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**Media Contacts:**

Kelly Everitt

Communications Specialist

208-332-6818

[keveritt@sde.idaho.gov](mailto:keveritt@sde.idaho.gov)

## **School bus stop arm safety awareness campaign launched**

(BOISE) – Superintendent of Public Instruction Sherri Ybarra today released a public service announcement aimed at increasing awareness about school buses and the stop arm law designed to protect students.

“The State Department of Education, and educators everywhere in Idaho, always place the safety of their students first,” Ybarra said. “This awareness campaign is part of our ongoing efforts to protect students with programs ranging from our anti-bullying campaign, safe and drug free schools grants and the KISS initiative. We want students safe from the moment they leave their home until they return after school.”

“I urge drivers to take extra caution, whenever you see a school bus with its lights on and stop arm extended.”

That public service announcement can be downloaded at <https://bit.ly/2SH1AGF>.

State law says bus drivers should report stop arm violations to law enforcement and then local authorities will find the driver and issue a citation. More and more buses also are deploying cameras to capture violators and the license plate of the car that ignores the stop arm law. Idaho Code says that the owner of the car is responsible for the citation unless they can prove someone else was driving, in which case the other person is cited.

The fine for a violation of the stop arm law, which is designed to protect students getting on and off a bus, can run from \$100 to \$500 (Idaho Code §49-1422 and §49-1423) and includes adding four points on the violator’s driver’s license.

“It’s been a long time since driver’s training for some people, so they may have forgotten the rules,” said Derek Newland, director of student transportation for the State Department of Education.

On a road of three lanes or less (which could include a turning lane), vehicles in both directions must stop when a school bus displays its stop arm, he said. On a road greater than 3 lanes, only those vehicles going in the same direction as the bus must stop. Newland said bus routes are designed to prevent children having to cross multiple lanes of traffic to board a bus.

Last year, Newland said he sent out a survey in November to the districts asking them for the number of stop arm violation reports they received *for that month*. A total of 48 districts responded, with more than 600 violations reported.

“Some people,” Newland said, “say bus drivers are just trying to entrap them” by sticking out the stop arm at the last minute, but, he pointed out, the yellow/amber warning lights come on 8-10 seconds before the bus stops and puts out its stop arm. “That’s like a yellow light coming on at a traffic light. It tells you that it’s time to come to a stop.”

A study by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS). showed that in a one-day national snapshot survey of more than 100,000 bus drivers in 2018, more than three out of every four of those drivers reported at least one stop arm violation that day.

“Any driver who passes a stopped school bus while students are getting on or off is gambling with children’s lives,” said Diana Hollander, NASDPTS president.

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**Media advisory:**

*To help promote the SDE’s stop arm and school bus safety awareness campaign, consider interviewing your local school bus officials and asking if you can send a reporter along with a driver, or interview some of the drivers about their experiences with stop arm violations.*

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