

Traffic Safety Facts 1997

U.S. Department of Transportation
National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration



School Buses



A school bus-related crash is a crash which involves, either directly or indirectly, a school bus-type vehicle, or a vehicle functioning as a school bus, transporting children to or from school or school-related activities.

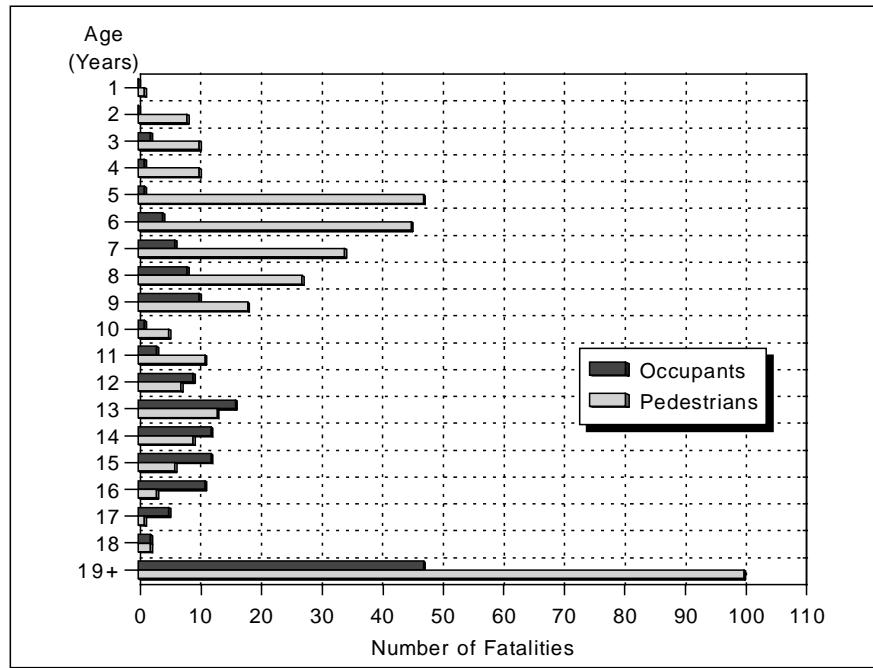
Since 1987 there have been about 420,000 fatal traffic crashes. Just over 0.3 percent (1,298) were classified as school bus-related.

Since 1987, 1,458 people have died in school bus-related crashes — an average of 132 fatalities per year. Most of the people who lost their lives in those crashes (63 percent) were occupants of other vehicles involved. Nonoccupants (pedestrians, bicyclists, etc.) accounted for 27 percent of the deaths, and school bus occupants accounted for 10 percent (drivers 2 percent, passengers 8 percent).

Since 1987, 257 school-age pedestrians (less than 19 years old) have died in school bus-related crashes. Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) were killed by school buses, 5 percent by vehicles functioning as school buses, and 32 percent by other vehicles involved in the crashes. Half of all school-age pedestrians killed in school bus-related crashes were between the ages of 5 and 7.

“An average of 33 school-age children die in school bus-related traffic crashes each year — 9 school bus occupants and 23 pedestrians.”

Figure 1. Occupant and Pedestrian Fatalities in School Bus-Related Crashes, by Age, 1987-1997



Note: Occupant fatalities shown are for occupants of school buses or vehicles used as school buses.

On average, 16 school-age pedestrians are killed by school buses (or vehicles used as school buses) each year, and 7 are killed by other vehicles involved in school bus-related crashes.

More school-age pedestrians are killed in the afternoon than in the morning, with 43 percent of the fatalities occurring in crashes between 3:00 and 4:00 PM.

Table 1. Fatalities in School Bus-Related Crashes by Time of Day, 1987-1997

| Time of Day | Occupant Fatalities* | Pedestrians (School Age) | Total Fatalities |
|----------------|----------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
| 12:00-6:59 AM | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| 7:00-7:59 AM | 48 | 29 | 77 |
| 8:00-8:59 AM | 17 | 19 | 36 |
| 9:00-9:59 AM | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| 10:00-10:59 AM | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| 11:00-11:59 AM | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| 12:00-12:59 PM | 5 | 8 | 13 |
| 1:00-1:59 PM | 6 | 4 | 10 |
| 2:00-2:59 PM | 17 | 36 | 53 |
| 3:00-3:59 PM | 25 | 110 | 135 |
| 4:00-4:59 PM | 9 | 29 | 38 |
| 5:00-11:59 PM | 7 | 4 | 11 |
| Total | 150 | 257 | 407 |

* Does not include occupants of other vehicles in school bus-related crashes.

“From 1987 to 1997, half of all school-age pedestrians killed in school bus-related crashes were 5 to 7 years old.”

Between 1987 and 1997, 100 crashes occurred in which at least one occupant of a school bus or a vehicle functioning as a school bus died. Half of those crashes (52 percent) involved another vehicle. In the 48 single-vehicle crashes, 60 occupants — 13 drivers and 47 passengers — were killed. In the 52 multiple-vehicle crashes, 18 drivers and 72 passengers died. In the 48 single-vehicle crashes, the first harmful events were as follows: striking a fixed object (28 crashes), a person falling from the vehicle (10 crashes), the vehicle overturning (6 crashes), the vehicle colliding with a train (2 crashes), and collision with object not fixed (1 crash).

In 42 percent of all crashes involving fatalities to occupants of a school bus or vehicle used as a school bus, the principal point of impact was the front of the vehicle.

Since 1987, 7 drivers and 47 passengers have died in school buses providing transportation for purposes other than school or school-related activities (churches, civic organizations, etc.). In one such multi-vehicle crash, 27 occupants, including the driver, died.

Table 2. Occupant Fatalities in School Bus-Related Crashes by Principal Impact Point on School Bus Vehicle, 1987-1997

| Principal Impact Point on Bus | Type of Crash | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|------------|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| | Single-Vehicle | | Multiple-Vehicle | | Total | |
| | Crashes | Fatalities | Crashes | Fatalities | Crashes | Fatalities |
| Front | 16 | 19 | 26 | 59 | 42 | 78 |
| Right Side | 6 | 6 | 10 | 15 | 16 | 21 |
| Left Side | 1 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 11 |
| Rear | 3 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 14 |
| Top | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Undercarriage | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Noncollision | 18 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 20 |
| Unknown | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 48 | 60 | 52 | 90 | 100 | 150 |

“Impacts to the front of the school bus occur in 42 percent of fatal school bus-related crashes.”

Table 3. School-Age Pedestrians Killed in School Bus-Related Crashes by Vehicle Maneuver, 1987-1997

| Vehicle Maneuver | Striking Vehicle | | | |
|---|------------------|----------------------------|---------------|------------|
| | School Bus | Vehicle Used as School Bus | Other Vehicle | Total |
| Going Straight | 61 | 9 | 56 | 126 |
| Slowing or Stopping in Traffic Lane | 6 | 0 | 3 | 9 |
| Starting in Traffic Lane | 66 | 1 | 1 | 68 |
| Passing or Overtaking Another Vehicle | 0 | 0 | 11 | 11 |
| Leaving a Parked Position | 7 | 1 | 0 | 8 |
| Maneuvering to Avoid an Animal, Pedestrian, Object, Other Vehicle, etc. | 0 | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| Turning Right | 11 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Turning Left | 6 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Backing Up (Other Than for Parking) | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Negotiating a Curve | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| Entering Parked Position | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Changing Lanes | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Other/Unknown | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Total School-Age Pedestrians Killed | 164 | 12 | 81 | 257 |

Table 4. School Bus-Related Crashes Involving Occupant Fatalities, 1987-1997

| Year | School Bus Body-Type | | | | Vehicle Used as School Bus | | | | Total | | | |
|--------------|----------------------|------------|------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------|------------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| | Single-Vehicle | | Multiple-Vehicle | | Single-Vehicle | | Multiple-Vehicle | | Single-Vehicle | | Multiple-Vehicle | |
| | Crashes | Fatalities | Crashes | Fatalities | Crashes | Fatalities | Crashes | Fatalities | Crashes | Fatalities | Crashes | Fatalities |
| 1987 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 11 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 9 | 14 |
| 1988 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1989 | 7 | 8 | * 5 | 25 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 10 | 11 | 6 | 26 |
| 1990 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 4 |
| 1991 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 10 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 11 |
| 1992 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| 1993 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 6 |
| 1994 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| 1995 | 2 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 4 |
| 1996 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 7 | 3 | 3 |
| 1997 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 9 |
| Total | 29 | 38 | 41 | 78 | 19 | 22 | 11 | 12 | 48 | 60 | 52 | 90 |

* Includes one crash with 21 occupant fatalities.

Note: Does not include occupants of other vehicles in school bus-related crashes.

Table 5. Fatalities in School Bus-Related Crashes, 1987-1997

| Year | Occupants of School Bus* | | | Pedestrians | | | Other Nonoccupants | Occupants of Other Vehicle | Total |
|--------------|--------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| | Driver | Passenger | Total | Struck by School Bus* | Struck by Other Vehicle | Total | | | |
| 1987 | 8 | 9 | 17 | 32 | 11 | 43 | 5 | 113 | 178 |
| 1988 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 19 | 17 | 36 | 6 | 80 | 130 |
| 1989 | 4 | 33 | 37 | 25 | 7 | 32 | 1 | 72 | 142 |
| 1990 | 4 | 7 | 11 | 32 | 7 | 39 | 1 | 64 | 115 |
| 1991 | 2 | 15 | 17 | 21 | 5 | 26 | 5 | 86 | 134 |
| 1992 | 1 | 9 | 10 | 21 | 8 | 29 | 2 | 83 | 124 |
| 1993 | 1 | 12 | 13 | 32 | 8 | 40 | 2 | 86 | 141 |
| 1994 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 28 | 9 | 37 | 2 | 64 | 107 |
| 1995 | 0 | 13 | 13 | 24 | 10 | 34 | 4 | 72 | 123 |
| 1996 | 2 | 8 | 10 | 16 | 7 | 23 | 2 | 101 | 136 |
| 1997 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 16 | 2 | 18 | 5 | 95 | 128 |
| Total | 31 | 119 | 150 | 266 | 91 | 357 | 35 | 916 | 1,458 |
| Average | 3 | 11 | 14 | 24 | 8 | 32 | 3 | 83 | 132 |

* Includes school bus body type and vehicle used as school bus.

For more information:

Information on school bus traffic fatalities is available from the National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NRD-31, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Telephone inquiries should be addressed to Ms. Louann Hall at 1-800-934-8517. FAX messages should be sent to (202) 366-7078. General information on highway traffic safety can be accessed by Internet users at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/nrsa>. To report a safety-related problem or to inquire about motor vehicle safety information, contact the Auto Safety Hotline at 1-800-424-9393.