

Operation Safe Stop Day Report from April 27, 2017

Since October 2003, the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC) has partnered with the New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT) to bring the pupil transportation and law enforcement industries together in support of Operation Safe Stop Day. Operation Safe Stop Day is a traffic safety initiative designed to prevent the potentially deadly consequences of passing a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing.

Professional school bus drivers have an awesome responsibility compared to other professional commercial motor vehicle (CMV) operators. While all CMV operators are very highly trained professionals, the difference lies in the cargo they transport. The school bus driver's cargo is precious and irreplaceable – our children. Children have been entrusted to their bus driver's care with the expectation that they will be returned in the same safe condition as when they boarded the school bus. These expectations can be compromised when motorists make the destructive and reckless decision to break the law by passing a stopped school bus that is in the process of loading or unloading children. This life-threatening decision is one that can negatively impact the life of not only the child who is struck but also their family, the motorist and their family, the school district and the entire community.

The 2017 Operation Safe Stop (OSS) statewide enforcement day was conducted on April 27. The primary focus of this enforcement event was to educate motorists about the dangers of their destructive decisions and to reduce the number of instances of a stopped school bus being passed. This enforcement initiative is supported by the GTSC's Police Traffic Services (PTS) grantees who are encouraged to use awarded funding to participate in this statewide event and other OSS enforcement events throughout the grant year.

To promote this year's Operation Safe Stop enforcement day, NYAPT held a statewide press event in Broome County on Thursday, April 27, 2017. The purpose of this press event, along with the many additional media events that were held across the state, was to increase the public's awareness of the law requiring motorists to stop for school buses when their red lights are flashing.

70 police agencies from across New York participated in this year's OSS initiative. That number, while less than last year, delivered results which were more successful. The combined efforts of these law enforcement agencies produced 1,037 tickets for passing a stopped school bus and 2,964 tickets for other moving violations.

The table below provides a ten year history of the program's activity. This year, the numbers for officer participation and tickets issued both increased. The support from the three Law Enforcement Liaisons (LEL) at GTSC played a pivotal role. A special thanks to Dominick Macherone, LEL for the New York State Association of Chiefs of Police; Tony D'Agostino, LEL for the New York State Sheriffs' Association and Sgt. Todd Engwer, New York State Police LEL, who promoted local OSS participation through their agency's publications and partnerships.

Operation Safe Stop Day Report from April 27, 2017

<i>Comparative data (10-year overview)</i>	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Net Change
Participating Counties	41	37	45	49	35	28	43	46	39	36	-3
No. of agencies	106	97	110	143	84	64	115	108	95	70	-25
Officers assigned (*Counts do not include participating officers from NYPD)	*955	*862	*912	*967	572	599	1,164	856	740	822	+82
1174 Violations (passing stopped school bus)	1,171	1,697	1,440	1,603	1,316	98	1,352	1,186	859	1,037	+178
Other UTTs issued	3,892	1,930	2,266	2,276	1,196	1,002	1,732	1,484	1547	2,964	+1,417

While the 2017 OSS Day reports do show an increase in the number of officers and tickets written, the 1,037 tickets issued for passing a stopped school bus does reinforce the need for a more concentrated effort to educate motorists about this dangerous behavior. After all, this was only one day out of 180 school days. Children's lives are put at risk on every one of those days by motorists who attempt to pass a stopped school bus while it is picking-up or dropping off students.

In light of this present-day risk, the NYAPT Operation Safe Stop Committee and GTSC (through the Department of Motor Vehicles) will continue to promote this program in order to inform the motoring public of the law and the consequences that can result if drivers fail to stop for school buses displaying their flashing red lights and stop sign.

Over the years, the OSS message has remained constant and our enforcement consistent thanks to the support of the NYAPT OSS Committee, NYAPT Executive Director Peter Mannella and the school transportation community along with the GTSC Highway Safety Program Representatives who encourage their local grantees to participate in this traffic safety event.