



# Extended Stop Arm Guidance

Final August 4, 2022

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) has received multiple inquiries regarding school bus extended stop arms for the upcoming 2022-23 school year. The existing stop arm requirements were impacted by the adoption of:

- [HB 267](#) (codified in [§ 61-8-351, MCA](#)) by the 2021 Legislature; and
- the [2022 Montana School Bus Standards](#) by the Montana Board of Public Education.

To address frequently asked questions about the extended stop arm requirements, OPI has prepared this guidance document. In the event that this guidance is in conflict with the statutory and regulatory requirements, those legal requirements are controlling.

## ***What is the difference between a stop arm and an extended stop arm?***

An extended stop arm is a type of stop arm. An extended stop arm must meet all the requirements of a stop arm as well as additional requirements that allow it to be “extended”. A school bus that has a legally conforming extended stop arm does not need a second stop arm unless that second arm is separately required.

## ***What characteristics of an extended stop arm are required?***

An extended stop arm must:

- meet the requirements of a stop arm;
- have flashing red lights that meet the requirements of [§ 61-9-402\(3\), MCA](#);
- be capable of extending a distance of at least 54 inches from the school bus at a height of not less than 36 inches;
- have an illuminated stop sign.

## ***What characteristics of an extended stop arm are recommended?***

An extended stop arm should:

- Have the illuminated stop sign at the furthest distance from the school bus.

### ***What characteristics of an extended stop arm are optional?***

An extended stop arm may:

- Exist with additional safety equipment, such as a non-extended stop arm, or additional safety characteristics, such as extra lighting or reflectors, so long as those additional features meet applicable standards and do not impair the extended stop arm or other bus or bus safety requirements.

### ***What characteristics of an extended stop arm are prohibited?***

An extended stop arm may not:

- Be located below a side emergency exit window.

### ***Sources:***

#### **[§ 61-8-351\(5\)\(a\)-\(d\), MCA](#)**

- (a) When a school bus route includes a bus stop that requires a school child to cross a roadway, the school bus must be equipped with an extended stop arm that partially obstructs the roadway. A school child may not cross a roadway to enter or exit from a school bus unless the roadway has been partially obstructed by the extended stop arm.
- (b) The extended stop arm must be equipped with additional flashing red lights as specified in 61-9-402 and must be capable of extending a distance of at least 54 inches from the school bus at a height of not less than 36 inches.
- (c) The board of trustees shall approve each school bus stop that requires a school child to cross a roadway.
- (d) A school bus that experiences a mechanical problem or an emergency that requires the school bus to stop at a nondesignated bus stop is not subject to the requirements of this subsection (5).

#### **[§ 61-9-402\(3\)\(a\)-\(c\), MCA](#)**

- (a) A bus used for the transportation of school children must be equipped with signal lamps mounted as high and as widely spaced laterally as practicable, displaying to the front at least two red and two amber alternating flashing lights and to the rear at least two red and two amber alternating flashing lights. These lights must have sufficient intensity to be visible at 500 feet in normal sunlight.
- (b) Additional red flashing lights may be mounted to the front and to the rear at a height of at least 36 inches and not more than 72 inches from the ground. If additional red lights are mounted, they must be installed so that they can be actuated only if the school bus is stopped.
- (c) The specifications for the warning lights must be prescribed by the board of public education and approved by the department.

[2022 Montana School Bus Standards](#), p. 24

- b. Side emergency exit windows when installed may be vertically hinged on the forward side of the window. No side emergency exit window will be located above the stop arm.

[2022 Montana School Bus Standards](#), p. 40

#### STOP SIGNAL ARM

1. The stop signal arm(s) shall comply with the requirements of FMVSS 131, School Bus Pedestrian Safety Devices. The stop signal arm is a required retrofit of all school buses, effective July 1, 1987. (Reference section on lamps and signals 3.b. (4).) MFSABs are exempt from these requirements.
2. Any newly manufactured bus under 40 feet in length may have an optional stop signal arm mounted to the rear of the bus.
3. Any newly manufactured bus over 40 feet in length shall have an additional stop signal arm mounted to the rear of the bus.
4. Stop Signal Arms may be equipped with a camera system(s).

[2022 Montana School Bus Standards](#), p. 40

#### EXTENDED STOP ARM

5. When a school bus route includes a bus stop that requires a child to cross a roadway, the school bus must be equipped with an extended stop arm that partially obstructs the roadway.
6. A school child may not cross a roadway to enter or exit from a school bus unless the roadway has been partially obstructed by the extended stop arm.
7. Extended Stop Arm must:
  - Be equipped with additional flashing red lights as specified in 61-9-402, MCA;
  - Be capable of extending a distance of at least 54 inches from the school bus; and
  - Be at a height of not less than 36 inches.
8. Extended Stop Arm should have an additional illuminated stop sign located at the furthest distance from the school bus.

[2022 Montana School Bus Standards](#), p. 78

**Extended Stop Arm:** a device that partially obstructs the roadway is capable of extending a distance of at least 54 inches from the school bus at a height of not less than 36 inches, with an additional illuminated stop sign.

[2022 Montana School Bus Standards](#), p. 89

**Stop arm:** A device in the form of a red octagon extending outward from the side of a school bus to signal that the bus has stopped to load or unload passengers and meeting FMVSS No. 131; also known as stop semaphore and stop signal arm.