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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LA PORTE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE/MICHIGAN CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT/INDIANA STATE POLICE TO INCREASE ENFORCEMENT DURING NATIONAL SCHOOL BUS SAFETY WEEK

The La Porte County Sheriff's Office has announced that it will be participating in a multi-jurisdictional traffic safety project in La Porte County that has been named: "Operation Stop Arm." The Sheriff's Office has partnered with the Michigan City Police Department and Indiana State Police with a common goal to make driver's more aware of school bus loading and unloading with an ultimate goal of keeping school children safe when they load and unload from buses. National School Bus Safety Week is October 20 – 24, 2014.

In the 2012-2013 school year, nine (9) children were killed nationwide while loading or unloading from school buses. This included an eight year old Indiana child who was struck and killed by an oncoming car while he was boarding his bus. The driver of the vehicle that struck the child was distracted by her cellular telephone and disregarded the extended stop arm and flashing red lights. Since 1970, 1,212 children have been killed nationwide while loading or unloading from a school bus.

Drivers who disregard stopped buses with their stop arms extended and flashing lights activated can be cited for Arm Signal Device: Duty to Obey, which is a Class "A" Infraction and is subject to a fine up to \$10,000. A driver can also be arrested for Class "B" Misdemeanor, Reckless Driving, if they recklessly pass a school bus while loading or unloading. That offense is punishable by a \$1,000 fine and up to 180 days in jail.

The Michigan City Area Schools recently hosted a "kick-off" to National School Bus Safety Week at their Transportation Facility and Director of Communications, Betsy Kohn stated: "The Michigan City Area Schools is pleased to partner with our local, State and County law enforcement to help insure the safety of our children while boarding or unloading from their buses. We ask that the motoring public help us accomplish this important task." (picture included)

Major John Boyd, states: "Drivers should always be diligent, patient and aware around stopped or slowing school buses. Since 1970, 1,212 children have been killed nationwide while loading or unloading from school buses and our goal is to not contribute to that statistic. Our Deputies, Officers and Troopers will be observing for violators who disregard school bus stop arms and signals and those who do will be ticketed or arrested." Major Boyd added: "Since 1975, there has been a 200% nationwide reduction in school bus loading or unloading fatalities and we want to insure that La Porte County drivers play an important role in this continued reduction."

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