



NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

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NYAPT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 31, 2021

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The New York Association for Pupil Transportation Reminds Drivers of the Dangers of Passing a Stopped School Bus as Schools Reopen

--Statewide School Bus Driver Shortage May Cause School Transportation Disruptions--

Latham, NY – The New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT) is reminding drivers to be extra careful this year as school districts begin to reopen across the state. The Association is also alerting parents and caregivers that there could be disruptions to school transportation this year as school districts face an unprecedented shortage in school bus drivers driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, extension of extra unemployment benefits and demand for drivers in the package handling industry.

According to a statewide survey conducted by NYAPT of school bus drivers across the state, an estimated 50,000 motorists in New York illegally pass stopped school buses every day school is in session, endangering students and putting their lives at risk.

“Providing New York’s school-age children a safe school bus ride to and from school each day is our top priority, and we urge all drivers to do their part and be extra cautious as schools reopen,” said David Christopher who is the executive director of NYAPT and former school transportation director. “We are asking drivers to avoid distractions while driving, be aware that school buses are back on the roads, and to always stop when they see those red lights flashing on a school bus because students’ lives depend on it.”

New York State Vehicle and Traffic law requires all vehicles to come to a full stop when approaching a school bus stopped with red lights flashing. Red flashing lights indicate that a child is either boarding or disembarking a school bus. New York state law prohibits the passing of a school bus that is stopped with red lights flashing regardless of your direction of travel, even if there is a multi-lane or divided highway.

Penalties for a first-time offense include a fine from \$250 to \$400, five points on your license and the possibility of 30 days in jail. A second conviction within three years will result in a \$600 to \$750 fine and up to 180 days in jail; while three or more convictions will result in a fine from \$750 to \$1,000, mandatory revocation of your driver’s license and up to 180 days in jail.

Christopher continued, “Riding a school bus is the safest way for a student to get back and forth to school each day, and we hope drivers across the state will do their part to keep it that way.”

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NYAPT is also alerting parents and caregivers that the school transportation industry, like many other service industries across the country, is experiencing an unprecedented shortage in school bus drivers. In a recent survey, nearly 80% of NYAPT members, which comprise New York's school transportation departments, characterized the school bus driver shortage as moderate to severe.

“School transportation departments are working very hard to address the driver shortage problem; however, we may see transportation disruptions across the state,” said Christopher. “Parents and caregivers may experience delays in service, and transportation routes may be temporarily eliminated by school districts due to lack of driver resources.”

NYAPT is reminding parents and caregivers to have a backup plan in place in case their school district experiences school transportation service disruptions. NYAPT also asks that everyone please be patient with school transportation personnel who might be feeling the pressures of providing transportation services with limited resources.

Finally, the Association is urging people who are looking for a rewarding part time job to consider applying to become a school bus driver. The job has many benefits such as a flexible schedule, competitive hourly pay, the ability to be home with your school-age children when school are closed, and in many cases a generous benefits package.

Contact your local school district or private school transportation provider to find out more about becoming a school bus driver.

The New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT) is a statewide organization dedicated to the support, development, and representation of school transportation professionals who are responsible for the safe and efficient transportation of more than 2.3 million school children across New York State.

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