

## *News release regarding school bus laws*

### CONFUSION OVER SCHOOL BUS LAWS LEAD TO DANGEROUS SITUATIONS

Since school started back in September, there have been a number of potentially dangerous situations arising due to confusion over the laws governing school buses.

Drivers should view a school bus as a moving traffic signal and act accordingly. The school bus driver should activate the overhead amber lights about 200 feet from the student drop off or pickup point. This is a signal to drivers in both directions to slow down and be prepared to stop. When the bus has stopped and is set to release students, the driver will check traffic and then open the door. This activates the overhead red flashing lights and traffic in both directions are required to stop and wait until those red lights are off. Remember, students may be crossing the street when a bus is stopped and a potentially tragic situation is created if a car were to “run” those red lights. Unfortunately, it has happened too frequently since September. This is quite possibly the scariest situation a school bus driver will ever face.

No one likes to be caught behind a school bus. Bus drivers know this and they are required by law to pull over and allow traffic to clear if it is safe to do so, once they have safely dropped or picked up their students.

There is another type of stop made by school buses which does not require traffic to stop. It is called a “hazard light stop” and can only be used in certain situations. During a “hazard light stop”, the bus driver will activate his or her right hand turn signal prior to the stop, pull completely off the traveled portion of the road, then turn on the four way hazard lights located midway down on the bus. These are the same lights as the turn signals. The driver will then drop off or pick up students. This is allowed ONLY when the bus can pull completely (all six tires) off the road, and ONLY when there are no students that need to cross the road. Traffic is allowed to continue past the bus in both

directions during a hazard light stop, using caution while making the pass.

The Benzie County Central Transportation Department urges you to know and obey the laws governing school buses. School bus drivers are carrying the most precious cargo there is, and they take that responsibility very seriously. They need your cooperation as a driver to make the trip to and from school as safe as it can be. The life you save is someone's child, maybe your child, or a child of a family member.

If you have questions about the rules regarding school buses, call the Benzie Central transportation department at 882-5072, or talk to your bus driver.