

# NEWS RELEASE

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## Alabama Department of Public Safety

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### **State Troopers Urge Motorists to Watch Out for School Buses, *Be Alert and Drive with Caution in School Zones***

MONTGOMERY — As students return to schools throughout the state, Alabama state troopers encourage motorists to watch out for school buses, young pedestrians and bicyclists, and to be particularly cautious when traveling through school zones, according to Col. W.M. Coppage, director of the Alabama Department of Public Safety.

Coppage said the beginning of the school year brings changes in traffic patterns and heightens the need for traffic safety, especially in school zones and around school buses. “There is increased congestion in school zones, including pedestrian and bicycle traffic, and that requires increased caution on the part of all motorists,” said Coppage.

“We ask that all Alabamians do their part to ensure the safety of our children as they travel to and from school each day,” he said.

Coppage reminded motorists that state law requires vehicles to stop when meeting or following a school bus that is stopped to receive or discharge passengers. “Traffic must stop for buses as children get on and off, and motorists may not proceed until the bus has retracted its stop signal and turned off its flashing red lights,” he said.

As the result of new legislation effective Oct. 1, drivers on divided highways with four or more lanes which permit at least two lanes of traffic to travel in opposite directions need not stop when meeting a school bus which is stopped in the opposing roadway. “Divided highway” is defined as a roadway where opposing lanes are divided in order to impede traffic traveling in one direction from crossing over into the opposing lane(s). This includes grass medians, concrete barriers, guardrails, etc.

Alabama state troopers and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration provide the following back-to-school safety tips.

#### **Tips for Motorists**

- Slow down and obey all traffic laws and speed limits.
- Always stop for a school bus that has stopped to load or unload passengers. Red flashing lights and an extended stop arm tell you the school bus is stopped to load or unload children.
- Be alert and ready to stop. Watch for children walking in the street, especially where there are no sidewalks. Watch for children playing and gathering near bus stops. Watch for children arriving late for the bus, who may dart into the street without looking for traffic. When backing out of a driveway or leaving a garage, watch for children walking or biking to school.
- When driving in neighborhoods or school zones, watch for young people who may be in a hurry to get to school and may not be thinking about getting there safely.

*for more information contact:*

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### Tips for Parents

- Help your children learn and practice the safety rules for walking, bicycling, or riding in a passenger car, school bus or transit bus.
- Supervise young children as they are walking or biking to school, or as they wait at the school bus stop.
- Be a good role model, especially when you are with your children. Always buckle up in the car, always wear a helmet when biking, and always follow pedestrian safety rules.

### Tips for Students

- Always buckle up when you're riding in a car.
- Always ride in the back seat. It's the safest place for young people.
- Always wear a helmet and follow traffic safety rules when riding your bike.
- If you ride a school bus, learn and practice the safety rules for waiting at the bus stop, getting on and off the bus, and riding the bus.
- If you walk to school, learn and practice the safety rules for pedestrians. Always cross at cross walks, obey all traffic signs, traffic lights and safety patrol instructions.
- Be a good role model for your younger brothers and sisters and friends, and help them learn and practice the safety rules.

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