



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TCSOS AND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS UNITE FOR NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK

Collaborative Campaign Highlights Student Safety and Community Awareness During School Bus Safety Week

October 18, 2024 — Sonora, California

The Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools (TCSOS), in collaboration with all 11 public school districts in the county, announces a joint campaign for National School Bus Safety Week, observed during the third full week of October. This campaign aims to promote student safety through community awareness and education.

“We want to remind everyone that school bus safety is a shared responsibility,” said Zack Abernathy, Tuolumne County Superintendent of Schools. “With the help of district transportation staff and local law enforcement, we’re committed to ensuring the well-being of our students.”

Community Collaboration and Board Presentation

This year’s campaign included a presentation to the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors by Angela Howard, Transportation Specialist for Summerville Union High School District, and Christi Hammerbeck, Transportation Director for Sonora Union High School District. Their presentation highlighted the importance of school bus safety and the need for community-wide awareness. Through their efforts, the Board proclaimed National School Bus Safety Week for the second consecutive year, emphasizing the critical role of collaboration in keeping students safe.

“School Bus Safety Week brings awareness to our daily travels and reminds us of the safety conditions within our community,” said Angela Howard.

Christi Hammerbeck added, “By raising awareness among our community members, we can work together to ensure the safety of the children in Tuolumne County.” Their efforts reflect the shared commitment to fostering a safer environment for students across the county.

Why School Bus Safety Matters

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 26,000 school bus accidents occur annually in the U.S. Between 2012 and 2021, 206 school-age children died in school-transportation-related crashes, with half involving children aged 5 to 10. These statistics underline the importance of community vigilance around school buses.

“Children are at higher risk when approaching or leaving a school bus,” noted the NHTSA. Despite flashing red lights and extended stop signs, accidents often occur when other drivers fail to stop. This reinforces the need for community awareness during National School Bus Safety Week.

Daily Tips and Social Media Campaign

In addition to the press release, TCSOS, and partnering districts will release daily safety tips on social media throughout the week, reminding drivers to:

- STOP for flashing red lights.
- WATCH for children crossing.
- KEEP our students and staff SAFE.

Voices from the Field

Local transportation staff shared their insights on bus safety:

- “Red light flashing and stop sign is out means stop. Not go. Please stop, it’s the law.”
– Kevin, Bus Driver
- “Children should be considered a priority while loading and unloading. Please notice this for our kids.”
– Gabe Mendezona, Bus Driver
- “Be patient and kind, as our children are learning along the way.”
– Sharlyn Anderson, Bus Driver

Partnering with Law Enforcement

Local law enforcement, including the California Highway Patrol (CHP), Sonora Police, and the Tuolumne County Sheriff’s Office, play a vital role in this campaign. Their efforts include increased patrols near school bus routes during peak hours and targeted messaging to remind drivers of the importance of stopping for school buses and adhering to safety laws. These partnerships help drivers throughout Tuolumne County remain aware of their responsibilities and the consequences of unsafe driving around school buses.

Join the Effort

TCSOS and its districts invite the entire Tuolumne County community to join this initiative, making school transportation safer for all. For more information, visit:

<https://www.tcsos.us/newsroom/events/national-school-bus-safety-week/>.

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