

Ask a Cop Submission
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Sept 16, 2010

Question: I've heard that it's illegal to pass in a school zone. What does that mean?

Answer: First let me define a "school zone" for you. A school zone can be anywhere; in residential neighborhoods or on main thoroughfares. Generally there are three signs within a school zone: the first two will be facing you, and the third, or last sign, will be facing away from you. The first sign facing you obligates you to begin traveling at 15 mph and not to "pass" any other vehicles traveling in the same direction as you. You are required to follow these rules until you get beyond the second sign facing you, which is placed at the far side of the crosswalk in the school zone. Once you are beyond that crosswalk you can resume the normal speed limit established for that street and you may pass when it's safe to do so. The third sign which will be facing away from you is notification to the traffic going the opposite direction that they are now entering a school zone. That sign does not apply to you.

The term "passing" in this situation means that when you enter the school zone, the front bumper of your vehicle cannot extend in front of any other vehicle that is inside the school zone traveling with you in the same direction, and was ahead of you when you entered the zone. Now if the vehicle that's in the lane next to yours is traveling slower than 15 mph, you cannot move ahead of it or "pass" it, you must slow down. Remember the driver of the other vehicle might see something that you don't, so you should slow down and proceed with caution.

The traffic laws applicable to school zones can be found in Arizona Revised Statute 28-797. The safety of our children as they travel to and from school is very important. Remember, a violation involving passing within a school zone or traveling in excess of 15 mph can cost you about \$275 if you are found responsible.