



# Illinois Department of Transportation

Division of Traffic Safety

1340 North 9th Street / P.O. Box 19212 / Springfield, Illinois / 62794-9212

September 6, 2010

Dear Illinois School Bus Operator:

School is once again in session throughout Illinois and it is time to focus on school bus safety. It is important that motorists help protect our children by being especially careful while driving near schools. Students should be reminded to avoid the danger zones around a school bus and to be particularly careful when crossing in front of a school bus. Students should be instructed to always make sure that the school bus driver can see them when walking near a school bus. Most importantly, school bus drivers must remember that school bus safety begins with them. They must always be focused and alert. A momentary lapse in concentration could result in tragedy.

The following new law from the 96<sup>th</sup> General Assembly impacts school bus transportation:

**Public Act 96-1066, effective July 16, 2010**, requires all school buses registered in Illinois to be equipped with an operating cellular radio telecommunication device (cell phone) or a two-way radio while the school bus driver is in possession of the school bus. This new law basically eliminated the “push-to-talk” requirement for cell phones that has been in effect since November 2009. The two-way radio or cell phone must be turned on and adjusted in a manner that alerts the school bus driver of an incoming communication request.

In order to pass inspection at an Illinois Official Testing Station, a school bus must be equipped with either a two-way radio, a cell phone or a letter, on company/district letterhead, that states the school bus will be equipped with a cell phone at all times when the school bus driver is in possession of the school bus.

Other issues to address are as follows:

## **SCHOOL BUSES EQUIPPED WITH ANTI-IDLING DEVICES**

Illinois law (at 625 ILCS 5/11-1429) requires a person who operates a diesel bus in an affected area (i.e., the counties of Cook, DuPage, Lake, Kane, McHenry, Will, Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe and the townships of Aux Sable and Goose Lake in Grundy County and the township of Oswego in Kendall County) to not cause or allow that bus, when it is not in motion, to idle for more than a total of 15 minutes within any 60 minute period. However, the law **exempts** all vehicles that are idling while forced to remain motionless because of on-highway traffic, an official traffic control device or signal, or at the direction of a law enforcement official. **No school bus manufactured for use in Illinois can be equipped with an anti-idling**

**device that will cause or allow a school bus to shut down if the vehicle is stopped at a railroad grade crossing.**

### **MULTIFUNCTION SCHOOL ACTIVITY BUSES STOPPING AT RAILROAD GRADE CROSSINGS**

Illinois law (at 625 ILCS 5/11-1202) requires school buses to stop within 50 feet but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail, and while so stopped, shall listen and look for the approach of a train or railroad track equipment and shall not proceed until such movement can be made with safety. School bus drivers are also required to turn off all noise-producing accessories, including heater blowers, defroster fans, auxiliary fans and radios and open the service door and driver's window before crossing a railroad track or tracks. Due to the fact that a multifunction school activity bus is defined as a school bus manufactured for the purpose of transporting 11 to 15 persons, including the driver..., the Department has interpreted Section 11-1202 to require drivers of multifunction school activity buses to also stop at railroad grade crossings and follow the same procedures required to be followed when driving a school bus.

### **GLOBAL POSITIONING SYSTEMS (GPS) ON SCHOOL BUSES**

The Department does not prohibit the use of GPSs in school buses. They cannot be located on the windshield and must not obstruct any portion of the driver's view, the service door or any emergency exit.

### **REMINDER REGARDING HEATERS IN SCHOOL BUSES**

School bus heater(s) are required to maintain an interior temperature of not less than 50° Fahrenheit throughout the bus. School buses will be rejected at Illinois Official Testing Stations if school bus heater(s) fail to maintain the correct interior temperature. IDOT personnel also have the authority to place any school bus out of service if the bus' heater(s) are not working between the dates of October 2 and April 14. Please keep the safety and comfort of children in mind and maintain the proper interior temperature on all school buses owned or operated by your company or school district.

If you have any questions, contact Dan Thompson at the Illinois Department of Transportation's Division of Traffic Safety at 217/785-3046 or at [dan.f.thompson@illinois.gov](mailto:dan.f.thompson@illinois.gov). Please have a safe school bus transportation year!

Sincerely,



Michael R. Stout  
Director