

School Bus Safety

The Beaufort Police Department wants to remind motorists to come to a full stop when following or approaching a school bus displaying its stop arm and flashing red lights.

The penalty for passing a school bus with its stop arm out includes a fine and could possibly result in the loss of driving privileges.

In Beaufort, all motorists following behind or approaching a school bus in the opposite lane displaying its mechanical stop signal or flashing red lights for the purpose of receiving or discharging passengers must stop. There are no roads in Beaufort with a median or center turn lane to make the motorist in the approaching lane exempt from stopping.

The Beaufort Police Department has a no-tolerance policy on passing buses with their stop arm engaged.

In May 2013, House Bill 428 was passed unanimously, adding a \$500 fine to the misdemeanor charge for passing a stopped school bus displaying its stop signal and its red lights flashing. If a driver hits anyone while passing a stopped school bus, the driver would face a \$2,500 fine as well as a felony charge, with the fee increasing to \$5,000 if the driver causes a fatality. The driver would also get five points on their license.

The Division of Motor Vehicles could also revoke the driving privileges of any driver for one year if they are convicted of two misdemeanors within a three-year period, under this legislation. A third misdemeanor could result in a permanent loss.

Drivers convicted of a felony would lose their licenses for up to three years and will be permanently revoked if convicted of a second felony violation under this section.

North Carolina's law on stopping for a school bus

All traffic must stop for a stopped bus, unless it is on a road of four or more lanes with a median or center turning lane. In those instances, oncoming traffic does not have to stop because children will not be crossing the road to reach the bus. Traffic following a bus must always stop with the bus. If in doubt, always stop for a stopped bus.

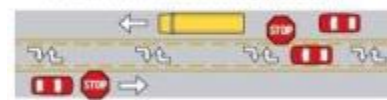
1 Two-lane road

All traffic from both directions must stop.



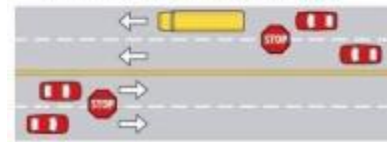
2 Two-lane road with a center turning lane

All traffic from both directions must stop.



3 Four-lane road without a median separation

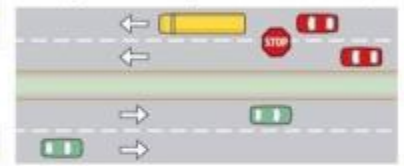
All traffic from both directions must stop.



Source: N.C. Department of Transportation

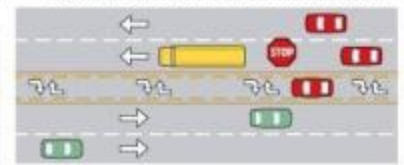
4 Divided highway of four lanes or more with a median separation

Only traffic following the school bus must stop.



5 Road of four lanes or more with a center turning lane

Only traffic following the school bus must stop.



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