



# Illinois Department of Transportation

Division of Traffic Safety

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

September 17, 2013

Dear Illinois School Bus Operator or Transportation Official:

School is once again in session and it is time to focus on school bus safety. It is important that school bus drivers help protect children on their bus 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 impacts school transportation.

**Public Act 97-556, effective January 1, 2014.** The following dot points provide a BRIEF overview of Public Act 97-556. The entire Public Act can be viewed at <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/98/PDF/098-0556.pdf>.

- Expands the definition of an automated traffic law enforcement system to include cameras installed on school buses that record images of vehicles that overtake or pass the school bus while it is engaged in receiving or disembarking passengers, provided the school bus has the visual signals required by law including extendable stop signs and flashing lights.
- Provides that municipalities and counties may authorize school districts to enter into contracts with vendors to install and operate an automated traffic law enforcement system on the district's school buses.
- Provides that the proceeds of any fines will be divided equally between the school district and the municipality or county administering the automated traffic law enforcement system.
- Provides that a first time violation carries a civil penalty of \$150, with subsequent violations carrying a civil penalty of \$500, and that the offense shall not be a moving violation recorded on the driver's driving history.
- Provides that failure to pay or successfully contest the violation can result in suspension of the driver's license.
- Requires school buses equipped with cameras to have a sign stating that the school bus is equipped with an automated traffic law enforcement system.

Other issues to address:

### **NONSCHEDULED BUS INSPECTIONS**

IDOT is authorized to conduct periodic nonscheduled inspections of school buses, buses registered as charitable vehicles, and religious organization buses at locations where the buses are stored or parked. The Division's nonscheduled bus inspection program is used to monitor the maintenance and condition of the buses for safety purposes. If the vehicle is placed out-of-service, it must pass a COMPLETE safety inspection at an official testing station before it is again placed in service. A complete inspection means all of the components (including a valid School Bus Brake Inspection report, if the vehicle is a school bus), not just those items that were responsible for placing the bus out of service.

IDOT is in the process of amending and updating the Nonscheduled Bus Inspection administrative rule. The proposed amendments to the rule can be viewed at [http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/index/register/register\\_volume37\\_is\\_sue37.pdf](http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/index/register/register_volume37_is_sue37.pdf) (see page 14785 for the proposed rulemaking). The public comment period for the rulemaking will end on October 28, 2013.

### **OBSTRUCTING EMERGENCY EXIT WINDOWS**

Child passenger restraint systems (i.e., car seats) cannot be located on the bench seat next to a designated emergency exit window (does not include factory-installed built-in child restraint systems). Designated emergency exit windows must not be obstructed at any time.

A "factory-installed built-in child restraint system" means a built-in child restraint system that has been or will be permanently installed in a motor vehicle before that vehicle is certified as a completed or altered vehicle. (The Department has approved the use of an add-on restraint. Please contact Dan Thompson at the e-mail address below for specific approval.)

### **OVERCROWDED SCHOOL BUSES**

A school bus' maximum seating capacity requires only 13 inches be provided for each student. Since most school bus seats measure 39 inches wide, this allows three students on one seat. However, each child must be provided adequate space on the seat. Compartmentalization requires children to be completely protected by the seat back or guard barrier in front of their seat. Industry guidelines recommend three students to a seat if passengers are in grades K through 5, and two per seat in grades 9 through 12. For students in grades 6 through 8, school districts or contractors vary the number of passengers depending on the size of the students.

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IDOT strongly urges school districts and contractors to consider the safety of students and ensure compartmentalization is provided for all students transported on school buses in Illinois.

**PEDAL EXTENSIONS**

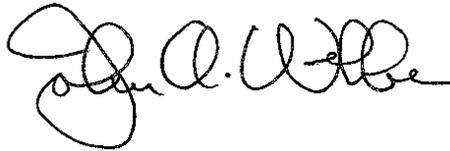
Manufactured extensions that are securely attached and covered with rigid nonslip material are permitted. Homemade pedal extensions are prohibited.

If you would like this letter emailed to you so that you can link the websites, please e-mail [cathy.allen@illinois.gov](mailto:cathy.allen@illinois.gov).

If you have any questions, please contact Dan Thompson at the Illinois Department of Transportation's Division of Traffic Safety at 217/785-3046 or by e-mail at [dan.f.thompson@illinois.gov](mailto:dan.f.thompson@illinois.gov).

Please have a safe school bus transportation year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John A. Webber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

John A. Webber  
Interim Director