

School Bus

The Vermilion Municipal Court has recently experienced an increase in school bus violations which concerns the court. Since the first of the year we have had 6 violations for passing a stopped school bus. What we would like the community to understand is that you must stop for a stopped school bus. The bus driver will activate the amber lights a minimum of 30 feet before the stop. Be prepared to stop. The bus driver must follow safety procedures that are required by State law.

The defendant's in court have made excuses such as "I stopped but didn't see any children so then I proceeded" and "I slowed down so I was driving safely". Clearly they do not understand the law.

Ohio Revised Code 4511.75 provides that a driver of a vehicle meeting or overtaking a school bus stopped to pick up or drop off children "shall stop at least ten feet from the front or rear of the school bus and shall not proceed until such school bus resumes motion or until signaled by the school bus driver to proceed".

If a bus is stopped on a road that has fewer than four lanes all traffic proceeding in either direction must stop. If a bus is stopped on a highway that has four or more lanes only traffic proceeding in the same direction as the bus must stop

A motorist does not have the option to decide that it is safe to proceed. The motorist may only pass the school bus when the flashing red lights are turned off. There is no time limit for a school bus to remain stationary after which a motorist may proceed. A failure to stop for a stopped school bus violation include penalties of a fine up to \$500.00 and a possible class seven license suspension.

The safety of our school children and school bus safety are very important. The school bus remains one of the safest ways to get our children to school. Bus driver's have an important job to make sure your children make it to school safely. Please speak with your child concerning proper behavior while riding a bus. Such as no yelling or standing while the bus is moving. With limited adult supervision children may misbehave which will pose a risk to everyone.

Many of the safety problems occur while waiting for or exiting a school bus. Make sure your child knows that there should be no pushing or shoving while waiting at the bus stop. A child could get shoved into the path of an oncoming school bus. The most dangerous zones are the front and back area of the bus. There is the danger from vehicles passing from behind or on the shoulder along with passing vehicles in the other lane of traffic. You must stop within 15 feet away from the front and behind of the bus. We need to be extra cautious around school busses and in school zones.

Also, we are now entering "orange cone season". Spring is the kick off National Work Zone Awareness Week to encourage safe driving through highway construction sites. Ohio law mandates that all fines in marked construction areas be doubled. A report released from the U.S. Department of Transportation data shows that roadway fatalities fell in 2010 by three percent from 2009 to 32,788 which is the lowest level since 1949. The Federal Highway Administration has improved the work zone design, increased training, strengthen law enforcement near work zones and heighten awareness among drivers which helped reduce the number of work zone fatalities. They urge drivers not to use a cell phone or text while driving in a construction zone. Stay alert and expect the unexpected. Slow down and do not tailgate. Pay attention to all signs and obey the flaggers. Please be patient, stay calm and know the road rules for work zones.

As of October 7, 2009 children in Ohio are required to use belt-positioning booster seats when they outgrow their child safety seats until they are 8 years old unless they are at least 4 feet, 9 inches tall

The Ohio revised code child restraint law requires the following: children less than 4 years old or 40 pounds must use a child safety seat. Children ages 8-15 must use a child safety seat or safety belt. New in 2009, is that children less than 8 years old, unless they are at least 4 feet, 9 inches tall must use a booster seat.

Law enforcement issued warnings for the first six months. Full enforcement began on April 7, 2010. Fines will range from \$25.00 to \$75.00 per occurrence.

This law is very important to keep our children from risk of serious injury if involved in a motor vehicle crash. Many children in Ohio are still not in booster seats. Motor vehicle traffic remains the leading cause of death for Ohio children aged 4 to 7 years. From 1999 to 2006 at least 34 Ohio children aged 4-7 years old died as occupants in motor vehicles.

Booster seats raise a child up so the shoulder belt fits correctly by lying over the middle of the shoulder and center of chest. The booster seat also positions the lap belt across the upper hips and thighs not the stomach. Without the seat the lap belt could cause hip, stomach and spinal cord injuries in a crash.

Booster seats are fairly inexpensive to purchase. You may visit the websites of the American Academy of Pediatrics Family Car Seat guide at <http://www.aap.org/family/Carseatguide.htm#boosterSeats> or 2008 NHTSSA Ease of Use Ratings for Booster Seats at http://www.nhtsa.gov/portal/nhtsa_eou/info.jsp?type=booster.

Your child can move from a booster seat to a seat belt when they are tall enough to sit against the vehicle seat back with their knees bent at the edge of the seat without slouching. The belt should lie in the middle of their chest and shoulder not neck or throat. Additional information on proper fitting can be found at <http://www.carseat.org/>

A person who is cited for this minor misdemeanor violation, 4511.213, will be assessed a fine of up to \$150.00. Another law that many drivers seem to be unaware of pertains to passing stopped law enforcement vehicles. When passing a stopped emergency or law enforcement vehicle with its flashing light on you must vacate the closest lane or reduce your speed by at least 20 mph. This law is very important because it protects the lives of those who are trying to protect or help us. The law applies to police, other law enforcement vehicles, fire vehicles, public and private ambulances.