

School Bus Safety

The safety record of school buses in North **America** and the fact that statistically school buses are the safest means of transportation on all roads and highways is no coincidence. There are several reasons for this; one being the high manufacturing standards of school buses and ongoing improvements to them. However, much of the credit for this safety record must go to the people who maintain and drive these buses as well as the people that train, test and evaluate them. Due to the fact that 40% of BPSD's enrolled students are transported by bus, safety is a very high priority in the Division.

In Beautiful Plains School Division there are school bus routes extending from the Assiniboine River in the South to the Village of Riding Mountain in the North. All bus drivers and spare drivers must attend one in-service day per year to review proper school bus operating practices, changes in regulations, medical and first aid training, and student behavior management techniques. Students, who are transported by bus either on a daily basis or for field trips are trained and instructed in proper evacuation and ridership procedures twice a year.

All school buses are given a complete mechanical inspection twice a year and minor inspections are conducted at more frequent intervals. As well, school bus drivers do pre and post inspections daily to observe the mechanical and safety equipment on the bus. The fleet is kept in top condition due to the diligence of the staff at the bus garage as well as the drivers, in both the maintenance and operation of the buses.

The safety of students can also be maximized by the citizens of our communities knowing when it is appropriate to pass a bus. Statistically, 85% of all school bus accidents where students are injured occur during loading and/or unloading of students. In regards to this fact, please remember that it is illegal and dangerous to pass a school bus when its red lights are flashing and the stop sign is out.

School buses have been on Manitoba roads for decades and have been very important to the education of our students. The buses are equipped with lighted stop signs which the bus drivers put out when students are boarding, exiting or crossing the road. There is a substantial penalty for drivers who pass a bus with the stop sign out. There is ample education on the radio, TV and in newspapers in regards to school bus safety. One would think that bus safety education is highly promoted and obeyed, yet alarming footage was discovered this winter when a Winnipeg based company equipped ten buses across the prairies with cameras. The footage revealed vehicles driving past stopped school buses when the stop sign was put out and the red lights were flashing at an average rate of 5 times per bus per week. Over a four month period, 423 violations were caught on camera. This indicates that students were put at risk 423 times in four months (423 times in approximately 100 school days). In some cases cars passed vehicles which were already stopped behind the bus.

REMEMBER: When you are driving your vehicle and you see a **BIG YELLOW** school bus with the **FLASHING** stop sign out – **STOP!!!** Children are trying to get home safely.

As always if you have any questions or concerns about student transportation feel free to contact your trustee, bus garage or division office.

Submitted by:
Board of Trustees
Beautiful Plains School Division