

In a 2018 survey conducted by National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS), 108,623 school bus drivers reported that 83,944 vehicles passed their buses illegally on a single day. Throughout a 180-day school year, these sample results alone point to over 15 million violations by private motorists.

It's the Law

The act of illegally passing a stopped school bus with red lights flashing is commonly known as a "stop arm violation". This refers to the stop sign shaped "arm" that extends from the left side of the bus when the red lights are activated.

Every one of the 50 states have a law wherein it is illegal to pass a school bus that is stopped to load and unload students with its red lights flashing and stop arm extended. However, some motorist simply chooses to ignore the law. To help reduce this trend in Colorado, Members have contacted us about using the Extended Stop Arm.

What are the standards for school bus stop arms in Colorado?

Members follow Colorado Department of Education's Colorado Minimum Standards Governing School Transportation Vehicles 1 CCR 301-25. Below are the minimum standards for stop arm signals:

2251-R-38.00 Stop Signal Arm

- 38.01 The stop signal arm shall meet FMVSS 131.
- 38.02 Rubber spacers shall be installed on either the side of the bus or the stop arm so as to prevent sign from making abrasive contact with the side of the bus.
- 38.03 Wind guard shall be provided to keep sign in retracted position.

What are Extended Stop Arms?

The Extended Stop Arm is an extension of the driver's side stop sign that works in conjunction with the existing bus stop sign. The length of the arm can range from four to six feet with 2 blinking stop signs.

Does CDE Transportation Have Specific Guidance for Extended Stop Arms?

CDE Transportation doesn't offer specific guidance on products that are available to attach to school buses. They have left the decision regarding purchasing available product options on vehicles to the districts to determine, as long as the option meets FMVSS Standards and does not interfere with the operation of the vehicle.

CSDSIP Coverage

Under the CSDSIP School Auto Coverage, the Pool would defend any liability claim or suit brought against the Member, subject to the policy terms, conditions, deductible and the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act (CGIA).

Any damage to the Member's vehicle would be covered under the School Auto Coverage Auto Physical Damage (APD) subject to the policy terms, conditions and deductible.

Recommendation for Members Considering using Extended Stop Arms

- Discuss and get approval to purchase and attach the extended stop arms from your governing board.
- Discuss and communicate with staff, students, parents and the community on your decision to buy and attached extended stop arms to school buses.
- Communicate if there will a trial period or will the use of extended stop arms go into effect immediately.
- Discuss using the product with your local law and state law enforcement in your area.

According to NASDPTS, reducing illegal passing requires a comprehensive approach, involving education of students, motorists, and school bus drivers; frequent, visible enforcement; and advances in school bus equipment and other technologies.