

DID YOU KNOW???

SCHOOL RESUMES – WATCH FOR STUDENTS & STOPPED BUSES

Probably the worst thing any driver could encounter is hitting a child. Then, why do an estimated 50,000 motorists illegally pass a stopped school bus in New York State EVERY SCHOOL DAY? Certainly every driver knows it is against the law to pass a stopped school bus with red lights flashing, no matter what state or province you are driving in.

Driver distraction, now the biggest problem in highway safety, is most likely a major factor, as drivers concentrate on things other than the task of driving. No matter the reasons, there is no excuse for passing a stopped school bus.

In NYS, you must stop whether you are approaching the school bus from the front or overtaking it from the rear. It is also illegal to pass a stopped school bus on divided and multi-lane highways. This law also covers school buses that are stopped on school property to load and discharge students – if the flashing red lights are on, you cannot pass the bus from any direction, even in school parking lots.

If you are convicted of passing a stopped school bus, five violation points are assigned to your driving record by NYS DMV. Additionally, the fines for this infraction range from \$250 to \$400 plus applicable surcharges for the first time offense.

Enforcement agencies work closely with school districts, especially shortly after school resumes in the fall, and periodically throughout the school year, to enforce the vehicle and traffic laws applicable to passing stopped school buses and for violations of school speed zones. In Franklin County, a September date has already been finalized for increased enforcement in the Malone Central School District. Enhanced enforcement in other school districts is always a strong possibility.

You should also be aware that many school districts, including Malone, equip some school buses with video cameras that activate with the flashing red lights and stop signs, and will record any vehicle that passes a stopped school bus, including the license plate number. This can be used to insure the vehicle's owner will get a visit and potentially a ticket from the police.

Lastly, a quick review of school speed limits, which will be the subject of next week's "Did You Know" article. School speed limits on streets and roads adjacent to schools require reduced speed during the hours stated on the regulatory signs. The signs may also include flashing yellow beacons. When used alone, the times that the school speed limit is in effect should be stated on the signs but can only be within the 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. time frame. When coupled with flashing beacons, the speed limit is in effect when the beacons are flashing, and the signs associated with the beacons state that.

Now that school is in session, pay attention to your driving, and NEVER pass a stopped school bus when the red lights are flashing. Be alert to students walking to/from school, and the possibility that students are riding their bicycles to school or back home. Safety for our children is the responsibility of all drivers! Are you on board?

For more articles on traffic law and safety, go to the traffic safety board's web site at: www.franklincony.org and click on "Traffic Safety Board" under departments then look for Did You Know articles under "services". You may also email me at: dwerner151@verizon.net