**School Bus Talking Points**

**Key Messages**

1. **School but travel is very safe.**

* The school bus is a large and heavy vehicle that provides good protection for its occupants.
* According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, school buses are the safest mode of transportation for children.
* Children are eight times safer riding in a bus to school than in any other vehicle.

1. **School Bus Fatalities and injuries are rare.**

* In Minnesota in 2019, there was one fatality involving a school bus.
* There were 3,220 traffic crashes involving school buses from 2015 – 2019. Only 272 school age children who were riding in a school bus were hurt during that time frame.

1. **Stopping for a school bus is the law.**

* In Minnesota, motorists must stop at least 20 feet from a school bus that is displaying red flashing lights or a stop arm when approaching from the rear and from the opposite direction on undivided roads.
  + Red flashing lights on buses indicates students are either entering or exiting the bus.
  + Amber lights on a bus is an alert to motorists that a bus is about to make a stop.
* Motorists must be alert and ready to stop for school buses to ensure kids can enter and exit buses safely. One tip is to change your route to avoid school buses, therefore keeping kids out of potentially dangerous situations.
* Motorists should slow down, pay attention and anticipate school children, especially in a school bus “danger zone” – the area around a bus where most school children injuries or deaths occur.

**Talking Points**

**School children need to be alert:**

* When getting off a bus, look to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road).
* Before crossing the street, take five “giant steps” out from the front of the bus, or until the driver’s face can be seen.
* Wait for the driver to signal that it’s safe to cross.
* Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is stopped. Keep watching traffic when crossing.

**Keeping Children Safe**

* School buses are the safest mode of transportation for children — the mass of the bus is designed to take the bulk of the crash force, and they are also less likely to roll over. The inside of the bus is designed as an egg carton with strong, closely spaced seats, energy absorbing seat backs, and padded seats.
* The biggest safety concern is for children outside of the bus. That’s why motorists need to stop and stay back from buses when the red flashing lights are operating. This means kids are entering or exiting the bus and likely trying to cross streets or in in front of the bus where they are not easily seen.
* Altering a route or schedule to avoid a bus is one way motorists can help improve safety. In doing so, motorists won’t find themselves behind a bus and as a result, won’t be putting children potentially at risk.
* Parents play a vital role teaching their children what to do around buses:
* How to cross safely.
* The importance to stay back from the road while waiting for the bus.
* The importance of making eye contact with the driver before crossing the street to ensure the driver sees them.
* Seat belts on buses – there is much debate on this. Buses are designed as an egg carton with high seat backs and cushioned seats. Seat belts are of course effective, but there are cost issues – as well as ensuring children are wearing them correctly and using booster seats as well.