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Defiant motorists posing safety risk for students

BY JENNIFER PELLEY

Advertiser

Local police are outraged that motorists in town are passing school buses while children are getting on and off.

Const. Peter Cornick with the Grand Falls-Windsor municipal police is speaking out against what he calls a grave situation that is a matter of public safety.

"These small kids, they're not always paying attention to the cars," he said. "I'm very concerned we're going to have an accident and there's going to be a tragedy. If a child gets run over, it's going to be serious."

The police have recently received several complaints from concerned citizens and school bus drivers about this, particularly since the snow has fallen. Const. Cornick and a representative from the local detachment of the RCMP met with school district officials to discuss the matter.

In the meantime, police are encouraging bus drivers to copy down license plate numbers of any vehicles that pass them while they are stopped and to report that information. Police can then track down the registered owner of the vehicle.

If it is the case that another person besides the registered owner was driving the vehicle at the time of the incident, there are provisions under the Traffic Act where the registered owner of the vehicle can be charged in lieu of the driver.

A fine for passing a stopped school bus can run in the hundreds of dollars. Drivers will also lose six demerit points off of their licenses.

"But worse than all of that is some child getting hurt or killed," said Const. Cornick. "The bus driver is going to have to live with those consequences even though it's not his fault, the other kids that see this accident happen, if it does happen, are going to have to live with it, and the person who's driving the car that passes the school bus is going to have to live with it."

Sgt. Harold Nippard with the local RCMP detachment is also expressing his concern with the matter, saying motorists need to use more common sense when on the roads.

"These children are crossing the road feeling that they are protected by the fact that vehicles are supposed to, by law, stop when the lights are flashing and the stop sign on the bus is extended," said Sgt. Harold Nippard with the local RCMP detachment. "It's upsetting to know that some drivers are circumventing the law and putting children at risk."

Since people passing school buses has become a problem in this town, Const. Cornick is encouraging parents to talk to their children about taking extra precautions when getting on and off school buses. He says the flashing lights obviously cannot prevent someone from passing the bus if they wish, that they only indicate a person should stop, so children need to be extra cognizant of their safety.



Students at Woodland Primary in Grand Falls-Windsor board the school bus to go home for their lunch break. Local police are speaking out about the fact that some motorists are passing the buses when their red lights are flashing and their stop signs are extended, posing a safety risk for the children.

10/12/07

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