

Students file in for bus safety class

By Louise Okrutsky
staff writer

This year, students in Farmington elementary schools are learning about reading, writing, arithmetic and bus riding.

Students in 10 of the district's elementary schools last week attended a bus safety assembly by April Morrison-Harke, safety education consultant for the Automobile Club of America. The remaining schools will participate in the assembly later this year.

"We have in years past held various assemblies and evacuation

drills," said Beverly Hausman, supervisor of purchasing and transportation for Farmington Public Schools.

"We haven't done it for the past couple of years. Elementary-aged students are groups we need to target for safety education."

Coincidentally, the assemblies were held the same week the Farmington Hills Police Department announced it was targeting drivers who don't stop for stopped school buses with flashing red lights.

On the average, eight Michigan children die in school-bus-related incidents throughout the year, said Morrison-Harke. Farmington Hills

police say a child hasn't been killed by a car after getting off a school bus since the city incorporated 15 years ago.

AVAILABLE FREE to schools, the AAA safety assembly stresses the importance of knowing a school bus's danger zones. In bus safety, 10 shapes up to be a magic number. Students should take care to stay at least 10 feet away from all sides of the bus.

"Drivers can't see within that zone, regardless of mirrors," Morrison-Harke said.

"You just can't see. It's important to educate the drivers and the kids.

And it's important to educate the parents, too," she said.

Drivers must stop at least 10 feet away from a halted school bus with flashing red lights. Children should walk 10 giant steps in front of the school bus before crossing the street. If they cross any closer to the front of the bus, the driver can't see them.

Younger elementary-age children need to be reminded that although they see the bus every day, that doesn't mean they don't need to be careful.

"Especially kids in kindergarten through third grade. They'll drop a lunch pail while getting off the bus. They think nothing of crawling under

the bus to retrieve it," Morrison-Harke said.

CHILDREN NEED to think about safety within the bus as well as outside of it. They need to realize they must stay in their seats. "You can't put your arms out of the window," Morrison-Harke said.

School buses don't have seat belts, but they have high padded seat backs to protect the head, neck and spine, Morrison-Harke said. For that padding to be effective, students must sit properly.

"If they're kneeling on the seat, talking to someone behind them, they're not protected," she said.

Even if the vehicle is traveling slowly, the amount of impact upon collision is something to be reckoned with. To estimate the weight you'll feel upon impact, multiply body weight by the speed of travel.

Part of the bus safety assembly is devoted to acquainting children with emergency evacuation procedures. During practice, teachers stand on the ground and assist students alighting from the emergency exit.

"We tell them that in case of an accident, they may have to take over and do it themselves. We give them the needed information," Morrison-Harke said.

Flashing red on bus means stop or get a ticket

By Louise Okrutsky
staff writer

There's an object so familiar, more and more drivers are passing it almost without thinking. It's big. It's yellow. It flashes red lights.

It's a school bus.

And Farmington Hills police urge drivers to stop for school buses picking up or discharging passengers. Sliding by stopped school buses with red flashing lights will earn you a ticket.

"Persons are late to an appointment. The school bus pulls up, stops, pulls up, stops again. They make a decision. They see no one crossing, and they drive past the bus," said Sgt. Raymond Cranston of the Farmington Hills Police Department Traffic Section.

A large percentage of violators are Farmington Hills residents. The bulk of violators are Oakland County residents," he added.

Under state law and city ordi-

nance, failure to stop for a school bus is a misdemeanor carrying a court appearance and a maximum \$50 fine.

Whether along a major road or a subdivision street, drivers in back of the bus and those approaching it must stop when the bus is stopped and its red lights are flashing.

ON A road divided by a median, only drivers behind the school bus must stop. "The size of the bus doesn't matter," Cranston said.

In Michigan, only private and public school buses are yellow. Buses used by camps or religious organizations must be painted another color. Cranston said he doesn't think anyone in the city's history has been hurt by a car while getting off a school bus.

"Farmington is unique in one respect in that there are very few sites where children cross the street after getting out of the school bus. There are only two sites," Cranston said.

School bus passengers must cross the street in front of the bus. But as Oakland County develops, traffic along its roads also grows.

"We've had a number of incidents. It's a potentially hazardous situation," Cranston said.

In recent years, complaints have risen about drivers along mile roads, especially 11 Mile, not stopping for school buses.

"We want to get people to wake up and start thinking," Cranston said. "We're getting into the warm weather months, and that's when we see higher speeds."

"Everyone is a little less attentive this time of year," Cranston added. "They're not really thinking. 'Hey, I'm driving an auto out in the road.'"

IN THE past, bus drivers have



Farmington Public Safety Officer Vincent Ziegler talks to Longacre Elementary School students about bus safety.



Ray Cranston



THOMAS ARNETT/staff photographer

Practicing what they've just learned, Longacre Elementary School fifth graders take to the emergency exit of a school bus. Kelly Semko

(left) and Gilbert Martinez help Jason Grey (center) through the bus' rear emergency exit. All are from Farmington Hills.

Calendar of events

Find the latest ideas for your most fashion-conscious summer ever.

BIRMINGHAM

APRIL 5 THROUGH 7

THURSDAY, APRIL 14
10 a.m.-5 p.m.

11 a.m.-5 p.m.

7 p.m.

THURSDAY, APRIL 21
7 p.m.

FRIDAY, APRIL 29
10 a.m.-5 p.m.

1 p.m.

See our exclusive Rosalie Designs Needlepoint Show of artistic pastel canvases in the Needlepoint Shop.

Informal modeling of Parisian fashions from our Chanel Boutique and Accessories Corner.

Find the right undergarments for your summer styles... Intimate Apparel Solutions Clinic with Paula McManus.

Join us in the Signature Salon for our Summer Preview Fashion Show... sportswear, day and evening dressing. Reservations, call 644-6900, ext. 344.

Day to Evening Fashion Seminar... suits, blouses and dresses with perfect accessories. R.S.V.P. 644-6900, ext. 309. Dress Salon

See our Tiktiner Spring/Summer International Designer Collections informally modeled.

All-Together Fashion Seminar focuses on the total look... sportswear, accessories, shoes and handbags. Reservations, call 644-6900, ext. 268.

Jacobson's

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Until 6 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday