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Police target drivers who don't brake for school buses

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Rain trickled onto the red flashing lights of a yellow school bus Friday as another motorist broke the law.

PHOTOS:



Photo by Henry A. Barrios

A school bus driver for the Rosedale School District stops traffic for children riding her bus.

and impounded three vehicles, according to a police news release.

"Motorists are getting very lax in stopping when the lights come out," said Michael Cerri, director of maintenance, operations and transportation for the Rosedale Union School District. "The dangers are for the children being around the school bus."

When the red lights of a bus flash, drivers in either direction must stop, according to the California

A white truck sped past the stopped bus that was dropping off some 80 students in northwest Bakersfield.

"That is bad to the bone," one kid said looking out of a bus window as a police car chased down the lawbreaker.

The Bakersfield Police Department and the Rosedale Union School District conducted their first operation "Home Safe" to catch motorists who fail to yield to the red flashing lights of school buses.

With officers on three school buses and patrol cars waiting by stops in the Rosedale area, police ticketed 17 people, cited three drivers for being unlicensed

Department of Motor Vehicles Web site. Violators can be fined up to \$1,000 or lose their license for up to a year, according to the California Driver Handbook.

At the bus stop on Allen Road and San Juan Avenue, a stream of vehicles failed to stop. There were not enough officers to catch them all.

"We needed about five guys on that stop," said Officer Tyler Kinney as he barked descriptions of the law-breaking vehicles on a walkie-talkie.

In neighborhoods where bus driver Theresa Shaw stopped and walked outside to escort elementary and middle school students across the street, cars stopped.

Many other times, cars don't heed the rules, Shaw said.

On Friday morning, Shaw said four cars did not brake at the bus's flashing lights when she picked up kindergarten students.

"I've seen cars pull up to my window and ask if they're supposed to stop," she said.

When bus drivers see a motorist not braking for the flashing lights, they are supposed to write a report of the offending vehicle, Cerri said.

Not every driver has enough time to jot down a license plate number, and the school district welcomed the assistance from the Police Department, he said.

"That is the awareness we're trying to see," Cerri said. "It's for safety."

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