School Zones

JUNE 2026

LENGTH 5–7 minutes

TO PREPARE Read the background information.

BACKGROUND

- Everyone has a responsibility to keep children safe on their way to and from school.
- Each school day, millions of children ride school buses. Did you know that the school bus is one of the safest vehicles on the road? According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, less than 1% of all traffic fatalities involve children on school transportation vehicles.
- However, children are more at risk when approaching and leaving a school bus. It's important for all drivers, as well as parents and students, to understand school bus safety.
- While school buses are the most regulated vehicles on the road, stop-arm laws protect children from other motorists.

DISCUSSION

- When you see a school bus slowing down or stopping, it's not just the bus that you need to have your eyes on, but the surrounding area too.
- Passing a stopped school bus poses a risk to children and others on the road.

What should you do when driving in a school zone?

- Stay alert and free of distraction. Using a handheld electronic device while driving in an active school zone is against the law. https://www.txdot.gov/safety/driving-laws/texting-cellphone-laws.html.
- Always obey school zone speed limit signs. These zones will have reduced speed limits (usually between 15 and 25 miles per hour) during specific hours.
- Keep an eye on children gathered at bus stops. Watch for children who might dart across the street or between vehicles.

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Buses often have a difficult time navigating the increase in traffic during the mornings and afternoons in school zones. What should you know when school buses are on the road?

- Yield the right of way to buses at all times.
- Yellow flashing lights indicate the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. You should slow down and prepare to stop your vehicle.
- Red flashing lights and extended stop arms indicate the bus has stopped and children are getting on or off. You must stop your car and wait until the red lights stop flashing, the extended stop-arm is withdrawn and the bus begins moving before you can start driving again.
- Share the road and avoid speeding when busses are present.

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION

- Use these tips from the Texas Department of Insurance to re-cap the discussion:
  - In addition to Texas doubling fines in school zones, it imposes an extra $25 court cost onto the cost of the ticket. These extra funds go back to the school system's crossing guard program and other student safety plans.
  - Regardless of the fine, the life of a child is priceless. Stay alert, obey the speed limit, and avoid distractions. The few seconds it takes to slow down in a school zone can save the life of a child.

SUMMARY

- Plan your journey to avoid school zones if possible. Give yourself extra time. Watch for pedestrians.
- Drivers need to be on high alert between 7-8 A.M. and 3-4 P.M. since these are typically the times when children travel to and from school.
- One-minute school zone safety video from Texas Department of Transportation: https://ftp.txdot.gov/pub/txdot-info/safety/back-to-school/videos/short-video-sd.mp4

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