



Back to School Refresher Course

Do you have school-aged children or know someone who does? Do you drive? If you answered yes to one of these questions, then this is for you! Within a few weeks, school will be starting once again, and safety is once again an issue. There is the issue of safety on the roadways with buses, and the safety of your students at school. Although there are many issues that could be covered in these two topics alone, today's article will focus on Emergency Contact Information for your students at school, and about the Vehicle Code relating to buses. **Do you know the law?**

First, let me cover the importance of up-to-date contact information regarding your students. Having worked in a school setting for several years, I know the importance of correct contact information and how critical it can be for your child's school and to your child! Your child's school relies on you to give them the most current and accurate emergency contact information as well as more than just a few names to contact. Before you list the same information as the year before, did you check to see if those phone numbers and addresses have changed? Giving the school inaccurate information can lead to worry and anxiety for the child who is in the school office waiting as school staff scramble to try to make contact with a family member, neighbor or friend. In an emergency, this leads to a difficult time not only for the school, but also for the child who is in the office waiting. For the safety and comfort of your child, I would like to suggest to you some basic rules:

✚ Before you fill out the emergency card given by your child's school, make sure you complete every line with the most detailed information you can give.

✚ Call the people you plan to list as a contact to make sure their phone

EMERGENCY INFORMATION CARD

Allergies _____
Grade _____ Home Room _____
Please Print
Student's Name _____ Last _____ First _____ S.S. No. _____ Student I.D. No. _____
Address _____ Zip _____ Home Tel. _____
Where can parent/guardian be reached if not at home? _____ Birth Date _____
Mother/Guardian _____ First Name _____ Last Name _____ Address _____ Work Phone No. _____
Father/Guardian _____ First Name _____ Last Name _____ Address _____ Work Phone No. _____
LIST OTHER PHONE NUMBERS: Home _____ Cell Phone _____ Pager _____
List three neighbors or nearby relatives who will assume temporary care of your child if you cannot be reached.
1. Name _____ Address _____ Tel. _____
2. Name _____ Address _____ Tel. _____
3. Name _____ Address _____ Tel. _____

Form 52L SCHOOL SERVICE, INC. (OVER) (903) 247-8649

numbers and addresses are still correct. Ask if you may also put down a cell number.

- ✚ List as many people on the card as you can. You'd be surprised how often the school has to call all the names on the card and there is either no response to any of them, or the numbers are disconnected. Since the emergency card only allows enough space for a few contacts, I would suggest writing down more on a separate sheet of paper (card stock works best) and staple it to the back of the emergency card. **Make sure your student's name, date of birth, and grade are on this separate sheet of paper.**
- ✚ **Please PRINT clearly.** This is probably one of the most important things to remember when filling out the card.
- ✚ Remember, the only people allowed to pick up a student from school are those listed on the emergency card, unless prior arrangements by a parent have been made. Therefore, in an emergency, only those listed will have permission to take your child off school grounds.
- ✚ **All persons listed as a contact on the emergency card must be 18 years of age or older** in order to pick up a student.
- ✚ Periodically through out the school year, check with those you have listed to make sure all the information is still correct. I would check just prior to having to go out of town just to make sure your children always had someone they could rely on if you are not available. This also helps to give a "heads up" to your contacts so they will be better prepared for a phone call in your absence. **(When it comes to your children, you can never be too prepared!)**
- ✚ After all forms are completed, make a copy and keep it at home near your phone. This helps you to remember all the people you have listed, and makes it easy to call them ahead of time should you need to make arrangements at the last minute. I keep these forms until the next school year when I have to complete the process all over again, at which time I shred the old.

Children are uncomfortable as it is having to wait in the office, but when you add a need, such as medical, transportation or something as simple as needing a change of clothes, they become anxious and slightly stressed the longer they are waiting in the office. Being able to make an immediate connection with someone on the emergency card becomes a comfort to them.

Be assured that office staff does their best to make those calls count, please do YOUR part and make YOUR list count!





For my second topic. Not too long ago I witnessed a school bus stopped to unload students while a vehicle drove on through without stopping. The bus had the flashing red lights on **and** the stop sign arm out - - - clearly visible. This vehicle kept on going. The bus was heading east on a double lane street. I was in the right-hand lane behind the bus, and the other car was in the left-hand lane. By law, this vehicle should have stopped. Perhaps the driver thought the law only pertained to those driving in the same lane as the bus. **Do YOU know the law?**

Vehicle Code (VC) Section 22454: School bus Meeting and Passing: taken from the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) website states:
<http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/vctop/d11/vc22454.htm>

- (a) The driver of any vehicle, upon meeting or overtaking, from either direction, any school bus equipped with signs as required in this code, that is stopped for the purpose of loading or unloading any school children and displays a flashing red light signal and stop signal arm, as defined in paragraph (4) of subdivision (b) of Section 25257, if equipped with a stop signal arm, visible from front or rear, shall bring the vehicle to a stop immediately before passing the school bus and shall not proceed past the school bus until the flashing red light signal **and** stop signal arm, if equipped with a stop signal arm, cease operation.

So, in simple terms, if you see a bus stopped and it has the red lights flashing, mechanical stop sign arm, or both operating...**STOP** and do not go until the sign has been unarmed and the lights are no longer flashing. Simple as that.



WHAT'S THE PENALTY?

YOU *WILL* BE SHOCKED!

The best thing about writing these articles is two-fold: Passing along knowledge for the betterment of our community, and learning something new with each Fact of the Week!

First, let me quote the California Department of Motor Vehicles Vehicle Code:

VC 22454.5: A person convicted of a *first* violation of Section 22454 shall be punished by a fine of not less than one hundred fifty dollars (\$150) or more than two hundred fifty dollars (\$250). A person convicted of a *second* separate violation of Section 22454 shall be punished by a fine of not less than five hundred dollars (\$500) or more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000). If a person is convicted of a *third* or subsequent violation of Section 22454 and the offense occurred within three years of two or more separate violations of Section 22454, the Department of Motor Vehicles shall suspend the person's privilege to operate a motor vehicle for one year.

Now, here's what you might not know:

Although the above paragraph is correct, what you may not know is that there are additional fees incurred with that. I spoke to our traffic court system here in Kings County and here is the basic breakdown for a first offense:

Base Fee (at low end)	\$150.00
State Fee	\$150.00
County Fee	\$105.00
Court Security Fee	\$30.00
State Infraction Fee	\$35.00 (per infraction)
DMV Fee	\$10.00
GRAND BASE TOTAL	\$480.00

What started out as a \$150.00 fee turned into \$480! For a first violation! All that money for a minute or two of impatience. I don't know about you, but that's a lot of money for

such a simple rule to ignore. This law wasn't put into place to set you back. It was put in place for the safety of our children. If that were your child getting on or off the bus, wouldn't you want the most in safety measures for him/her?

If you decide to read the entire code and all subsections, you might find that it leaves room for interpretation. My suggestion would be if you still have any questions regarding certain roadways in your area and this vehicle code, you might want to call your local police department and ask for the traffic division.

Well, I hope you learned something new today. As I've said before, knowledge is power. Let's empower our community one person at a time! Do your part for preparedness!



Credits: **Graphics:** www.mpsaz.org, schoolservice.com, dyslexiavictoria.wordpress.com, Microsoft clip art, Wikipedia.org, trutv.com, up2date.kfupmblog.ac. **Resources:** California Department of Motor Vehicles @ www.dmv.ca.gov and the Kings County Courts.

*Created by Elizabeth Hall for Preparedness Fact of the Week,
August 9, 2010
www.kingscountyem.com*