Hayen

School Bus Safety

With school back in session, it's important for motorists to use caution when children are getting on or off a school bus. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, children are safer riding on school buses than in private vehicles. The most hazardous times for children who ride a school bus is when they are getting on and off a bus.

According to North Dakota Century Code 39-10-46, the driver of a vehicle meeting or overtaking from either direction any school bus stopped on the highway shall stop the vehicle before reaching the school bus. The school bus must have its flashing red lights, or the stop sign on the control arm activated. The driver of a vehicle may not proceed until the school bus resumes motion, the driver is signaled by the school bus driver to proceed, or the flashing red lights and the stop sign on the control arm are no longer activated.

The driver of a vehicle upon a highway with separate roadways need not stop upon meeting or passing a school bus which is on a different roadway.

Every school bus must be equipped with a stop sign or a control arm and red visual signals. The stop sign or red lights may only be activated by the driver of the school bus when the vehicle is stopped on the highway to receive or discharge schoolchildren.

School Bus Evacuation Drills

There is currently no state law requiring bus evacuation drills be taught to students. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) provides guidance to schools on bus evacuation drills in the emergency procedures section of the School Bus Driver's Guide located on the NDDPI website. This is the guidance given to schools on school bus evacuation drills.

All children should be given an opportunity to participate in evacuation drills including those children who ride only on special trips.

All children should be instructed in school bus passenger safety and procedures for emergency evacuation prior to participation in evacuation drills.

- School bus evacuation drills should be held more often during fall and spring months.
- Drills should be held in restricted off-street areas and not on bus routes.
- All types of emergency evacuations should be practiced with emphasis on utilizing the rear emergency exit.
- At least once each school semester, provide all students transported to and from school in a bus with instruction on the location and operation of all emergency exits and provide them supervised emergency exit drills.
- Before departure of each school activity trip, provide all students transported on a school bus or school-chartered bus with instruction on the location and demonstration of the operation of all emergency exits.

It's important for school children to be familiar with the evacuation process in the event of a crash or rollover. The lack of knowledge and training about emergency exits on school buses could easily result in additional injuries or death due to lack of emergency exit training.

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