

August is fading fast, and Labor Day is just around the corner. The end of summer means back-to-school time is upon us. Soon, children will be heading back to school and school buses will be lurching their way around our neighborhoods. During the school year, it is important that everyone does their part to safely get our kids to and from school each day. Today, I'd like to challenge readers to test their knowledge of driving laws pertaining to school buses. If you think you know the rules about buses, sharpen your pencil and read on.

Question: When is the only time you are **not** required to stop for a bus with its lights flashing and stop arm extended?

- a. When the bus is stopped for more than 30 seconds.
- b. When there is a double yellow line separating your vehicle from the bus.
- c. When your vehicle and the bus are separated by a physical median.
- d. When you really need to get to Starbucks.

The answer is (c). Drivers do not need to stop for a bus stop arm when the bus is on a separate roadway with a physical median between the driver's lane(s) and the bus' lane(s). In all other instances, drivers must stop and remain stopped until the stop arm is retracted and the lights turn off.

Question: A vehicle must stop at least how far from a bus whose stop arm is extended?

- a. 20 feet
- b. 30 feet
- c. 100 feet
- d. The average scrolling length of a political Facebook post.

The answer is (a). State law requires drivers stop at least 20 feet from a stopped bus. Give the buses and kids enough room to ensure you and the bus driver can see the children entering or exiting the bus.

Question: What is the penalty for disobeying a school bus stop arm?

- a. A fine of not less than \$100
- b. A fine of not less than \$500
- c. A fine of not less than \$1000
- d. Banishment

The answer is (b). Disobeying a stop arm is a misdemeanor. State law requires a fine of at least \$500 for each violation and a potential of up to \$1,000. A citation for a stop arm violation will include a mandatory day in court in addition to the fines and potential jail time.

Question: Passing a stopped school bus displaying a stop arm on the right-hand side of the bus enhances the penalty to a _____.

- a. Misdemeanor
- b. Gross misdemeanor
- c. Felony
- d. Walk off the plank

The answer is (b). Passing on the right enhances the crime to a gross misdemeanor. A gross misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year in jail or a fine of up to \$3,000. Passing a bus is extremely dangerous. Have patience and let the bus driver do their work of transporting kids safely.

Question: The driver's license of a person convicted of a stop arm violation twice in five years will be _____.

- a. shredded
- b. revoked
- c. cancelled
- d. posted on a wall of shame for everyone to see

The answer is (b). License revocations for stop arm violations begin at the second violation and increase in length and severity from there.

Children can be unpredictable. Our laws pertaining to school buses are intended to create a safe zone for children to enter and exit the bus knowing that children can be unpredictable. When you encounter a school bus while driving, use patience, stop for the stop arm, and be alert for children in the area. For more crime prevention information and safety information visit the Benton County Sheriff's Office website at: <https://www.co.benton.mn.us/211/Crime-Prevention>. You can also like and follow us on Facebook and Twitter at @BentonMNSheriff for regular updates and crime prevention messages.