

August 28, 2007

The Hanover County Sheriff's Office would like to remind all motorists that the new school year will begin on September 4, 2007. We need your assistance to ensure that each and everyone adhere to the laws related to stopping for a school bus and speed limits in school zones.

The Hanover County Sheriff's Office will participate in the American Automobile Association's "School's Open – Drive Carefully" campaign. As part of this campaign, posters have been distributed to area stores and gas stations reminding motorists that school is open and to drive safely.

In addition to the posters, Hanover County patrol deputies will be observing several school bus stops and in some cases they will actually follow the school bus for the duration of their morning or afternoon bus routes. While the Sheriff's Office responds to and investigates all reports of motorists driving unsafely at or near bus stops, this effort will provide the deputy an opportunity to directly observe any infractions, be a visible deterrent, and bring additional security at various bus stops.

In some cases when a motorist does pass a school bus, it is because of inattention or lack of knowledge. The goal of this program is not to "catch" someone passing a school bus, but to ensure all Hanover motorists, parents, and children are aware of the laws and children are safely transported to school.

Motorists are also reminded that school zone speed limits are reduced when the yellow lights are flashing, and that deputies will also be actively enforcing this law.

For twenty-three million students nationwide, the school day begins and ends with a trip on a school bus. The greatest risk is not riding the bus, but approaching or leaving the bus. Here are some helpful hints for drivers, children, and parents:



### Drivers

- When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch out for children going to the bus stop.
- Slow down. Watch for children walking in the street, especially if there are no sidewalks in the neighborhood.
- Slow down. 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.
- **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. 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 driving again.
- Drivers are **required** to stop for a school bus when they are headed towards it even when approaching from a crosstreet. However, drivers are not required to stop when approaching a stopped school bus when the roadways of the driver and the school bus are divided by a physical barrier or an unpaved area.

## Children

- Get to the bus stop at least five minutes before the bus is scheduled to arrive. When the bus approaches, stand at least three giant steps (6 feet) away from the curb, and line up away from the street.
- Wait until the bus stops, the door opens, and the driver says that it's okay before stepping onto the bus.
- If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk on the sidewalk or along the side of the road to a point at least five giant steps (10 feet) ahead of the bus before you cross. Be sure that the bus driver can see you and you can see the bus driver.
- Use the handrails to avoid falls. When exiting the bus, be careful that clothing with drawstrings and book bags with straps don't get caught in the handrails or doors.
- Never walk behind the bus.
- Walk at least three giant steps away from the side of the bus.
- If you drop something near the bus, tell the bus driver. Never try to pick it up because the driver may not be able to see you.

## Parents

- Teach children to follow these common sense practices to make school bus transportation safer.

**For additional information, please contact Lieutenant Kenny B. Epling at 365-6434.**

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