



School Bus Safety

Each year in the United States, approximately 450,000 public school buses travel 4.3 billion miles to transport 23.5 million children to-and-from school and school-related activities. In 2008, there were 781 collisions either directly or indirectly involving a school bus in Kentucky. These collisions resulted in 324 injuries and five fatalities.

Seat belts and school buses

- **What agency establishes safety guidelines for buses?**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) establishes Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries from motor vehicle crashes, including crashes involving school buses. These standards regulate how vehicles and buses are made. NHTSA also works with each state on school bus safety and occupant protection programs.

- **Why are seat belts not on school buses?**

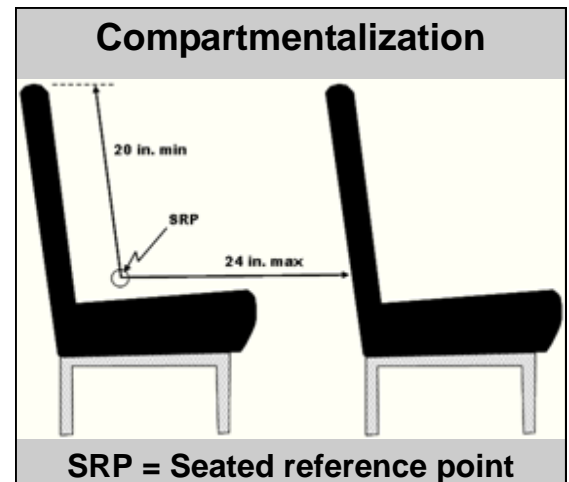
There is no question that seat belts play an important role in keeping occupants safe in vehicles, however, school buses are different by design and use a different kind of safety restraint system.

Large school buses have a Gross Weight Vehicle Rating (GWVR) of over 10,000 pounds. These buses are heavier and distribute crash forces differently than other vehicles. Seat belts are only required for drivers. According to NHTSA, the best way to provide crash protection is through “compartmentalization.” Through this concept, protection is provided by flexible, high, energy-absorbing seat backs and narrow spacing between the seats. This creates a protective compartment to confine the passenger in a crash.

Crash data show that compartmentalization is effective at protecting school bus passengers. NHTSA’s 2002 Report to Congress found that the addition of lap belts did not improve occupant protection for the severe frontal impacts that were studied.

Small school buses have a GWVR of 10,000 pounds or less. These buses are required to have seat belts. Lower anchors are also required in at least two seating positions in small buses made after September 2002. Tether anchors are not required.

For more information on safety recommendations and child safety research on school buses, visit <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-01/esv/esv19/05-0325-W.pdf>. For the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommendations on school bus safety visit www.aap.org.



Did you know?



A school bus is the safest form of ground transportation. It is nearly *eight times* safer than a passenger vehicle. The school bus fatality rate of 0.2 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is considerably lower than the 1.44 per 100 million VMT of passenger cars or light trucks.

Getting to the bus

- When waiting for the bus, stay away from traffic and avoid roughhousing or other behavior that can lead to carelessness. Do not stray onto streets, alleys or private property.
- Line up away from the street or road as the bus approaches.
- Wait until the bus comes to a complete stop and the door opens before stepping onto the roadway.
- Use the hand rail when stepping onto the bus.



Behavior on the bus

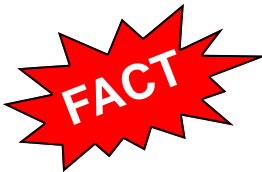
- Find a seat, sit down and talk quietly. Yelling or other noises can distract the bus driver.
- Never put your head, arms or hands out of the window.
- Keep the aisles clear. Books or bags are tripping hazards and can block the way in an emergency.
- Before reaching your stop, get ready to leave by getting your books and belongings together.
- At your stop, wait for the bus to stop completely before getting up from your seat. Walk to the front door and exit using the hand rail.

Getting off the bus

- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk at least ten feet ahead of the bus along the side of the road until you can turn around and see the driver.
- Make sure the bus driver can see you.
- Wait for a signal from the driver before beginning to cross.



- When the driver signals, walk across the road, keeping an eye out for sudden traffic changes.
 - Do not cross the center line of the road until the driver has signaled that it is safe for you to begin walking.
 - Look left, right and then left again before crossing the street. Continue to look in this manner until you are safely across.
- Stay away from the rear wheels of the bus at all times.



Getting to and from the bus is more dangerous than riding the bus. Pedestrian fatalities account for the highest number of school bus-related fatalities with the greater risk in loading zones.

For additional information:

- National Academy of Sciences: www.nasonline.org
- National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services: www.nasdpts.org
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: www.nhtsa.dot.gov
- National Safety Council: www.nsc.org
- National Transportation Safety Board: www.nts.gov