



# KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

## NEWS RELEASE

No. 17-094

July 25, 2017

**MEDIA CONTACT:** Rebecca Blessing

**Office:** (502) 564-2000, ext. 4604 | **Cell:** (502) 330-5063 | **E-mail:** [rebecca.blessing@education.ky.gov](mailto:rebecca.blessing@education.ky.gov)

## **BILLBOARDS REMIND DRIVERS TO STOP FOR SCHOOL BUSES**

(FRANKFORT, Ky.) – As a new school year approaches, Kentucky drivers will soon see reminders to watch out for stopped school buses.

This week, 51 billboards started going up across the state that warn of the danger of passing a stopped school bus. The billboards feature an extended stop sign arm on the side of a school bus with the words, "It's not JUST a stop sign, it's a child's life."

"It is paramount that our children arrive at school and back home safely each day," said Commissioner of Education Stephen Pruitt. "While stopping for a school bus might be a minor inconvenience for drivers, the penalty for passing a stopped school bus can be severe. Drivers can receive a fine, but for a child, it could be a matter of life or death. I ask all Kentuckians to be especially cautious around school buses, not just at the beginning of the school year, but year round."

Loading and unloading the school bus is the most common time for accidents to occur. Last school year, a vehicle passing a school bus on the right side hit three children waiting at their school bus stop in Louisville. In the past 46 years, 1,230 students have died nationwide, with the majority of children being under the age of 10. Those fatalities involved 792 students on the way home and 395 on the way to school.

In Kentucky, it is illegal to pass a stopped school bus in either direction on a two-lane road if the warning lights on the bus are on. In April, while conducting a statewide survey on illegal passing of stopped school buses, 304 incidents were reported to the Kentucky Department of Education.

School bus drivers use a flashing signal light system to alert motorists of what is about to happen:

- Yellow flashing lights indicate that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Motorists should slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles.
- Red flashing lights and extended stop arms indicate that the bus has stopped and that children are getting on or off the bus. Motorists must stop their cars and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop sign is withdrawn, and the bus begins moving before they can start moving again.

More than 385,000 children in Kentucky ride some 9,855 school buses each day. To keep those children safe during their travels, the National Transportation Safety Administration offers these tips to drivers:

- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch out for children walking or bicycling to school.

(more)

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- 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 the neighborhood.
- 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.
- Observe the posted speed limit in school zones.

The billboard reminders are going up in Lexington, Mt. Sterling, Morehead, London, Georgetown, Frankfort, Versailles, Harrodsburg, Hopkinsville, Paducah, Kenton County, Campbell County, Louisville, Taylorsville, Hazard, Pikeville, Owensboro, and will be up for about a month.

The billboard space is provided at a discounted rate by Lamar Advertising Company of Lexington, Outfront Media of Louisville and Fairway Outdoor Advertising in Eastern Kentucky.

The billboards are part of a KDE Back to School Campaign that includes a [website](#) established for school districts. The campaign website features additional school bus safety resources including bus safety pledge cards, cutouts, flyers and coloring pages.

Companies and community members wishing to support the Back to School Billboard Campaign should contact their local school district superintendent or transportation director.

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