

Virginia Department of Education Pupil Transportation

Safe Practices for Loading and Unloading



The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration considers school buses to be the safest form of transportation for daily school commutes. However, nationally, about 16 students each year are fatally injured while getting on or off a school bus. Our goal is to reduce that number through the education of all persons that are involved in the pupil transportation process.

Parents and guardians are reminded to:

1. Never allow a child or student to run towards, behind, away from or after a stopped or moving school bus. Many students have been fatally injured while running towards or away from the school bus. The student should cautiously walk towards or away from a stopped school bus.
2. Instruct students to stop, look, and listen for possible dangers prior to approaching or exiting the school bus.
3. Teach and instruct children or students to alert an adult when any item is dropped around any vehicle, including a school bus.
4. Supervise children to make sure they arrive at the stop on time.
5. Direct children not to play or stand too close to a road or in the roadway.
6. Contact your local pupil transportation department when hazardous conditions exist at a bus stop.

Students are reminded to:

1. Never run towards, behind, away from or after a stopped or moving school bus. Students should walk while cautiously observing the environment around them.
2. Stop, look, and listen for possible dangers prior to approaching or exiting a school bus.
3. Alert an adult when you have dropped an item around any vehicle, including a school bus.
4. Be at the bus stop on time.
5. Not play at the bus stop or in the roadway.
6. Wait for the school bus driver to signal when it is safe for you to cross the roadway.

The Danger Zones of the School Bus

Each year, nationwide, numerous students are injured getting on or off the school bus. Most of those fatally injured are children, five to seven years old. Students are more likely to be injured while within the Danger Zones of the school bus. The Danger Zones extend ten feet around the perimeter of the school bus. Situations where persons are positioned in close proximity of the wheels and/or the school bus' body is especially dangerous. That danger is magnified when the school bus is in motion.

Many students will assume that the bus driver can see them while in the Danger Zones. That assumption can be fatal. The school bus is a very large vehicle and students may not always be visible to the school bus driver when in the Danger Zones. Again, this danger is compounded when the child is small in stature, bending down or when there is poor direct visibility of the student. Other dangers include vehicles that may pass the school bus on the left side as well as the right side of the school bus.

