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EMERGENCY VEHICLES AND SCHOOL BUSES September 1, 2005

This communication is offered to clear up confusion regarding the duties of emergency vehicle operators who approach a school bus stopped for the purpose of loading or unloading. This same information has been sent from the Director of Public Safety to chief officials with the Buckeye State Sheriff's Association, State Fire Marshall, Ohio Medical Transportation board, and the Ohio Association for Chiefs of Police.

ORC 4511.041 identifies sections of traffic code that are exceptions for emergency or public safety vehicles responding to an emergency call. Even with these exceptions, the driver of an emergency or public safety vehicle must drive with due regard for the safety of all persons and property upon the highway.

The section of code that requires all traffic to stop for a school bus loading or unloading (ORC 4511.75) is not included in these exceptions.

ORC 4511.75 requires the driver of a vehicle to stop at least ten feet from the front when meeting the school bus or ten feet from the rear when overtaking a school bus which is stopped for the purpose of receiving or discharging any school child, and shall not proceed until such school bus resumes motion, or until signaled by the school bus driver. There are no exceptions to this law for emergency or public safety vehicles.

In order to minimize disruption to emergency responses by emergency or public safety vehicles, and also to safeguard any children outside of the bus, Ohio School bus drivers should observe the following procedure:

The following procedure is to be used by school bus drivers when they are stopped for the purpose of loading or unloading students and an emergency vehicle is approaching their bus from either direction:

1. Keep red lights on if children are outside of your bus !
2. Blow horn if necessary to warn children to get to a safe place.
3. Immediately after all children have reached their designated place of safety, close your door and deactivate the red warning lights. After the emergency vehicle passes, check traffic and mirrors and resume your route.
4. If you are approaching the loading or unloading zone with your yellow lights on, the procedure is as follows:
 - a. Keep yellow lights on!!
 - b. Pull to right side of roadway.
 - c. Check traffic before you pull back on to roadway.

REMINDER TO ALL SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS:
Teach students to check traffic before walking out into the roadway.

While it is acceptable to pass a school bus with yellow warning lights flashing, it is both dangerous and illegal to pass a school bus with red lights flashing.

For questions regarding this information, please contact the Pupil transportation office at the Ohio Department of Education.