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ENTRY LEVEL

DRIVER

TRAINING

GUIDE

SCHOOL BUS

4.0 School Services

School Bus

**ELDT Guide**

***Slide 2:*** **Danger Zones**

Every year in the U.S., numerous school children are killed during the school bus loading or unloading process. For example, in recent years:

* + A seven-year-old girl was killed after she exited a school bus in New York; the bus driver did not see her as she walked in front of the bus, and she was struck and killed by the right front wheel
  + A 16-year-old Florida boy was crossing the street to catch his school bus when an oncoming vehicle failed to stop; the student was struck and killed
  + In Nevada, a student was being dropped off at his home when his sibling crawled under the school bus and was killed as the bus pulled away

The area around a school bus can be particularly dangerous, not only due to other passing vehicles but also due to dangers presented by the school bus itself. Certain areas are quite hard for the bus driver to see. That’s why certain areas surrounding every school bus are known as the “danger zones.”

***Slide 3:*** The danger zones are found **on all sides of the bus** where children are in the most danger of being hit and injured or killed, either by another vehicle or by the school bus.

Opinions differ on the exact size of the danger zones, but they extend:

* + 10 to 20 feet forward from the front bumper, with the first 10 feet being the most dangerous
  + 10 to 15 feet outward from the left side, including any left-side traffic lanes
  + 10 to 15 feet outward from the right side, with the exception of a narrow path to the **service door**
  + 10 to 15 feet behind the rear bumper

As shown in the accompanying diagram, some areas of the danger zones are more hazardous than others. The most hazardous areas are those where children often cannot be seen and where they are in the most danger of being struck by the bus wheels, the bus body, or another vehicle.

You must become familiar with these danger zones, know why they are dangerous, know how to minimize the dangers, and know how to instruct children on avoiding the dangers. You must:

* + Practice your danger-zone training every day, because a momentary lapse can lead to tragedy
  + Avoid slipping into a routine that causes you to not recognize dangers around your bus before driving away from a stop
  + Remain alert at all times, even if (or especially if) you are in a hurry
  + Avoid distractions while students are in the danger zones—do not use a cell phone, radio, PA system, or anything else that takes your focus away from the students

***Slide 4:*** **Front Danger Zone**

The blind spot immediately in front of your bus presents a danger zone for anyone crossing in front of the vehicle or located near its front wheels. This is one of the most dangerous areas around a bus.

The size of the front blind spot will depend on the type of bus you drive, either:

* + *Conventional* (Type A, B, or C), with a large engine and hood sticking out the front and an entrance door located behind the front wheels, or
  + ***Transit*** *(Type D),* with a flat front (usually rear-engine) and an entrance door located ahead of the front wheels

Visibility in a conventional bus is generally worse than in a transit-style bus due to the large hood.

How far the blind spot extends in either type of vehicle will vary depending on your eye level while seated in the driver’s seat. The lower your eye level, the longer and larger the blind spot.

Many school buses are equipped with a **crossing arm** or gate intended to keep children from walking too close to the bus as they cross in front.

Mirrors are also critical to reducing this blind spot, as discussed below.

***Slide 5:* Rear Danger Zone**

Another danger zone is located directly behind the bus, again due to limited visibility. Unlike a car, the inside rearview mirror on a bus is used to observe passengers inside the bus, not the rearview on the outside. Also, your outside mirrors allow you to see along the sides of your bus but not directly behind it. This means there is a blind spot directly behind the bus where children cannot be seen easily.

**Left (Driver’s Side) Danger Zone**

The driver’s side of the bus presents another danger zone. That’s usually where other vehicles may pass, which may be the biggest danger for any children who need to cross the street. It’s also the location of another blind spot for you, because you may not be able to see the area directly below the window level around the driver’s seat. How far this blind spot extends will vary depending on your eye level while seated.

***Slide 6:*** **Right (Door Side) Danger Zone**

The final danger zone is on the passenger or door side of the vehicle, where children wait for the bus and where they load and unload. Though you can look out the door, this side of the bus has a large blind spot because you cannot see directly below the window level and because you sit further away from that side of the bus. Again, the size of the blind spot will vary depending on your eye level at the driver’s seat.

The most hazardous areas on this side of the bus are the areas around the front and rear wheels, where children could be struck by the vehicle.

The wheels are not the only hazard. A child standing on a sidewalk near the rear side of the bus could be hit by the swinging bus body (tail swing) as you turn away from the curb.

***Slide 7:*** **Mirrors & Their Adjustment**

Proper adjustment and use of all mirrors is vital to the safe operation of your bus, given the many blind spots that surround it. Your mirrors will help you observe the danger zone and look for students, pedestrians, traffic, and objects. You will need to learn to “read” your mirrors carefully and use the information to get a better picture of what’s happening outside your vehicle.

During your daily pre-trip inspection, check each mirror and make sure it is properly adjusted before operating the bus. If something isn’t right, get it fixed before you drive.

Federal regulations in 49 CFR Sec. 571.111 include detailed specifications for the proper size, mounting, and adjustment of school bus mirrors. The regulation includes a field-of-vision test that uses a specific arrangement of traffic cones (a “mirror grid”) to make sure all mirrors are properly adjusted. The test also helps the driver understand the effectiveness and limitations of the mirror system. Your employer or school may have a specific parking area equipped with traffic cones to be used to conduct the test.

Your mirrors will include:

* + Convex cross-view (or crossover) mirrors
  + Flat rearview (or West Coast) mirrors
  + Convex rearview (or spot) mirrors
  + Inside rearview (or student) mirror

Be aware that each exterior mirror will create its own blind spot—an area behind the mirror that you cannot see because the mirror itself is blocking your view. This blind spot gets larger the farther away you try to look, and it constantly moves with the vehicle. You may need to move your head and shoulders to peer around the mirror and into the blind spot.

Each mirror will reveal only a small part of the whole picture. Never rely on a single mirror to determine when the situation is safe.

***Slide 8:*** **Convex Cross-View Mirrors**

These mirrors are mounted on both left and right front corners of the bus. They are used to see:

* + The area **directly in front** of the bus, from the front bumper at ground level up to a point where direct vision is possible. In other words, what you can see directly through the windshield and what you can see through these mirrors should overlap. They allow you to see approximately six feet in front of the vehicle.
  + A portion of the **left and right sides** of the bus, including the right and left front tires from where they touch the ground. On the right side, they are also used to see the service door.

The cross-view mirrors are used when the bus is stopped. Do not try to use them to see traffic while the bus is moving. Because these mirrors are convex, they give a distorted view. Keep in mind that the size and distance of objects that you see in them does not reflect reality.

***Adjustment***

Adjust the cross-view mirrors so you can see the entire area in front of the vehicle, as well as the front bumper. Your body height will affect the height of your eyes at the driving position and could affect what you see in the cross-view mirrors. Make sure the mirrors are adjusted properly!

**Flat rearview mirrors**

These mirrors are mounted at the left and right front corners of the bus at the side or front of the windshield. They are used to monitor traffic and check clearances and students on the sides and to the rear of the bus. They also allow you to see if any students are throwing items from, or leaning out of, the windows.

There is a blind spot immediately below and in front of each mirror and directly in back of the rear bumper.

* + The blind spot behind the bus extends 50 to 150 feet rearward, and could extend up to 400 feet depending on the length and width of the bus
  + The mirrors may block your view at intersections; lean towards your steering wheel so you can peer around the mirrors whenever you need to make sure traffic has cleared

***Adjustment***

Adjust the flat rearview mirrors so you can see:

* + 200 feet or approximately four bus lengths behind the bus
  + The rear tires touching the ground and approximately 6 inches of pavement in front of the rear tires
  + Along the sides of the bus, but not so much of the bus that you can see all the windows

***Slide 9:*** **Convex Rearview Mirrors**

The convex mirrors are located below the outside flat mirrors near the sides of the windshield. They are used to monitor the left and right sides of the bus at a wide angle. They provide a view of traffic, clearances, and students at the side of the bus.

Because the mirrors are convex, they present a distorted view of both size and distance.

***Adjustment***

The convex rearview mirrors should be adjusted so you can see the entire area to the rear of the mirror along the side of the bus.

Make sure you can see:

* + The entire side of the bus up to the mirror mounts
  + The front of the rear tires touching the ground
  + At least one traffic lane on either side of the bus

***Slide 10:*** **Inside Rearview Mirror**

The inside rearview mirror is located directly above the windshield on the driver’s side of the bus. It is used to monitor passenger activity inside the bus, NOT traffic behind the bus. It may provide a limited view directly behind the bus if there are any windows on the back side (such as a glass-bottomed rear emergency door).

This mirror has a blind spot directly behind the driver’s seat and behind the bus. You must use the exterior side mirrors to monitor traffic behind the vehicle.

Do not get distracted by this mirror! It requires taking your attention away from the road. A quick look should be all you need. If you must address a situation in the passenger area, you should stop in a safe location before doing so.

***Adjustment***

Position the mirror so you can see:

* + The top of the rear window in the top of the mirror
  + All of the students, including the heads of the students seated right behind you

**Keep Mirrors Clean**

Proper adjustment won’t do any good if you cannot see what you need to see in each mirror. Keep your mirrors clean and free of dirt, debris, ice, and other obstructions at all times. Carry glass cleaner and paper toweling in case you need to clean your mirrors during a route or trip.

A dirty mirror is almost as bad as having no mirror at all!

***Slide 11***: **Signaling**

School bus drivers will need to learn and use standard hand signals to tell students when a roadway is safe to cross and give other non-verbal directions from the driver’s seat.

* + Hold up your palm to the window, facing the student (the universal “stop” sign), to tell him or her to wait before stepping into the roadway
  + When you are certain that it’s safe to cross, make eye contact with the student and give him or her the sign that it is safe to cross; Thumb up, palm open facing the direction they are crossing, moving your arm and hand across your body in the direction they are crossing. The student should still look both ways before crossing

The horn may also be used as a signal, especially to grab a student’s attention when there is imminent danger.

Be alert to any motorists who might think you are trying to signal to them. Another driver who sees and misinterprets your signal, thinking that it’s safe to proceed, could put a child in danger.

***Slide 12***: **Training Students**

* Your awareness of the danger zones is critical, but equally important is the need for students to understand the dangers around your bus and how to avoid them. For that reason, you may need to be involved in training and, especially, reminding students about the danger zones, signaling, and how they can avoid harm.
* Keep in mind that you may be the **only adult** who regularly observes a child getting into or off of your bus. If a student does something to put herself in harm’s way around your vehicle, it’s your responsibility to tell the student what they did wrong.
* The need for training and reminders is most important for younger children, who may forget their training unless it is repeated at regular intervals.

***Slide 13***: **Some important reminders for students:**

* + The Danger Zones are found all around the bus. They extend about 12 feet in every direction. The bus driver may not be able to see students in this zone, especially near the wheels of the bus and by the front door.
  + Students must be very careful when approaching, walking away from, or getting on or off the bus.
  + If something is left behind or dropped under or near the bus:
    1. Leave it there and move out of the danger zone
    2. Get the driver’s attention by waving your hands above your head
    3. Wait for instructions from the driver before retrieving the item
  + Students must always make eye contact with the bus driver and watch for his or her hand signals.
  + If you hear a bus horn, immediately stop, make eye contact with the driver, and watch for hand signals.
  + Don’t hang out in the danger zones. After exiting the bus, immediately walk 5 giant steps (10-15 feet) away from the vehicle.
  + If you must cross the street in front of the bus, walk on the sidewalk or along the side of the street until you are at least five giant steps (10-15 feet) in front of the bus. Make eye contact with the bus driver and watch for a hand signal before crossing.
  + Never walk or cross behind a school bus.
  + Never run along the side of a moving bus.
  + Arrive early to the bus stop so you do not need to rush across a street and/or rush around the bus.
  + Never “dart out” into a street or in front of the bus, even if you are in a hurry. Stop in a safe spot (out of the danger zones) and wait and watch until you’re sure it’s safe to proceed.
  + When waiting at a bus stop, remain about six feet away from the curb until the bus comes to a complete stop, the door opens, and the driver says it’s okay to approach the bus door.
  + Never run to catch a bus after it has started moving.

Making eye contact with the bus driver is critical to safely crossing a street.

**Procedures for crossing a street to board a bus:**

* 1. Stay on your side of the road, far back from the edge of the road and away from traffic
  2. Wait for the bus to stop
  3. Move along the side of the road, if necessary, until you are about 12 feet (5 giant steps) ahead of the bus’s front bumper
  4. Make eye contact with the driver and watch for the driver’s signal to cross
  5. Check for traffic in both directions, and then check again
  6. Cross the street, walking directly across while continuing to check for traffic in both directions
  7. Board the bus using the hand rails

There may be a designated safe place to wait at the stop for pickup. Students should arrive five minutes before the bus’s scheduled arrival. In some cases, they may be required, upon drop-off, to wait in the designated area until the bus departs.

***Slide 14***: Procedures for crossing a street after exiting a bus:

* 1. Use the hand rails while exiting
  2. Turn left and walk forward on the sidewalk or the side of the road until you can see the bus driver and are about 12 feet (5 or more giant steps) ahead of the bus’s bumper
  3. Stop and make eye contact with the bus driver
  4. Wait for a signal from the driver to cross
  5. Cross to the center of the street, still in front of the corner of the bus
  6. Stop, look, and listen for traffic in both directions
  7. Cross the street quickly after all vehicles have stopped

Children should be encouraged to NOT wear headphones or earbuds in or near the danger zones, so they can hear traffic or other dangers.

***Slide 15***: **Dart-Outs**

Staying alert and adjusting your mirrors cannot prevent students from “darting out” of a safe area and putting themselves in danger. This usually occurs when a student is in a rush to get to or from the bus, which might cause them to dart into a roadway or in front of the bus without thinking or looking. Children may also dart out if they are:

* + Chasing after something, such as a floating piece of paper, a ball, an ice-cream truck, etc.
  + Chasing after someone, such as a parent or other kids

Children who are departing the danger zone may also try to “dart back” to the bus to retrieve a forgotten item.

For those reasons, you must:

* + Always be alert to children who may dart out in front of the bus or other vehicles. This is especially important at the moment you are ready to retract the stop signal arm and begin moving the vehicle, because a child may think they “can still make it ” if they hurry.
  + Make eye contact with students and others around the vehicle whenever possible. Eye contact can help you understand their intentions and is the first step in signaling instructions.
  + Use hand signals as discussed below to give directions and prevent children from darting out. If necessary, use your horn to grab their attention, especially if there is an imminent danger.
  + Keep the vehicle at a stop if there’s a chance that anyone will rush in front of it as you start to move.
  + Wait until dropped-off children have reached a safe, designated area outside of the danger zone before you begin to move.
  + Never let your desire to stay on schedule cloud your judgment. It’s more important that students get onto the bus safely than risk being pressured to cross a street before it’s safe to do so.
  + Report and/or talk to students who dart into dangerous situations, to prevent the behavior from repeating.

 Pay particular attention if a child failed to show up for the bus. They may be running to catch up.

***Slide 16:*** **Loading and Unloading**

**Dangers of Loading & Unloading**

School buses are the safest method of transporting kids to school. But when children are *outside* the bus, either departing or approaching it, is when they can get into harm’s way. In fact, government data shows that loading and unloading is the most dangerous part of the school transportation process.

* + On average, 30 school-age children die in school bus-related crashes each year
  + Nearly two thirds of school-age children killed in those crashes are killed outside the bus, and two-thirds of those are killed by school buses
  + Half of all school-age pedestrians killed in school bus-related crashes are 5 to 7 years old; these younger students are especially vulnerable because they are smaller, harder to see, inexperienced, and more impulsive
  + The principal point of impact is the front of the bus.
  + Most fatal school bus-related crashes occur during the day in clear weather.
  + In most cases, students are killed or injured by their own bus.
  + The after-school run is more dangerous than before school, possibly because students have been sitting quietly all day, are eager to get home, and are less likely to pay attention.
* Depending on your route, the loading and unloading process may take place dozens of times every day, divided between the morning—when you load near children’s homes and unload at the school—and the afternoon—when you load at school and unload near children’s homes.

***Slide 17***: **Danger Zones**

As discussed in earlier, the most hazardous areas around your bus are those where children cannot be seen and where they are in most danger of being struck by the bus wheels, the bus body, or another vehicle.

The loading and unloading process puts children near these danger zones, so that is when most care and attention is required. If you “lose track” of a child in the danger zones, it could put their life at risk when you start to move the bus. The approach to and departure from a bus stop, when your bus is moving, are the most dangerous times. While the bus is stopped, danger comes from other vehicles.

**Use Approved Stopping Locations**

School bus routes and stops, particularly stops in urban areas, are carefully chosen. All stops should be approved by the school district prior to making the stop. Never change the location of a bus stop without approval from the appropriate official!

***Slide 18:* Red Warning Lights**

Flashing red warning lights near the top of a school bus—two in front and two in the rear—indicate that the bus is stopped for loading or unloading. In general, other drivers must stop at least 20 feet from the bus while these lights are active.

Depending on vehicle design, you activate the flashing red warning lights and deactivate the amber warning lights simultaneously by opening the entrance door when stopped for loading or unloading. This will also deploy the stop arm as described below. When you close the door, the red warning lights will turn off.

When the stop arm and flashing red warning lights are activated, any motorist who passes the bus is committing a serious violation, with severe penalties.

Depending on state and local laws:

* + There may be specific situations when the red warning lights are not needed during a stop, such as when the bus is entirely off the traveled part of the roadway.
  + Vehicles traveling in the opposite direction on a divided highway may not need to stop when the red warning lights are activated.
  + You may be required to report drivers who fail to stop when your red warning lights are active. You will be expected to provide details such as the time, location, license number, color and type of vehicle, etc. Your bus may be equipped with a camera system to capture such details automatically.

The four red and four amber warning lights make up the standard “eight-way light system” found on most modern school buses.

***Slide 19***: **Hazard Warning Lights**

Hazard warning lights are the standard four-way flashing amber warning lights located next to the brake or tail lights on most vehicles. These lights are used in a variety of conditions to make other vehicle drivers aware of the bus and exercise caution. Depending on state and local law, these lights may be used:

* + At railroad crossings
  + When backing into another street to turn around
  + In place of other flashing warning lights in certain situations

**Stop Arm**

The stop arm (or stop signal arm) is a lighted “STOP” sign that flips out from the front left (driver’s) side of a school bus during a stop. (Some buses have two stop arms, one in front and one in the rear.) In combination with the red warning lights, it signals to other motorists that they must stop.

The sign is usually activated automatically in conjunction with the flashing red warning lights and the opening of the entrance door.

***Slide 20:*** **Crossing Gate**

A crossing gate (also known as a crossing arm or crossing control arm) is an optional safety device meant to keep children where you can see them when they cross in front of your bus. They force children to walk at least five feet away from the front bumper if they want to cross in front of the bus.

A crossing gate is typically made of wire or plastic and it swings out from the front bumper on the right-front corner of the bus while stopped for loading or unloading. It is activated in combination with the stop arm, red warning lights, and the opening of the entrance door. The arm is then retracted flush against the bumper before the bus moves.

There may be situations when the crossing gate will not be used, such as while loading or unloading at school. For that purpose, your control panel may include a crossing gate override switch.

**Service Door**

The service door is the main entrance door on the right side of the bus, through which you and passengers normally board and exit the vehicle. Opening the service door will typically activate the red flashing lights and the stop arm and deactivate the flashing amber lights.

***Slide 20:*** **Approaching a Bus Stop**

You need to use extreme caution when approaching a school bus stop, whether for loading or unloading

When approaching the stop, you should:

* 1. Approach cautiously, at a slow rate of speed with the transmission in gear.
  2. Look for students and other pedestrians, traffic, or other objects before, during, and after coming to a stop.
  3. Continuously check all mirrors to spot potential hazards.
  4. Activate the flashing amber warning lights as you approach the stop. The distance from the stop at which you must activate these lights will depend on state or local laws. In general, you will need to activate them at least 100 to 300 feet (100 feet in urban areas or at slower speeds, 300 feet for speeds over 35mph) or approximately 5 to 10 seconds before coming to a stop. The higher the speed limit, the further away you will need to activate the lights.
  5. Again, continuously check mirrors to monitor the danger zone for students, traffic, and other objects.
  6. Move as far as possible to the right on the traveled portion of the roadway.

Pay careful attention to waiting or approaching students as you approach the bus stop. If students are not paying attention and are placing themselves in danger as you approach, be prepared to stop farther away from the students and/or use your horn to get their attention. Remind them of their responsibilities for staying safe. Ideally, students should:

* + Arrive five minutes before your arrival
  + Be waiting in a designated location, at least six feet from the edge of the roadway
  + Face the bus as it approaches
  + Make eye contact with you and wait for your signal before walking toward the bus

***Slide 22***:  **Stopping at a Bus Stop**

When coming to a stop, you should:

* 1. Bring the students to you, don’t bring the bus to the students. Come to a full stop on the right side of the roadway, with the front bumper at least 10 feet away from students at the designated stop. That is, stop at least 10 feet before reaching the point where the students are standing. This forces the students to walk to the bus so you have a better view of their movement. If students are roughhousing, running, or not paying attention to your location, you may need to stop sooner and get their attention before moving closer.
  2. Place the transmission in Park or Neutral. This is important because it’s possible that your foot could slip off the brake pedal, allowing the bus to move.
  3. Determine if other drivers have observed the flashing amber warning lights and will have time to stop when you activate the stop arm. Use your windows and mirrors to check in every direction around the bus for other motorists.
  4. Activate the flashing red warning lights when traffic is a safe distance from the school bus. You can do this on some vehicles by opening the service door.
  5. Make sure the stop arm and (if applicable) crossing gate are extended.
  6. Make a final check to see that all traffic has stopped.
  7. Open the service door completely if it is not already completely open.

If you must pull the bus all the way up to where the students are standing, make sure you are at least three or more feet away from them. If necessary, use hand signals to instruct students to move back as you pull forward.

***Slide 23:*** **Loading Procedures**

After you perform a safe stop as described above, you should:

* + Monitor all mirrors continuously.
  + Count the number of students at the bus stop and be sure everyone boards the bus. If a student is missing and others boarded at that stop, ask the other students where the missing student is.
  + Make eye contact with students and use signals to indicate what they should do. Only signal them to cross the street or approach the bus when all traffic is stopped and it is safe for them to do so.
  + Turn on the interior dome light if loading in the dark.
  + Have the students board the school bus slowly, in single file and using the handrail.
  + Wait until students are seated and facing forward before moving the bus.
  + Check all mirrors. Make certain that no one is running to catch the bus.
  + If you cannot account for a student who was at the stop but did not enter the bus, your you may need to secure the bus, take the key, and check around and underneath the bus. Do not move the bus until you are certain that no one is in the danger zone.

Students are required to be seated before the door is closed, so as to keep the stop arm and red warning lights active until children are safely in their seats.

***Slide 24:***  Preparing to Depart

When all students are accounted for, prepare to leave by following these procedures:

* 1. Securely close the door, which typically turns off the red warning lights and retracts the stop arm and crossing gate
  2. Check ALL mirrors
  3. Engage the transmission
  4. Check all mirrors again
  5. Allow congested traffic to disperse
  6. When it is safe, move the bus to enter traffic flow and continue the route.

***Slide 25:*** **Safe Unloading Procedures at School**

While a school may seem like a safe environment in which to load and unload students, many of the same dangers as found out on the road will exist. You also need to understand and obey any state and local laws and regulations that apply. The following procedures are meant to be general guidelines for unloading at a school, but the specific procedures you need to follow may vary.

* 1. Perform a safe stop at the designated unloading area, following the same procedures as used to stop at a bus stop on the road
  2. Secure the bus by:
     + Turning off the ignition switch or turn it to the “accessory” position if required to operate the radio.
     + Removing the key if leaving the driver’s compartment
  3. Have the students remain seated until told to exit.
  4. Have students exit in an orderly fashion using the handrail
  5. Watch students as they step from bus to make sure they move promptly away from the unloading area
  6. Walk through the bus and check for hiding or sleeping students and any items that may have been left behind
  7. Make certain that no students are returning to the bus
  8. If you cannot account for a student outside the bus and the bus is secure, check around and underneath the bus

If you are required to leave the bus running, set the brake and shift to Park or Neutral. Do not leave the driver’s seat without turning it off and removing the key.

***Slide 26:*** **Departing from School**

When all students are accounted for and the danger zones are clear:

* 1. Close the door
  2. Fasten your safety belt
  3. Start the engine
  4. Engage the transmission
  5. Release the parking brake
  6. Check all mirrors, looking for any pedestrians or vehicles
  7. When it is safe, pull away from the unloading area

Wait until the bus in front of you has departed before trying to leave.

***Slide 27:*** **Safe Loading Procedures at School**

The loading procedure is essentially the same wherever you load students, but there are slight differences when loading students on a school campus.

* 1. Arrive before students are in the loading area at dismissal time
  2. Drive slowly in and near the school loading area, keeping constant watch for dangers
  3. Park in the designated loading area
  4. Turn off the ignition switch or turn it to the “accessory” position if required to operate the radio.
  5. Set the parking brake
  6. Remove the key if leaving the driver’s compartment
  7. After loading is complete, follow the procedures above for departing from school
     + Remain in line and do not pass other buses
     + Maintain proper following distance. On school property, maintain a 50 distance while buses are moving.
     + Enter the traffic flow and continue the route

***Slide 28:*** Safe Unloading Procedures on the Route

Follow the procedures listed above for approaching and stopping at a bus stop. Then, use the following procedures at each designated unloading area:

* 1. Have students remain seated until told to exit, or at least until the bus comes to a complete stop and the door opens
  2. Check all mirrors to confirm that all traffic has stopped; be sure to check the right side of the bus in both directions to make sure no one (including bicycles, scooters, etc.) is passing on the right, where they might hit someone exiting the bus
  3. Open the door completely (if it’s not already open) and note the number of students who are unloading, so you can confirm the location of all students before pulling away from the stop; this is especially important if students will be crossing the street
  4. Have students exit the bus and walk at least 10 feet away from the side of the bus to a location where you can plainly see them

**If students will be crossing the street, they should:**

* + - Walk at least 10 feet in front of the right corner of the bumper, but remain away from the front of the school bus
    - Turn left but stop at the edge of the roadway; if they are far enough in front of the bus, you should be able to see their feet
    - Stop and look in all directions, making sure the roadway is clear and safe
    - Check to see if the red flashing lights on the bus are still flashing
    - Wait for your signal before stepping into the roadway
    - Cross in front of the school bus, all within your view
    - Stop at the left edge of the school bus, make eye contact with you, and look for your signal to continue to cross the roadway; if you give a danger signal, they must go back to the edge of the road.
    - Look for traffic in both directions, making sure the roadway is clear.
    - Proceed across the roadway, continuing to look in all directions.

Follow the “Preparing to Depart” procedures above to depart from the stop.

If you miss a student’s unloading stop, **do not** back up. Radio to dispatch that you have missed the stop and give an adjusted time of arrival.

Pay special attention to any students who might have gotten “stuck” on the stairs.

***Slide 29****:*  **Special Dangers**

**Students left on the bus:** Children have died from being left behind on a bus when the driver thought the vehicle was empty. Sleeping or hiding students can be impossible to see from the front of the bus. At the end of your route, you must walk through the bus to look for:

* + Sleeping or hiding students
  + Articles left on the bus
  + Open windows and doors
  + Damage or vandalism
  + Place empty sign in back window of bus and/or turn of child safety alarm if bus is equipped with alarm.

If you find a student on the bus, that student’s safety continues to be your responsibility. Report the situation immediately to your supervisor or school authorities and follow local procedures for making sure the student reaches home safely.

Your bus may be equipped with a **child-safety alarm system**. The system will generate an audible alarm when you turn off the ignition. To deactivate the alarm, you must walk to the rear of the bus, thereby creating an opportunity and a reminder to check for any remaining passengers on the bus.

In general, you should walk through the bus as soon as safely possible after the last child has exited the bus. Check local laws and regulations for requirements on when and where the post-trip walk-through must be conducted.

It is 4.0 School services policy that we walk through the bus twice. Once at the school when dropping then a second time back at the garage in the morning. In the afternoon after you have dropped your last student off, find a safe place to pull over and walk through your bus, then again when you return to the garage in the afternoon.

***Slide 30:***  **Dropped or forgotten objects:**

Always focus on students as they approach the bus and watch for any who disappear from sight. Students may drop an object near the bus during loading and unloading. Stopping to pick up the object or returning to pick up the object may cause the student to disappear from your sight at a very dangerous moment.

Students should be told to leave any dropped object and move to a point of safety out of the danger zone and attempt to get your attention to retrieve the object.

**Handrail hang-ups:** Students have been injured or killed when clothing, straps, drawstrings, accessories, or even parts of their body were caught in the handrail or door as they exited the bus. Closely observe all students exiting the bus to confirm that they are in a safe location (at least 10 feet away from the bus) before you move the bus.

***Slide 31:***  **Distractions:**

The loading and unloading process takes all your concentration. Don’t take your eyes, ears, or mind off of what is happening outside the bus. If there is a disturbance or behavior problem on the bus, wait until students have finished loading or unloading before addressing the problem. If there is a distraction while you are driving, pull the bus over to a safe location before you handle the situation, if necessary.

**Unattended bus:** Leaving your bus with passengers on board can be a serious risk, not only to the passengers but also to the bus, you, and others in the area.

Never exit the bus with children on board unless it’s absolutely necessary, the bus has been secured, and state and local laws are followed. A bus can be secured by:

* + Turning the wheels into the curb, if possible, so the bus cannot roll away
  + Setting the parking brake
  + Putting the transmission into Park
  + Turning off the ignition switch
  + Removing the key and taking it with you

**Backing:** Backing a bus is always dangerous, especially during the loading and unloading process or whenever pedestrians or obstacles may be near the bus.

* + Back the bus only when it is absolutely necessary.
  + If you are at a loading point, load all passengers **before** you back, and watch for any latecomers.
  + If you are at an unloading point, unload passengers **after** backing.
  + Never back onto a busy street. Instead, use a cul-de-sac, driveway (with permission), or secondary street.
  + Whenever possible, use a “lookout,” a mature and reliable student who can watch the back of the bus and warn you about obstacles, pedestrians, or other vehicles. Make sure everyone on the bus is quiet so you can hear the lookout. If parent can act as a lookout outside the bus, have him or her stand within your view at the rear driver’s side and use hand signals to guide you. If no lookout is available, secure the vehicle and walk to the rear of the bus to make sure the path is clear.
  + Constantly check all mirrors and rear windows while you back.
  + Back slowly and smoothly.

***Slide 32***: **Vehicle Orientation**

***Slide 33:***  **Vehicle Size & Configuration**

School buses come in many shapes and sizes. Under U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) regulations, a school bus is a vehicle used to carry students to and from school or school‑related events and which has a capacity of 11 or more people (including the driver). However, a commercial driver’s license (CDL) with a school bus (S) endorsement is only required for school buses that were designed to carry 16 or more passengers (including the driver).

As a school bus driver, you don’t need to be an expert on the construction of your bus, but you should have a general working knowledge of how your bus is built and the standards it has to meet. This will also help you understand (and share with others) how safe your passengers really are. Most school buses:

* + Are built to seat passengers above the crash line and protect passengers in a rollover crash
  + Are compartmentalized, with each student protected in a small “compartment” formed by high, closely-spaced seat backs with padding to absorb impact
  + Have one or more emergency exits
  + Are highly visible, with flashing lights, stop arms, reflectors, and reflective tape
  + Have a variety of safety equipment including crossing gates, stop arms, backup alarms, video cameras, and—in many states—seatbelts at each seating position

***Slide 34****:* **Four Types**

There are four common types of school buses that can seat 16 or more people. All have a single deck with steps in the entranceway, and all are required to meet the same basic school-bus standards—including the iconic “school bus yellow” color, a “SCHOOL BUS” label, safety lights, and other safety equipment. These buses may or may not be equipped with a wheelchair lift.

**Type A — Cutaway Van**

A Type A school bus is converted from, or has a body constructed on, a van-type truck or front-section vehicle chassis. This is the only bus type that has a left-side driver’s door, in addition to a standard entrance door located behind the front wheels. There are two classifications:

* + **Type A1:** Gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) less than or equal to 10,000 pounds
  + **Type A2:** GVWR greater than 10,000 pounds

Seating capacity:  12-30

These small school buses must be equipped with lap and/or lap/shoulder belts at all designated seating positions and they must be used by all passengers.

**Type B — Integrated/Conventional**

A Type B school bus is constructed using a stripped chassis with the entrance door behind the front wheels. These are the least common type of bus. Part of the front-mounted engine is located beneath or behind the windshield and beside the driver’s seat. There are two classifications:

* + **Type B1:** GVWR less than or equal to 10,000 pounds
  + **Type B2:** GVWR greater than 10,000 pounds

Seating capacity: 24-36

**Type C — Conventional**

A Type C school bus is a front-engine bus constructed using a chassis with a hood and front fender assembly. The entrance door is behind the front wheels. This is the most common type of school bus.

* + Typical GVWR: 24,000 pounds – 30,000 pounds

Seating capacity: 54-83

**Type D — Flat Nose**

A Type D school bus is constructed utilizing a stripped chassis with the entrance door **ahead** of the front wheels. These buses have the greatest seating capacity. With a flat “nose” (no front hood) these vehicles offer greater visibility for the driver. The engine may be in the front, middle, or rear.

* + Typical GVWR: 25,000 pounds – 36,000 pounds

Seating capacity: 72-90

The maximum seating capacity for all bus types is usually based on having three grade‑school (K‑6) students per seat. For middle/high school, the rule of thumb is two per seat. The U.S. DOT recommends that all passengers be seated entirely within the confines of the school bus seats while the bus is moving. Persons who are standing or who are sitting partially outside of the school bus seats will not be afforded the same protection provided by the school bus seats.

**Type III**

Type III school buses are restricted to passenger vehicles and buses having a maximum manufacturer's rated seating capacity of ten or fewer people, including the driver, and a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or less. A “type III school bus” must not be outwardly equipped and identified as a type A, B, C or D school bus or type A, B, C, or D Head Start bus. A van or bus converted to a seating capacity of ten or fewer and placed in service on or after August 1, 1999, must have been originally manufactured to comply with the passenger safety standards.

***Slide 35:* School Activity Buses**

A final type of school bus is the “multifunction school activity bus”. As the name suggests, this type of bus may be used for multiple purposes (such as a hotel shuttle), so it is NOT painted yellow or labeled as a school bus and does not have all the same traffic control devices as a normal bus. These vehicles are typically shaped like a Type A bus, giving them a safety advantage over 15-passenger vans or other automobiles. They are mainly used for extracurricular activities, private schools, child-care centers, or point‑to‑point transportation (rather than being used to pick up students along a designated route).

***Slide 36:*** **Knowing Your Vehicle & the Space Around It**

The size of your vehicle will determine how you manage the space around it and where you can safely and legally travel. Your bus may simply be too large to enter certain areas or go on certain roads, under certain bridges, or over certain railroad crossings or obstacles.

Safe and legal operation of your vehicle requires you to become familiar with the following characteristics:

* + Height
  + Length
  + Width
  + Ground clearance
  + Rear overhang
  + Turning radius
  + Gross vehicle weight and gross vehicle weight rating
  + Axle weights
  + Seating capacity

These characteristics change as a bus is loaded or unloaded. An empty Type C or D school bus may weigh 15,000 - 19,000 pounds when empty but reach nearly 30,000 pounds fully loaded, and will handle differently at each weight.

On larger buses, the design will dictate the size and how many students it can hold. The following table shows typical sizes and capacities.

The vehicles you operate may not be quite as large or capable of transporting so many people, but your priorities must remain the same: the safe, professional, and legal transportation of your passengers to their destination.

Always remember a bus has a longer stopping distance, slower acceleration, wider turning radius, and higher and wider clearances than an automobile. Another difference is that, while school bus drivers sit higher and have a better forward view, you will have to rely much more on your mirrors for adequate rear and side viewing.

If you don’t know the dimensions of your vehicle, ask your employer, review documentation in or on the vehicle, or find information from the manufacturer.

***Slide 37:***  **Ground Clearance**

When you’re sitting high, it may seem like there’s a lot of room under the vehicle, but that may not always be the case. An especially high or low point on the road could cause your vehicle to “hang up,” which could put your passengers and/or other motorists at risk.

* + Be familiar with the ground clearance on your vehicle, both empty and loaded.
  + Be especially alert on dirt roads, driveways, or other areas where the road surface may have worn away, creating a high “crown” in the middle of the road. Getting stuck on this crown could trap your vehicle in the traveled part of the road or other dangerous area.
  + Watch for depressions or deep dips in the road, such as drainage channels that cross the road, and cross them carefully or find an alternate route if necessary.
  + Railroad tracks are particularly dangerous. If you hang up on an active track, it could spell disaster. Watch for signs indicating a railroad grade crossing with low clearance, and NEVER take a chance on getting hung up halfway across.

If you do get hung up, notify your company, emergency services, and/or the railroad as quickly as possible, and determine if your vehicle must be evacuated.

Careful route planning can help you avoid problems with clearance. Stick to a familiar route that you know is safe and contact your employer if you need to detour off that route.

**Overhead Clearance**

The height of your vehicle can be a concern when driving through tunnels or under overpasses, canopies, or other rigid structures.

* + Pay close attention for signs near bridges or tunnels indicating the amount of clearance.
  + Do not entirely rely on posted clearance signs! Know the height of your bus, and do not proceed if you have any doubt that your vehicle will fit. Keep in mind that clearance can be reduced by road resurfacing, ice on the road, or a crown or uneven surface on the road.
  + Beware of underpasses, tunnels, or bridges that might have enough clearance in the center of the road but not along the edges.
  + Never drive under a structure if you are not certain that your bus will fit.
  + When in doubt, find an alternate route or call your dispatch center for guidance.

***Slide 38:***  **Rear Overhang & Tail Swing**

Rear overhang refers to the part of the vehicle that extends behind the rear axle. The rear overhang on a large bus can be more than 10 feet, and it can cause several problems:

* + The rear of the vehicle—the “tail”—will swing to the side when you make a turn (it will pivot at the rear axle), possibly hitting nearby pedestrians, vehicles, mailboxes, or other objects.
  + The underside of the tail can “bottom out” if there isn’t enough ground clearance when the road angles upward. Watch for deep dips in the road or a road that suddenly angles upward to avoid bottoming out.

The distance that the rear overhang swings to the side when you turn the vehicle is known as the “tail swing” or “kick out.” That distance may be 1-2 feet, depending on the vehicle’s design. This means you must leave *more* than that amount of space between the vehicle and other objects when turning.

One common type of accident caused by tail swing can occur when you pull away from a curb or other stationary object. The tail will swing over the curb and can strike a person, a sign, or a fire hydrant, for example. Or, the tail could hit a stopped car as you pull away from a row of cars.

Avoid tail-swing crashes by taking these precautions:

* + Become familiar with the dimensions of the bus and how much tail swing you can expect, especially if you are driving a different vehicle for the first time.
  + Maintain several feet of clear space on the sides of the vehicle whenever possible.
  + Avoid sharp turns, because the sharper the turn, the bigger the swing. When stopped, leave extra space in front of your vehicle, if possible, so you can pull out at a shallower angle, minimizing tail swing.
  + Make sure your mirrors are properly adjusted, so you can check for obstacles or pedestrians on the sides of the bus both before turning *and* during the turn. Check the left side of the bus when turning right, and the right side of the bus when turning left, and make sure you have the right of way.
  + Maneuver away from objects slowly, check your mirrors often, and stop if the tail might hit something.

The tail will swing to the right when you turn left, and to the left when you turn right.

***Slide 39*:** **The Driver’s Seat**

Proper seat adjustment goes hand-in-hand with making sure your mirrors are properly adjusted. A properly adjusted seat will:

* + Let you get the maximum visibility from your mirrors and out of your windshield
  + Ensure that critical controls are within reach
  + Help prevent fatigue
  + Give you a sense of control (not distracted by an improperly adjusted seat)

Familiarize yourself with the driver’s seat and its controls, whether manual or electrical. Follow these steps to adjust the seat (these steps may vary depending on how adjustable a particular seat is):

* 1. Sit in the driver’s seat and fasten your seatbelt.
  2. Move the seat forward until you can comfortably reach the foot controls with your feet. Make sure you will be able to apply the full force of your legs if you need to make an emergency stop.
  3. Check the distance between the hollow at the back of your knees and the front of the seat cushion. You should be able to fit two to three fingers in the gap. This will help the circulation in your legs.
  4. Adjust the tilt angle of the seat to a comfortable position.

**Windshield & Wipers**

As with any vehicle, you must become familiar with the controls for the windshield wipers, defroster, and washing system so you always have a clear view of the road, day and night. Adjust your seat and then orient yourself to the vehicle by:

* + Scanning the windshield and side windows and focusing on both what you can *and cannot* see. Familiarize yourself with any obstructions, such as the pillars on either side of the windshield, cracks, or stickers.
  + Checking the location of the wiper, washer, and defrosting controls and testing them to make sure all are in good working order. The wiper blades should make full contact with the windshield. The defroster should blow a steady stream of warm air on the windshield and driver’s side window.

***Slide 40***: **Lighting & Reflective Tape**

The lights and reflective tape on a school bus are critical to safety at all times, especially at night or in bad weather. Be familiar with all lights and reflective materials on your vehicle so you know when something is broken or missing and you know how to operate all lighting devices. This includes:

* + Headlights, both high-beam and low-beam
  + Tail lamps
  + Brake lights
  + Turn signals (rear- and side-mounted)
  + Four-way flashers (hazard warning lights)
  + Backup (reverse) lights
  + Amber warning lights
  + Red warning lights
  + Stop-arm lights
  + Strobe light
  + Clearance, identification, and marker lights
  + Yellow reflective tape on the sides and rear of the bus

***Slide 41***: **Engine Compartment**

With any type of engine, you must know how to unlock and lift the hood or access door to check the engine compartment. Depending on the model, you must become familiar with:

* + Sight glasses and dipsticks to check the level of all fluids (coolant, oils, transmission fluid, brake fluid, steering fluid, etc.)
  + Caps for adding fuels and fluids
  + The main fuse and major electrical wires
  + All belts and hoses
  + Alternators, compressors, and cooling fan
  + Air and fuel filters
  + Engine block heater, if equipped (to help start a cold engine)

#### Electrical System

Most of the components described above rely on electrical controls, so you will need to become very familiar with your vehicle’s electrical system. The “cockpit” of a modern bus has potentially dozens of electrical control switches, knobs, dials, and indicator lights. Additional electrical controls, indicators, and other components may be found outside the vehicle.

You need to know the location and function of each one, and what to do if there is a problem. Electrical problems can cause a minor inconvenience—such as a broken aisle light—to an inability to start the vehicle, a fire, or even a crash.

Become familiar with any electrical components you may find on your vehicle, and—most importantly—how to control or operate them. You do not want to jump into a bus at 5:00 a.m., in the dark, and not know exactly where your most important controls are.

#### Switches/buttons/knobs

The switchboard to the left of the steering wheel (This varies by manufacturer)  includes a variety of important electrical switches, such as:

* + Windshield washer/wiper
  + Headlights
  + Panel lights
  + Interior fans
  + Warning lights (amber and red)
  + Entrance (service) door (which activates warning lights, stop arm, and crossing gate)
  + Crossing gate
  + Interior dome lights
  + Strobe light
  + Heater controls (rear, middle (midship), driver, defrost, stepwell, mirrors)
  + Boost pump (to help control interior heating)
  + Noise kill switch (to silence all noise for a railroad crossing)

**Other controls may include:**

* + Transmission shifter
  + Parking brake
  + Engine fast-idle (throttle) switch
  + Emergency lights (four-way flashers)
  + Horn
  + Wheelchair lift control
  + Audio controls
  + Two-way radio

Indicator Lights

* + Light monitor (showing operation of exterior warning lights)
  + Check or stop engine
  + Low coolant or low fuel
  + Malfunctioning alternator
  + Regeneration required
  + Light indicators (for turn signals, hazard lights, stop-arm lamp, strobe light, etc.)
  + Water in fuel filter, or clogged filter
  + Brakes applied
  + Antilock braking system
  + Seat belt warning
  + Door ajar
  + Wheelchair interlock
  + Fire in engine compartment

These lights appear on the dash or within sight of the driver, to indicate a condition or precaution.

Dials

* + Speedometer
  + Air pressure
  + Oil pressure
  + Coolant temperature
  + Fuel gauge
  + Diesel exhaust fluid gauge
  + Tachometer (engine rpm)
  + Voltmeter

Other

* + Battery compartment(s) and batteries
  + Fuse panel and spare fuses
  + Circuit breakers
  + Wheelchair lift
  + Any wiring that will be part of your daily inspection
  + Other electrical switches

In addition to the above, you must become familiar with any alarm sounds your vehicle generates. For example, an alarm may sound while the vehicle is backing or when a pedestrian is detected in the danger zone.

Never tamper with the electrical system without authorization.

***Slide 42:* Brake System**

The brake system is a critical safety component. You must know:

* + The types of brakes on your vehicle (parking and service brakes)
  + How to use the brakes properly, including all switches and knobs
  + How to read and respond to any brake‑related warning lights
  + What to do if you suspect a problem with the brakes

To some degree, the size and age of your vehicle will determine the types of brakes it has. Federal regulations specify the amount of force the brakes must be able to generate, which then determines the size and type of brakes the vehicle must be equipped with.

All brake components—brake controls, brake lines, connections, adjusters, shoes, and drums or rotors and pads, etc.—must be in good working condition. Be sure to check with your employer on the specifics of what should be checked on your vehicle’s brake system.

The vehicle must also have a warning system to warn the driver if the system loses pressure. If the warning system (light and/or buzzer) ever activates while you are operating the vehicle, stop immediately! The parking brakes may apply automatically if the pressure drops too low.

**Antilock Braking System (ABS)**

Most school buses today have an antilock braking system (ABS) and an ABS malfunction indicator. Become familiar with how these work and how to conduct a “key-on” ABS check. This involves turning the key on and then verifying that the ABS malfunction light comes on and then goes off.

* + If it does not turn on, the diagnostic system is not working or the bulb is burned out
  + If it turns on and stays on, this usually means there’s a problem with the ABS

If your ABS malfunctions, you should still have regular brakes and should drive normally, but get the system serviced as soon as possible.

***How ABS Benefits You***

As the name implies, ABS is designed to prevent your brakes from “locking up” when you brake hard, helping maintain grip with the road surface. If your front wheels lock up, you will lose control of your steering. If other wheels lock up, you could skid and possibly even spin the vehicle.

With ABS, you can avoid locking up the wheels and maintain control. ABS will not necessarily make you stop faster, but by avoiding wheel skids and lock‑ups, you will be able to maintain better control and steer around obstacles.

You should ways drive so you never need to use your ABS. If you need it, however, ABS could help to prevent a serious crash.

***Braking with ABS***

Some drivers think they need to change their braking practices when they have ABS, but that is not the case. With ABS, you should brake the same as you always have. In other words:

* + With emergency braking, apply steady pressure to the pedal rather than pumping the brakes
  + Use only enough braking force to stop safely and remain in control
  + As your braking slows you down, monitor the situation and back off the brakes (if appropriate and safe) so you can maintain control

***ABS Safety Reminders***

ABS will NOT:

* + allow you to follow more closely, drive faster, or drive less carefully
  + always shorten your stopping distance
  + prevent all skids, such as those caused by going too fast through a turn or spinning the wheels
  + increase or decrease the ultimate stopping power of your braking system
  + compensate for worn brake pads or poorly maintained brakes
  + change the way you should normally brake

ABS will:

* + help you maintain vehicle control
  + help prevent skids caused by locked brakes
  + help prevent wheel lock-up caused by over-braking

***Slide 43:* Post-Crash Procedures**

**SAFETY** – The driver is responsible for the safety of the passengers on board the bus.

**REMAIN CALM** – The driver must remain calm under the pressure of an emergency situation to avoid unnecessary panic and confusion.

**ASSESS THE SITUATION QUICKLY** – The driver must be able to evaluate the situation quickly, and determine what type of assistance is needed.

**REQUEST ASSISTANCE** – Via two-way radio or telephone.

The driver should never leave the students unattended. The first responsibility is to the students’ safety. (MN Rule 7470.1000 Subp. 4)

***Slide 44:* Assessing the Situation**

With careful driving habits, you may never be involved in a crash. However, as a school bus driver, you must be prepared for any kind of emergency situation. This includes a crash, mechanical breakdown, or any other emergency. In every case, your first priority is to remain calm and make sure all students are as safe as possible.

Every crash is unique and it’s impossible to predict and prepare for every variable. Crashes often have common elements, but the specific steps you take will depend on the type of crash and its severity, as well as any state/local or district requirements.

Your primary responsibility is always to your passengers!

***Slide 45:*** **First Steps**

If your vehicle is involved in a crash—even a minor one—you need to stop the vehicle, remain calm, and act as the authority on the scene until help arrives. The safety of your passengers and other motorists depends on you keeping your emotions under control and taking charge of the situation to prevent further harm.

You should immediately:

* 1. Turn on your emergency flashers; after dark (or anytime for additional safety), also activate your parking lights, clearance lights, and strobe light
  2. Move your vehicle to safety, if possible; This is usually the side of the road, as far as possible from moving traffic
  3. Secure the bus by:
     + Putting the transmission in Park or Neutral
     + Engaging the parking brake
     + Shutting off all other (non-emergency) lights and electrical switches
     + Shutting off the engine
     + Removing the ignition key
  4. Remain calm, judge the situation, reassure your students, and plan your course of action, as detailed below

If you are unable to move the vehicle to safety, you may need to evacuate the bus and take students to a safer location, as described below.

**Start with Yourself**

You cannot take charge of the situation if you are not physically able to do so. After your vehicle is out of the way, assess your physical condition. Take a moment to calm yourself, then look and feel for any pain or signs of injury. If you lost consciousness, have neck or back pain, or you suspect any other serious injury, stay still and wait for help. Your adrenaline and endorphin levels will spike after a crash, so you may not feel pain—which means you may be more injured than you think.

Apply direct pressure to control any serious bleeding—press down hard on the area and maintain pressure, as able. Do not let up until emergency services arrive to take over. If you have compression or pressure bandages in the vehicle’s first aid kit, these can be used to apply the pressure.

If you personally need help, ask for assistance from a responsible passenger. If necessary and you are able, pick a responsible individual and give him or her specific directions to follow for obtaining necessary assistance.

You may not feel or discover an injury until hours or even days after a crash. If you have any signs of injury, seek medical attention and report any injuries to your employer.

***Slide 46:*** **Check for Immediate Hazards**

You will quickly need to assess whether your students are in imminent danger and must be evacuated immediately. Check for the possibility of:

* + **Fire.** If you see smoke or flames and/or a fire is present or imminent, evacuate all passengers. Do not try to fight the fire unless everyone has been safely evacuated to a secure location and you feel comfortable going back to the bus to tackle the fire. The potential for fire is high if there is:
    - Smoke
    - A hot tire  that could catch fire
    - A ruptured fuel line or fuel tank
    - Sparks or a possible electrical fire
  + **Hazardous materials.** Look for any possible hazardous materials that could present a danger to you and your students, and try to identify the material(s). Evacuate the bus if there is danger from vapors, chemicals, or other hazardous or toxic substances.

Keep all students on the bus unless conditions require their immediate removal.

Do not touch a tire if you suspect that it’s hot. Place your hand near the tire to see if heat is being

**Assess Students & Call for Help**

Once immediate hazards have been identified and controlled to the extent possible, account for all students and check them for injuries. You will need at least a rough estimate of how many students or others are injured, and the relative seriousness of their injuries. Do this quickly so you can relay critical information to first responders, including:

* + The exact location of the incident
  + The number of injured persons, including yourself, your passengers, and any other motorists or pedestrians
  + The extent of their injuries
  + Whether anyone is trapped
  + Whether there is a fire
  + Whether any vehicles are overturned
  + The number of passengers on your vehicle

Do not lose control of the situation, because you do not want children to panic and rush for the exits, which might put them into more danger or cause more harm to injured students. Urge everyone to remain calm and follow your instructions, and to stay seated unless an immediate evacuation is required.

Use your two-way radio and/or a cell phone (your own or a passenger’s) to call 911.

In most cases, you should not leave the bus unattended to go for help. Ask several passing motorists or pedestrians to notify the proper authorities, if necessary. In general, you should only send a pair of older, responsible students for help in a life-threatening emergency when there are no other options. Always follow local school policy in regard to sending students to get help.

If there is no cellular phone service, seek help from anyone who can reach an area with service (such as someone who stopped at the scene with a working vehicle and cell phone). If possible, write down the crash details listed above and provide them to the individual before they leave the scene.

**Keep in mind:** When speaking to bystanders or anyone involved in the incident:

* + Do not admit anything
  + Do not promise anything
  + Do not get into an argument

If you have a list of students—and possibly where they sit—use it to make sure everyone is accounted for.

If you use a cell phone to call 911 for help, emergency personnel may be able to pinpoint your location using GPS.

Do not leave the bus unattended to investigate whether anyone else is injured before you call for help. Your students are your first priority.

It might be a good idea to send *two* bystanders to call for emergency services, to increase the chance that an accurate call will be made.

***Slide 47:*** **Control the Scene**

Your top priority after a crash is to keep the situation from getting worse until help arrives. While you wait for emergency responders, you may have time to provide emergency care and support to any injured students. However, you must not forget to manage the entire scene until help arrives. This includes:

* + Watching for any developing hazards, and controlling them if possible
  + Evaluating any injuries
  + Contacting emergency services
  + Getting help from others, as needed
  + Maintaining control of all students, even those who are not injured
  + Controlling access to students—they must only be released to authorized individuals and should not discuss the accident with bystanders
  + Protecting the scene so evidence is not destroyed

Students must stay at the scene except for medical treatment, unless instructed otherwise by school officials. Never allow students to wander off or leave with bystanders.

**Help the Injured**

* Once you are sure that help has been summoned, continue to assess injuries and provide aid as allowed under school policies.
* Evaluate all injuries or illnesses quickly and decide where help is needed most (a process known as “triage”). Do not treat any injuries until you have found all problems requiring help. Use your best judgment for treating and reporting injuries.
* If you have not had training in first aid, do not attempt anything that might cause more harm, such as trying to move an injured person. At the very least, keep any injured children still, warm, and as comfortable as possible until help arrives. Do not move an injured person unless there is risk of death.

Most states have “Good Samaritan” laws that will shield you from liability for trying to help the injured at an accident scene.

***Slide 48:***  **Controlling Bleeding**

**External:** After a serious crash or other incident, an individual may be bleeding from an external wound. In the case of serious wounds:

* + Call emergency medical personnel and your dispatcher
  + Protect yourself and others from bloodborne pathogens
  + Apply pressure to the wound with a sterile bandage from your first aid kit, to stop the bleeding
  + Raise and support the injury above the level of the person’s heart

**Internal:** Internal bleeding may be visible or hidden. It can be very serious and require immediate medical attention. Some signs of hidden bleeding include:

* + The coughing up of bright red, frothy blood
  + Black or red blood in vomit
  + Pain, nausea, and/or vomiting
  + Pale, clammy, cool skin
  + Swelling
  + Rapid, shallow breathing
  + Rapid but weak pulse

If you suspect someone has internal bleeding based on the signs above:

* + Get immediate medical help
  + Have the person lie on his or her back, if possible, and raise their legs
  + Do not give them anything to eat or drink

**Head Injuries**

If your bus was strongly impacted or jarred, find out if anyone hit their head during the incident. If yes, seek medical assistance. Do not move the student or—if possible—your bus.

Any movement could cause further injury. In all cases, it is very important not to ignore a student who has hit his or her head while riding your bus.

A person suffering from traumatic brain injury may show no signs of injury. Symptoms may include headache, loss of hearing or memory, slurred speech, blurred vision, seizures, dilated pupils, paralysis, dizziness, confusion, fainting or loss of consciousness, nausea, or vomiting.

***Slide 52:*** **Fractures**

A fractured bone (whether broken or cracked) is not usually a life-threatening emergency, but it may cause other complications like bleeding and shock or may affect other important functions like breathing.

The following are common signs or symptoms of a fractured bone:

* + Swelling and discoloration
  + Pain at the injury site, especially during movement
  + Bones that are crooked or not aligned

In most cases, the only way to confirm a fracture is to have a physician review an X-ray. Keep in mind that being able to move an injured arm or walk on an injured leg does NOT mean that the underlying bone is not fractured.

If you suspect someone has a fractured bone and he or she cannot move, call your dispatcher and/or 911 to obtain emergency medical assistance. Keep in mind that fractures are generally not life threatening, so you will have some time to take control of the situation and to keep it from getting worse.

You will want to prevent the injured person (or others) from moving the joints above and below the site of the fracture. If you have the proper materials and training, you may be able to apply a splint. Otherwise, do not move the injured person unless absolutely necessary. If moving the student is required, you may need to pull them by their outstretched hands or shoulders. A better option is to first place them on a blanket, coat, or similar object, to make dragging easier and safer.

Note that a fractured spine creates the danger of paralysis due to spinal cord damage. That’s another reason why it can be important not to move an injured student after a crash.

**Report All Injuries**

It is critically important to report all injuries, illnesses, or other medical problems among your students, as mandated by local policies and procedures. This is true after a crash but also at any other time. Reporting is important for several reasons:

* + The injury or illness may require further treatment
  + You or your employer may face liability for failing to report an injury or illness
  + Students may not report their own injuries or illnesses to anyone

***Slide 50:*** **First Aid Kits & Their Use**

The first aid supplies on your bus may become critically important after a crash or other emergency. Always follow your school policies and procedures for administering first aid on your vehicle.

The contents of your first aid kit may vary according to local policies. Your bus may also be equipped with a body fluid clean-up kit. The kit(s) may be sealed.

The kit and/or its location should be clearly visible and accessible in the driver’s compartment.

You must:

* + Be familiar with the contents of each kit and how and when to use each item
  + Make sure the kit is present and fully stocked as part of your daily vehicle inspection; if a seal is missing, it’s a sign that something has been removed
  + Replace anything you take from the kit (or anything you notice missing) as soon as possible; contact a supervisor about obtaining new supplies

**Providing First Aid**

While you are not expected to be a medical professional, you are expected to be able to assess the situation and—to the extent that you can—help those involved get through the emergency with as little harm as possible.

If you need to provide first aid, follow these guidelines:

* + Do not move an injured person unless there is risk of death from remaining in place. Instead, wait for emergency services personnel who have been properly trained to move an injured person safely.
  + Check the person’s “ABCs”—Airway, Breathing, and Circulation:
    - Make sure the person has an open **airway—**that nothing is blocking his or her ability to get air in.
    - Make sure the person is **breathing**. Check for breath at the nose and mouth and look for chest rise and fall. When someone stops breathing, they don’t have long to live unless someone intervenes. If the person is talking to you, it’s safe to assume they have an adequate airway and are breathing.
    - Check for **circulatory** problems. Lack of a pulse or profuse bleeding are two problems that need to be addressed quickly. If the person has no pulse, cardiopulmonary resuscitation **(CPR)** is necessary.
  + Provide CPR if necessary. The American Heart Association and American Red Cross encourage the use of “hands-only” CPR. This means doing chest compressions only, at a rate of 100 or more per minute, and no mouth-to-mouth breathing. Compressions alone can create enough air exchange that mouth-to-mouth breathing is not necessary during bystander‑provided CPR.
  + Apply direct pressure to control any bleeding. This involves pressing hard on the cut and holding pressure. Do not let up until emergency services arrive to take over. If you have compression or pressure bandages in the vehicle’s first aid kit, these can be used to apply the pressure.
  + Avoid contact with anyone else’s blood and other bodily fluids and keep students away from such substances. See “Bloodborne Pathogens” below.
  + Provide comfort measures if the person is ill. This involves placing the student in the position in which they feel most comfortable, keeping them warm and calm, and monitoring them until emergency services arrive.

***Slide 51:*** Bloodborne Pathogens

Bloodborne pathogens are disease-carrying organisms found in human blood and certain other bodily fluids. Contact with the bodily fluids of an injured or ill student can lead to you or others becoming infected with the disease as well. For that reason, you must protect yourself and others when blood or bodily fluids are present.

There are two ways you can come into contact with bloodborne pathogens:

* + **Direct contact** with a bodily fluid such as blood, urine, or vomit
  + **Indirect contact** through a contaminated object like a towel, bandage, or syringe

***Use Protective Gear***

Do not touch any bodily fluids and *never* pick up or touch contaminated materials without proper protections in place. These include medical gloves (such as latex, nitrile, or vinyl gloves) from your first aid kit or body fluid clean-up kit, or other tools that allow you to deal with the bodily fluid or contaminated object without actually coming into contact with it.

If gloves are not available or if contact occurs:

* + Wash your hands and other affected areas with soap and warm water immediately or as soon as possible after contact
  + If soap and water are not available, wipe your hands thoroughly with an antibacterial wipe from your first aid or clean-up kit

***Decontaminate***

Once the bodily fluid or the contaminated item has been removed, you will need to decontaminate the area by wiping it down thoroughly with a disinfectant. If tools were used, be sure to decontaminate them before putting them back into regular use (or as instructed under school or company policies). Do not remove your gloves until the entire area and any tools have been disinfected.

When removing gloves, turn them inside out while removing them so you do not have skin contact with the outside of the gloves during or after removal.

Wash your hands immediately after removing the gloves or use a hand sanitizer until soap and water are available. Be careful of what you touch after dealing with a bodily fluid or contaminated item until you have an opportunity to wash your hands. Do not eat, drink, smoke, or touch your eyes, nose, or mouth until you have washed your hands.

If you don’t have the appropriate equipment (gloves, disinfectant, soap, etc.), do not try to deal with a bodily fluid. Call dispatch for instructions.

A body fluid clean-up kit should have supplies for dealing with, and disposing of, bodily fluids. Follow district procedures for disposing of the supplies upon returning to the bus garage.

***If you think you had direct contact*** with a bodily fluid or contaminated object, don’t panic. The odds of becoming infected are low—the other person would need to have a disease, and your body would have to allow that disease in through an opening such as a cut. However, take these precautions:

* + If your clothes were contaminated, remove them carefully, avoid touching the contaminated areas, and do not allow the contaminated areas to touch your skin
  + Immediately and thoroughly wash all skin that might have been exposed to a pathogen
  + Notify a supervisor immediately

If your exposure was significant—if there is a reasonable chance that you may have been exposed to a bloodborne pathogen—you may be referred to a medical professional for evaluation and even blood testing.

***Slide 52:* Working with Law Enforcement**

* Cooperate with law enforcement
  + Do Not Place Blame
  + Give law enforcement the facts
  + Remain calm
  + Have your driver’s license and insurance information ready.
  + Do not discuss the accident with anyone except law enforcement

***Slide 53:* Interacting with Law Enforcement**

Make sure the crash is reported to law enforcement officials as quickly as possible. If you personally are unable to make the call, advise a student or, if necessary, another motorist to make the call.

When emergency personnel arrive at the scene, provide a brief “situation update.” They will want to know:

* + The number of injured
  + The extent of any injuries
  + The total number of students
  + Whether all students have been accounted for
  + If the vehicle is under any kind of threat, such as leaking fuel, smoldering engine or tire, etc.

When talking to law enforcement, answer questions simply and honestly but don’t volunteer extra information.

Assist them in any way they ask. Do not leave the scene until released by the law enforcement officer in charge of the scene.

Provide your dispatch office with a brief report by radio or phone. Answer any questions honestly and concisely, but don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know, but I’ll find out.”

**Documenting the Crash**

Your school or employer policies should dictate the information to be recorded following a crash. They may have a specific form you must complete. Among the information you may need to gather includes:

* + Date, time, location of the crash, and direction of travel
  + Bus ID number
  + Description of damage to vehicles and property
  + Injuries and fatalities
  + The identities of everyone involved, including students, other motorists, witnesses, and law enforcement officers
  + Description of the event including weather and road conditions
  + License plate numbers for all vehicles involved and vehicles driven by witnesses
  + A diagram of the crash scene

**Photographs** — A camera or disposable camera may be the most useful item you can have at the scene. Taking pictures will help determine how an accident occurred and how much damage was involved. But you need to know what to photograph, and what not to photograph.

* + Take wide shots from the fog stripe at the edge of the road toward the point of impact, showing the final location of the vehicles
  + Take wide shots from the centerline and all sides of the vehicles
  + Take close-up shots of damage and any skid marks or road debris
  + Never take pictures of individuals who have been injured or killed

As you’re documenting the accident and taking pictures, don’t put yourself in danger by wandering into flowing traffic or getting in the way of law enforcement or medical responders while trying to get the perfect shot.

***Slide 54:*** **Emergency Equipment**

Besides the first aid and clean-up kits, your bus may be equipped with several pieces of emergency equipment you may use in the event of a crash. Once a crash occurs, it’s too late to learn how to use the emergency equipment. Learn how to use the equipment and make sure it is in place during every vehicle inspection. Such equipment may include:

* + Warning devices, including reflective triangles
  + Fire extinguisher
  + Seatbelt cutter
  + Spare fuses

***Slide 55:*** **Warning Devices**

You must place reflective triangles or similar warning devices around your bus whenever you are stopped on the traveled part of a roadway or the shoulder, for any reason other than necessary traffic stops.

The first warning device is your **four-way emergency flashers**. Turn them on immediately after a crash and leave them on, preferably for the entire time you’re stopped but at least until you place other warning devices around the vehicle. Those other warning devices typically must be placed within 10 minutes of stopping, but the sooner the better. Be sure your flashers are on while you are retrieving the warning devices as well.

Take these steps to place triangles or other approved warning devices around your vehicle:

* + Place them 10 feet, 100 feet, and 200 feet behind the vehicle if all traffic is approaching from one direction (such as on a freeway or one-way street)
  + Place them 10 feet and 100 feet behind the vehicle, and 100 feet in front of the vehicle, if you are stopped on a two-way roadway
  + If you are on a curve or a hill and the farthest warning device will not adequately warn approaching traffic, you can move it up to 500 feet away to provide more warning

For reference, an average person’s pace is roughly 2½ feet long. Therefore, 10 feet equals roughly four paces, and 100 feet equals roughly 40 paces. The warning device placed within 10 feet of the bus should be placed behind the corner of the bus nearest to moving traffic (usually the left rear corner).

**Fire Extinguishers**

If a fire breaks out on the vehicle, your first priority is to evacuate the students and get them somewhere safe. Only try to extinguish a fire if you know what you’re doing and you think it’s safe.

You may be able to extinguish a fire if it:

* + Is small
  + Is not in the passenger compartment
  + Is in an easily-accessible area
  + Does not involve a tire

If you decide to fight the fire, first make sure the vehicle is secured with brakes set.

**Seatbelt Cutter**

Your seatbelt cutter, it should be mounted in a visible location in the driver’s compartment. It may be used after a crash to cut any seatbelts that cannot be unfastened.

**Spare Fuses**

If your bus operates on electrical fuses instead of circuit breakers, the bus should be equipped with spare fuses. If possible, check with your dispatch or maintenance department before attempting to replace a blown fuse.

***Slide 56:*** ***Know Your Equipment***

Your pre-trip inspection should give you critical information about your fire extinguisher before you get behind the wheel. You should know:

* + Where it’s located
  + What types of fires it can be used on
  + What its rating is

Modern extinguishers have color-coded symbols and “pictograms” indicating the type(s) of fires they were intended for. These include:

* + **Class A:** A green triangle with an “A” in it and/or a pictogram showing a burning garbage can and wood pile—to be used on common combustibles, such as wood, plastics, and paper
  + **Class B:** A red square with a “B” in it and/or a pictogram showing a burning gas can—to be used on burning liquids
  + **Class C:** A blue circle with a “C” in it and/or a pictogram showing an electrical plug and receptacle—to be used on energized electrical equipment

Your extinguisher should be rated for the type of fire you need to fight. Even if you don’t have an exact match, however, the extinguisher may still work. For example, a Class B and/or C extinguisher may work on a Class A fire.

Avoid tackling a fire in energized electrical equipment if your extinguisher is not “C” rated. Otherwise, you may get a shock.

The extinguisher rating system also tells you “how much” fire the extinguisher can put out. For example, if the extinguisher has a rating of 1A:5BC:

* + **1A** indicates that the extinguisher can be used on common combustibles (a Class A fire) and that it can extinguish the same amount of fire as 1¼ gallons of water
  + **5B** means the extinguisher can be used effectively on burning liquids (a Class B fire) and it can extinguish up to five square feet of burning liquid
  + **C** indicates that it can be used on energized electrical equipment

***The PASS Technique***

Remember “PASS” when using an extinguisher:

* + **Pull** the safety pin. In some cases, this will require pulling hard enough to break a seal holding the pin in place
  + **Aim** the extinguisher at the base of the fire; that is, aim at the material that is actually burning (aiming at the flames will not put the fire out)
  + **Squeeze** the handle to activate the extinguisher
  + **Sweep** the extinguisher back and forth across the burning material

Also remember:

* + **Don’t breathe the smoke.** Smoke from vehicle fires is extremely toxic. Stay back from the smoke and hold your breath whenever it heads toward you.
  + **Stand within the range of the extinguisher.** Most extinguishers can reach 5 to 8 feet. You don’t need to be “right on top” of the fire to fight it.
  + **Test the extinguisher before getting too close.** Give a short burst from the extinguisher in the direction of the fire as you’re approaching it. If the extinguisher is not functioning, don’t continue to advance until you locate the problem.

If the fire is in the engine or battery compartment:

* + Turn off the engine as quickly as possible
  + Try to extinguish the fire—or at least slow it down—using any available openings first, such as louvers, the radiator, or from under the vehicle
  + Do not open the compartment hood if you can avoid doing so, at least until the fire has been reduced
  + If you open the compartment to get at the fire, only open it enough to get the extinguishing agent inside
  + Do not “whip” the door open, which could make the fire worse and expose you to additional heat and smoke

In the case of an engine compartment fire, tire fire, or any other “stubborn” fire, be prepared to use anything at hand—sand, dirt, snow, bottled water, etc.—to supplement your extinguisher.

If you are not able to completely extinguish the fire with your extinguisher, immediately evacuate the vehicle if you have not already done so.

Don’t immediately walk away from a fire that you *think* is extinguished! Fires can easily “rekindle,” especially if combustible material such as fuel or plastic is dripping down into the heated area. Observe the area for several minutes to verify that the fire is fully extinguished.

***Slide 57:*** **Emergency Exit and Evacuation**

After certain types of crashes, you may need to evacuate the bus. First you will have to assess the situation and quickly decide whether evacuation is necessary.

* + If time permits, contact your dispatcher to explain the situation before making a decision to evacuate the bus
  + As a general rule, students are safer and easier to control if they remain on the bus
  + You will need to decide if keeping students on the bus exposes them to unnecessary risk or injury
  + Remember that the decision to evacuate the bus must be a timely one; an unnecessary delay could be costly
  + Always be aware of any hazards outside the bus such as speeding traffic, severe weather, a hazardous spill, or downed power lines

**When to Evacuate**

In general, there are three situations when an evacuation will be necessary:

* + **Fire or danger of fire** — Stop and evacuate the bus immediately if the engine or any part of your bus is smoking or on fire. Be alert for the smell of any leaking fluids that could ignite. Make sure students move to a safe place at least 100 feet from the bus. If your bus is near an existing fire, or near gasoline or other combustible materials, and you are unable to move away, students should be evacuated.
  + **Unsafe place** — If your bus must unexpectedly stop due to a crash, mechanical breakdown, or road conditions, you must immediately decide whether it is safer to keep students seated or to evacuate.
    - *Train tracks:* If you are stopped in the path of a train or next to railroad tracks, you must evacuate the bus.
    - *Danger of collision:* If your bus is stopped in a location that puts it at risk of a collision, evacuate it. Ideally, your bus should be visible from a distance of 500 feet or more.
  + **Danger of conditions changing** — If your bus is stopped in a location that might put it into danger if conditions change, you should evacuate it. For example, you should evacuate the bus if you are stopped uphill from a body of water or a cliff, because the bus could roll into danger if the brakes fail.

Keep in mind that trains may extend three feet beyond the edge of the tracks.

***Slide 58:*** **Understanding Your Role**

You can never predict when you might be involved in an emergency situation that requires the evacuation of your school bus. It could happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere. It could involve a crash, a stall in a dangerous location, an electrical or tire fire, a hazardous chemical spill, or many other types of unpredictable situations. Knowing what to do in such an emergency—before, during, and after an evacuation—can mean the difference between life and death.

As the “captain of your ship,” you will play a critical role in any evacuation. Unless you are incapacitated, it will be up to you to:

* + Determine if an evacuation is required
  + Secure your bus in the best possible position for an evacuation
  + Keep your students calm
  + Decide how to evacuate
  + Guide passengers through the entire evacuation process
  + Make sure everyone evacuates quickly and safely
  + Protect the scene
  + Notify appropriate individuals

Before an evacuation is ever needed, you must prepare for one, and make sure your passengers are prepared as well.

***Slide 59:*** **Preparing for an Evacuation**

Preparation for an evacuation requires practice. Having evacuation drills in a safe, controlled environment will help you and students prepare for the day when a real evacuation is needed. Your school will probably require annual (or more often) evacuation drills to help you and students prepare.

* + Learn how to open all emergency exits on your bus; if possible, practice evacuating yourself through an emergency window and roof hatch so you are prepared for an emergency and can explain the process to others
  + Conduct an evacuation drill as early in the school year as possible
  + During the drills, pay careful attention to what goes right and what needs improvement, then adjust your plans and procedures accordingly
  + Your school should designate a safe location for conducting evacuation drills, if using emergency exits, be sure to find an area where there is no traffic

Other ways to prepare for an emergency evacuation include the following:

* + Visualize an emergency evacuation beforehand and think about how it should unfold
  + Periodically remind your passengers to think about how they would evacuate from various seating positions and under various emergency conditions
  + Have emergency contact numbers available on the bus and/or on your person
  + Identify student helpers before an emergency occurs, following local policies, and teach the helpers how to help you
  + Know where to find—and how and when to use—the belt cutter, first aid kit, fire blanket, and fire extinguisher, if available
  + Teach your helpers and other students how to take certain emergency steps if you become incapacitated, such as how to set the air brakes, how to open the service door, and how to use the radio to call for help

***Slide 60:*** **Assigning Helpers**

Despite your primary role, evacuations are much easier with help. Depending on school procedures:

* + Assign two older, responsible students to assist at each emergency exit and teach them how to help other students off the bus
  + Assign another responsible student to lead evacuating students to a safe location after evacuation
  + Explain emergency evacuation procedures to *all* students, in case your designated helpers are not available; be sure to explain how to operate the emergency exits and the importance of following your instructions

**Special Evacuation Plans**

Your school or district may have—and require you to follow—a written evacuation plan for passengers with special needs or who ride in child safety seats. You must review and be familiar with the plan, and follow it during an emergency evacuation. The plan should identify:

* + Riders who can evacuate themselves, riders who can be removed from their wheelchair or specialized seat during an evacuation, and riders who must NOT be removed from their wheelchair or specialized seat
  + Riders who need specialized items to be removed with them during an evacuation, such as an oxygen tank or medication
  + Riders and personnel who could help you during an evacuation
  + How to evacuate a child who is restrained in a child safety seat

Be sure to practice:

* + How to operate the wheelchair lift manually
  + Proper lifting and moving techniques, such as a one-person lift, two‑person lift, and dragging a passenger on a blanket

#### Preparing Unprepared Students

You may have passengers on your bus who have never received evacuation training, especially students who:

* + Only ride the bus sporadically, or
  + Only ride a bus for extracurricular trips.

These students, like all others who ride buses, *must* be prepared for an emergency evacuation. There won’t be time for them to read the instructions on the emergency exits, especially in a potentially stressful and chaotic situation.

If you are not certain whether your passengers are familiar with evacuations, provide a pre-trip safety briefing that includes information on:

* + The location of emergency exits, especially emergency windows and roof hatches
  + How to open emergency exits, including a visual demonstration
  + The importance of keeping aisles and emergency exits clear (critical time can be lost if the aisle or exits are blocked in any way)
  + The need to remain calm and follow your instructions in an emergency
  + The location of the fire extinguisher, first aid kit, and emergency warning devices
  + How to open the service door
  + How to shut off the engine and set the parking brake

***Slide 61:*** **Deciding if Evacuation is Required**

Deciding if and when to evacuate is one of the most important decisions you will make. You must recognize the hazard and determine if it is serious enough that evacuation is the best option.

* + If you have time, and as soon as possible, contact your dispatcher to explain the situation before deciding whether to evacuate the bus. Your dispatcher can help you decide whether to evacuate and can notify emergency personnel.
  + One of the first questions to ask yourself is whether you can move the bus to a safer location instead of, or before, evacuating. In general—including during many types of emergencies—student safety is best ensured by keeping students on the bus. They will be protected by the vehicle and will all be in one confined space where you can better maintain control.
  + Weigh the hazards both inside and outside the vehicle before evacuating. Be aware of such hazards as speeding traffic, severe weather, a hazardous spill, or downed power lines. Move the bus away from hazards before evacuating, if it would increase safety for your passengers.
  + Be aware that evacuating students who are injured could complicate their injuries, especially if there are students with neck or back injuries or fractures.

The timing of your decision is critical. Wait too long and students may be at greater risk.

Ultimately, the decision to evacuate is YOURS, based on your evaluation of where your passengers will be the safest, either on or off the bus.

Most of the time the students are safer remaining on the bus.

***Slide 62:*** **When to evacuate**

In general, there are three situations when an evacuation will be necessary:

* + **Fire or danger of fire** — Stop and evacuate the bus immediately if the engine or any part of your bus is smoking or on fire. The rule of thumb is that you have about two minutes or less to evacuate students from a burning bus. Be alert for the smell of any leaking fluids that could ignite. Make sure students move to a safe place at least 100 feet from the bus. If your bus is near an existing fire, or near gasoline or other combustible materials, and you are unable to move away, students should be evacuated.
  + **Unsafe place** — If your bus must unexpectedly stop due to a crash, mechanical breakdown, or road condition, you must immediately decide whether it is safer to keep students seated or to evacuate.
    - *Train tracks:* If you are stopped in the path of a train or next to railroad tracks, you must evacuate the bus.
    - *Danger of collision:* If your bus is stopped in a location that puts it at risk of a collision, evacuate it. Ideally, your bus should be visible from a distance of 500 feet or more to help avoid collisions.
    - *Tornado:* If you are directly in the path of an approaching tornado, evacuate the bus and move students away from the bus and to a low area, preferably a ditch. Have students lie face down and cover their heads with their hands.
  + **Danger of conditions changing** — If your bus is stopped in a location that might put it into danger if conditions change, you should evacuate it. For example, you should evacuate the bus if you are stopped uphill from a body of water or a cliff, because the bus could roll into danger if the brakes fail.

Also evacuate the bus immediately if there is a bomb threat.

**When NOT to Evacuate**

There are times when evacuating the bus will likely be more unsafe than keeping students on board.

**Hazardous materials:** If the environment *outside* the bus is contaminated with a hazardous material, it may be safest to remain on the bus and not come into contact with or be exposed to the material. You should:

* + Close all doors, windows, and air vents and turn off all heating/ventilation systems
  + Move the bus uphill and upwind if possible
  + Be prepared to evacuate if necessary
  + Contact dispatch
  + Request medical attention for any passenger who shows signs of exposure to the material (i.e., dizziness, fainting, shortness of breath, unexplained coughing, headaches)

**Lockdown situations:** If there is a serious threat to life outside the vehicle that requires students to hide and take cover, such as gunshots, a dangerous person, a hostage situation, etc., remain on the vehicle and take immediate protective actions:

* + Secure the door and drive away from the danger if safely possible
  + Instruct passengers to crouch down in their seats or on the floor, keep away from the windows, and keep quiet
  + Contact your dispatch office as soon as safely possible
  + Do not let anyone onto the bus and do not release anyone from the bus
  + Keep students calm and reassess the situation as it develops

**Downed power lines:** If a power line is down on the road or hanging low enough to contact the bus, keep everyone on the vehicle. Take the following actions:

* + Find a safe place to stop, at least 50 feet from the downed line
  + Call your dispatch office or 911
  + Do not drive over a fallen power line or under a low-hanging line
  + Do not grab a power line or anything or anyone in contact with the line
  + Ask dispatch about an alternate route if necessary

If your bus is stopped and in contact with an energized power line, do not exit or evacuate the bus until first responders tell you it is safe to exit or move the bus. If you must evacuate the bus, students should:

* + Keep their hands at their sides
  + Jump away from the bus without touching it when their feet hit the ground
  + Keep their feet close together and shuffle (not run) away from the bus

**Severe weather:** If severe winds or torrential rain or hail require you to stop driving, stop in an area away from potential falling objects (such as a large parking lot) and wait for the storm to subside. Keep students on the bus. If necessary, have students crouch down below the windows.

**Earthquake:** If an earthquake occurs while you are driving, quickly find a safe place to stop, preferably outside of any tsunami zone. Keep everyone on the bus and take cover below the windows. Contact your dispatch office as soon as possible, remain parked, and prepare for aftershocks.

* Book bags can provide useful cover and protection.
* Pull to the side of the road if no other safe parking area is immediately available.

***Slide 63:*** **Increasing Safety Before Evacuation**

Ideally, your bus will be in as safe a location as possible—and will be as visible as possible—before an evacuation begins. It would be highly dangerous, for example, to evacuate students into an active traffic lane or near a cliff. Whenever possible before an evacuation:

* + Move off the roadway to a safe location
  + Activate the hazard warning lights, and if it’s dark, also turn on the parking lights, clearance lights, and strobe light (if equipped)

In addition, set out reflective warning devices as soon as possible after the evacuation.

**Securing the Bus**

Before starting an evacuation, secure the bus by:

* + Putting the transmission into Park
  + Setting the parking brakes
  + Shutting off the engine
  + Removing the ignition key
  + Activating the hazard warning lights

With a manual transmission, put the transmission into Neutral before setting the parking brake, and then put the bus into gear before removing the key.

**Notification**

As soon as possible—whether before, during, or after the evacuation—notify your dispatch office and/or emergency responders of your evacuation location and any assistance needed.

* + If there is no radio on the bus, use your cell phone or borrow one from a student
  + If no cell phones are available, flag down a passing motorist or area resident to call for help
  + As a last resort, dispatch two older, responsible students to go for help
  + If there is a suspected bomb on the bus, DO NOT use any radios or phones in the vicinity of the bus, and warn students not to do so either

Your school may issue—or you may create for yourself—an emergency notification card listing contact information for local police, school officials, an ambulance service, the bus garage, and others, along with information about you and your bus. You can provide the card to any students who you need to send for help.

**TIP:** Dangle your radio microphone outside of the driver’s window so you can use it later without entering the bus

**Evacuation Reminders**

In every evacuation:

* + Make sure the bus is secured, with engine off, brakes engaged, key removed, and hazard lights activated
  + Students should leave all their belongings behind, except for cold‑weather clothing if needed
  + You must remain calm and maintain order
  + Students must remain calm, quiet, and attentive to your directions
  + Students must take turns exiting by alternating rows
  + Students must leave the bus quickly without pushing or shouting
  + Students must watch for broken glass, passing vehicles, or other dangers as they exit, and must be careful not to get anything caught in the handrails or doors
  + Students must walk (and preferably must be guided) to a safe location (see below)
  + Students must follow the evacuation procedures they practiced in mock evacuation drills
  + You should be the last person to exit the bus
  + After evacuating and accounting for all students, administer first aid if necessary

***Slide 64:*** **Finding a Safe Assembly Point**

Before an evacuation begins, you will quickly need to choose a safe assembly point where students should gather after evacuating. Ideally, you will have a student helper who can lead students to the assembly area. The location should be:

* + At least 100 feet away from the bus—about three bus lengths or 40 paces away—or as far as needed for the students’ safety
  + Easily accessible, without having to cross hazards
  + Away from traffic
  + Large enough to accommodate all the passengers

**Special considerations:**

* + If there is **severe weather**, the assembly areas should be protected from the elements as much as possible
  + If the bus is on **fire**, students should be upwind of the bus to avoid the smoke and ash
  + If stopped on **railroad tracks**, students must move as far away from the tracks as possible, in the direction of any oncoming train
  + If there is a **hazardous materials spill**, students must move upwind of the bus and at least 300 feet away
  + If the bus is in the direct path of a **tornado** and no other shelter is available (such as a tornado shelter), students should move to a nearby ditch or culvert

Direct students to stand or sit in a large group or in rows so you can count them and make sure everyone is there.

If parents arrive at the scene, do not let students leave the area until school procedures have been followed.

Keep in mind: Buses can be replaced, but students cannot!

**Emergency-Door Evacuation**

* 1. Stand facing the rear of the bus.
  2. Command students to remain seated and quiet but prepare to evacuate out the emergency door.
  3. Announce the assembly point and remind students to remain calm, to leave their belongings behind, and to walk, not run.
  4. If you have designated helpers, call them into action.
  5. Walk to the rear of the bus and open the rear door.
  6. Have your helpers exit the bus first so they can help others as they exit. One will help at the exit and another will lead students to a safe location. Instruct the helper where to lead the other students.
  7. Ensure a clear path for students who are exiting. Starting with either the left or the right rear seat:
     + Tap the shoulder of the student nearest to the aisle to indicate that the passengers in that seat should exit the bus. Have them assume a semi-squat position, or sit on the floor, as they exit. Have a helper grab the student’s wrist or forearm with one hand and place their other hand under the student’s shoulder as they exit. Caution students not to bump their heads as they exit.
     + Hold your palm out to the students in the opposing seat to keep them in the seat until you are ready for them to exit.
     + Turn to the students in the opposing seat and use the same procedure as above to direct them to exit the bus.
  8. Continue the above procedures for each set of seats as you walk towards the front of the bus, until it is empty.
  9. When the last student is out, walk down the aisle to the back of the bus as you check each seat to make sure everyone has exited.
  10. Exit the bus and make sure all students, including helpers, are in a safe location about 100 feet (40 paces or three bus lengths) away from the bus. Keep them there as a group, away from any danger.
  11. If needed, return to the bus to remove the fire extinguisher, first aid kit, and/or warning devices.
  12. Protect the scene by placing emergency warning devices as necessary, if appropriate.

***Slide 65:*** **Front & Rear (Split-Door) Evacuation**

* 1. Stand facing the rear of the bus
  2. Command students to remain seated and quiet but prepare to evacuate out both the front and rear doors
  3. Announce the assembly point and remind students to remain calm, to leave their belongings behind, to walk (not run), to use the handrails at the front, and use caution at the rear
  4. Call your designated helpers into action; if possible, have two helpers at the front door and two at the rear door
  5. Explain where the front and back half of the bus will be divided (roughly in the middle), so students know which way they will be exiting; instruct students who will exit out the back door to alternate seat by seat, right to left
  6. Move to the first row of occupied seats and turn toward the front of the bus (because you will be walking backward down the aisle)
  7. Starting with either the left or the right front seat:
     + Tap the shoulder of the student nearest to the aisle to indicate the passengers in that seat should exit the bus out the front door
     + Hold your palm out to the students in the opposing seat to keep them in the seat until you are ready for them to exit
     + Turn to the students in the opposing seat and use the same procedure as above to direct them to exit the bus
  8. Move backwards down the aisle, repeating this procedure at each seat until you reach the middle of the bus
  9. Proceed to the back of the bus, checking each seat to make sure it is empty
  10. Walk to the front of the bus, again checking for passengers before exiting
  11. Make sure all students, including helpers, are in a safe location about 100 feet (40 paces or three bus lengths) away from the bus; keep them there as a group, away from any danger
  12. If needed, return to the bus to remove the fire extinguisher, first aid kit, and/or warning devices
  13. Protect the scene by placing emergency warning devices as necessary, if appropriate

 Keep an eye on students exiting the rear of the bus, to ensure they are exiting in an orderly fashion.

**Window or Roof Hatch Evacuation**

By its nature, evacuation through emergency windows and/or roof hatches is hazardous, more chaotic, and should be used only as a last resort when other exits are not available or are unsafe.

* + You and your helpers must know how to open these exits by releasing the safety locks and pushing the windows or hatches open
  + Your student helper(s) should exit first and then help other passengers exit
  + You should be the last to leave the bus, after checking throughout for anyone left behind
  + Provide students with directions for exiting
  + You likely will not be able to have students exit in as orderly a fashion as with other exits, but try to maintain control and have students exit slowly and carefully so as not to injure themselves or others
  + Keep yourself calm and collected and urge students to remain calm as they exit the bus
  + Make sure all students, including helpers, move to a safe location about 100 feet (40 paces or three bus lengths) away from the bus; keep them there as a group, away from any danger
  + If needed, return to the bus to remove the fire extinguisher, first aid kit, and/or warning devices
  + Protect the scene by placing emergency warning devices as necessary, if appropriate

***Slide 66:*** **Railroad-Highway Grade Crossings**

**The Danger of Highway-Rail Grade Crossings**

The crossing of railroad tracks is one of the greatest hazards you will face as a school bus driver. That’s why federal and state regulations require you to stop, look, and listen before crossing most **highway-rail grade crossings**. The purpose of these rules is to keep you and your passengers safe at these dangerous intersections. At a highway-rail grade crossing:

* + You should ALWAYS expect a train and NEVER try to beat one
  + The train ALWAYS has the right of way
  + A train will ALWAYS take a long time to stop, and it’s difficult to tell how fast one is approaching
  + The train will ALWAYS win in a confrontation with a school bus

Whether you regularly encounter railroad tracks on your route or not, you must learn how to cross one safely and legally. The lives of you and your passengers depend on it.

***Slide 67:*** **Types of Crossings**

There are Three general types of highway-rail grade crossings:

**Passive Crossings:** This kind of crossing does not have any type of traffic control device. Passive crossings require you to recognize the crossing, stop at the crossing and look for a train, and decide if there is enough space to cross safely. Passive crossings have yellow, circular advance warning signs, pavement markings, and crossbucks to assist you in recognizing the crossing.

**Active Crossings:** This type of crossing has a traffic-control device installed at the crossing to regulate motor vehicle traffic. These active devices include flashing red lights with or without bells, and flashing red lights with bells and gates.

**Exempt - When Stopping is not Required**

In certain instances, stopping at railroad tracks **may not** be required. This includes:

* + At streetcar crossings or railroad tracks used only for industrial switching purposes within a business district
  + Where a police officer or flagger is directing traffic
  + If a traffic signal shows green, indicating that it is safe to cross
  + At crossings marked as “exempt” or “abandoned”

If a stop is *not* required, you still must:

* + Slow to a speed that would allow you to stop before the tracks in case a train is approaching
  + Make certain the crossing is clear, with no trains approaching

At all railroad crossings, you must NEVER:

* + Stop on the railroad tracks
  + Drive onto the crossing without first making sure there is enough space to drive completely through the crossing without stopping
  + Shift gears on the crossing

***Slide 68:*** **Warning Signs & Devices**

**Advance Warning Signs**: These round, black-on-yellow warning signs are placed ahead of a public railroad-highway crossing. An advance warning sign is meant to tell motorists to slow down, look and listen for a train, and be prepared to stop at the tracks if a train is approaching.

**Pavement Markings**: Pavement markings mean the same as the advance warning sign. The marking usually consists of an “X” with the letters “RR” and a no-passing marking on two-lane roads. There may be a white stop line painted on the pavement before the railroad tracks. The front of the school bus must remain behind this line while stopped at the crossing.

**Crossbuck Signs:** This sign marks the crossing. It requires you to yield the right of way to the train. If there is no white line painted on the pavement, you must stop the bus before the crossbuck sign. When the road crosses over more than one set of tracks, a sign below the crossbuck indicates the number of tracks.

**Flashing Red Light Signals:** At many highway-rail grade crossings, the crossbuck sign has flashing red lights and bells. When the lights begin to flash, stop! A train is approaching. You are required to yield the right of way to the train. If there is more than one track, make sure all tracks are clear before crossing.

**Gates:** Many railroad-highway crossings have gates with flashing red lights and bells. Stop when the lights begin to flash and before the gate lowers across the road lane. Remain stopped until the gates go up and the lights have stopped flashing. Proceed when it is safe. If the gate stays down after the train passes, do not drive around the gate. Instead, call your dispatcher.

***Slide 69:*** **Crossing Procedures**

There are specific procedures to follow as you approach the tracks, stop at the tracks, and then cross the tracks.

**Approaching the Crossing**

* + Take note of the “big picture,” including:
    - Traffic conditions
    - The status of warning devices or traffic control signals at the crossing
    - The amount of space available for your bus on the other side of the tracks
    - Buildings, trees, or other objects that could block your visibility of the tracks
  + Check the containment are across the tracks. Make sure there is enough room for the bus.
  + **If you don’t fit, don’t commit!**
  + Stay in the driving lane farthest to the right and check for traffic around you
  + Master switch off
  + Activate your hazard warning lights approximately 100 feet before the tracks, 300 feet if speed limit is over 35mph to ensure your intentions are known
  + Stop be tween 15 to 50 feet before the tracks. This depends on the visibility you have when you approach
  + Quiet the students and all other distractions such as the fans and the radio
  + Open the window and the door
  + Look both ways and listen. Using the Rock and roll method to see around blind spots is crucial to crossing safety
  + Close the door
  + Look again
  + Proceed with caution over tracks
  + After clearing tracks, turn off hazard lights, turn master switch back on
  + Remember: If the train engineer can see you, it is to late for him to stop.

***Slide 70:*** **Crossing the Tracks**

#### Federal regulations require stopping when there are passengers on board and when empty!

If a train passes on a multi-track crossing, do not proceed until other tracks become visible, another train may be approaching from the opposite direction.

Remember that trains overhang their tracks by about three feet on both sides. Leave plenty of room.

**Crossing the Tracks**

* + After you have determined that no train is approaching from either direction, make sure your path across the tracks is clear, i.e., your vehicle will fit on the other side of the tracks and will not get hung up or bottom out during the crossing
  + Check both directions again, close the service door, and proceed with caution
  + Check your mirrors for traffic behind the bus
  + Cross the tracks quickly and smoothly, in a low gear—NEVER change gears while crossing
  + At a multiple-track crossing, stop only before the first set of tracks; when you are sure no train is approaching on any track, proceed across all of the tracks until you have completely cleared them
  + If the gate comes down after you have started across, drive through it even if it means you will break the gate; never drive in reverse on the tracks
  + After you have cleared all tracks completely, turn off the hazard warning lights, turn on the master switch and radio, and return all equipment that you had shut off back to normal operating condition

***Slide 71:*** **Special Situations**

**Bus is stuck on tracks:** If your bus stalls or is trapped on the tracks, get the students out of the bus and off the tracks immediately. Move everyone far from the bus at an angle which is both away from the tracks and *toward* any approaching train (moving at an angle away from the train could put students in danger).

Look for an emergency telephone number posted at the crossing and call it. If there is no posted emergency number, call 911 immediately. Give your exact location, using landmarks and the Department of Transportation (DOT) number from the crossing.

**Police officer or flagger is at the crossing:** If an official is at the crossing, follow their directions. If there is no official and you believe the signal is malfunctioning, call your dispatcher to report the situation and ask for instructions on how to proceed.

**Obstructed view of tracks:** Plan your route so it provides maximum sight distance at highway-rail grade crossings. Do not attempt to cross the tracks unless you can see far enough down the track to know for certain that no trains are approaching. Be especially careful at crossings that do not have any type of traffic control device.

**Containment or storage areas:** Know the length of your bus and the size of the containment area at highway-rail crossings. When approaching a crossing with a signal or stop sign in your lane on the opposite side of the tracks, pay attention to the amount of room there. Be certain there is enough containment or storage area to completely clear the railroad tracks on the other side, in case there is a need to stop. As a general rule, add 15 feet to the length of the school bus to determine an acceptable amount of containment or storage area.

IF YOU DON’T FIT, DON’T COMMIT!!

***Slide 72:*** **Driver Disqualification**

A conviction for any one of the following six highway-rail grade crossing offenses while operating a school bus requiring a commercial driver’s license will disqualify you from operating a school bus or other commercial motor vehicle.

* 1. Failing to slow down and checking that the tracks are clear of an approaching train (if you **are not** required to stop at all times)
  2. Failing to stop before reaching the crossing if the tracks are not clear (if you **are not** required to stop at all times)
  3. Failing to stop before driving onto the crossing (if you **are** required to stop at all times)
  4. Failing to have sufficient space to drive completely through the crossing without stopping
  5. Failing to obey a traffic control device or the directions of an enforcement officer at the crossing
  6. Failing to clear a crossing because of insufficient undercarriage clearance

The disqualification period ranges from 60 days for the first conviction to one year for three or more convictions in a three-year period.

***Slide 73:*** **Student Management**

**Behavior Management Roles**

We all have roles to play and expectations to follow, including on a school bus. Under ideal conditions, students are expected to:

* + Stay seated and keep their limbs and belongings within the confines of the seating compartment unless the bus is stopped
  + Face forward
  + Talk quietly and respectfully so as not to distract the driver

If students always followed these rules, your job would be much easier. However, students:

* + Are in varying stages of physical and emotional development
  + Are constantly exploring and adjusting
  + May need help understanding what is acceptable and appropriate behavior on a school bus

Unlike many other locations, student behavior on a school bus has a direct bearing on the safety of every person on the bus. Students who act up or cause disruption could be putting everybody at risk, especially if they interfere with you—the driver—and your ability to drive the bus safely.

For that reason, you must play a dual role: bus driver and people manager. Students need to learn how to control their actions, behaviors, and emotions, but when they don’t—to the extent that safety might be affected—you must step in and address the situation.

***Slide 74:*****Student Management**

#### Critical Driving Tasks

Behavioral problems can arise at any time, but there are certain times when you must not allow the activities going on behind you to distract you from what’s happening in front of you.

**Loading and unloading:** Never try to deal with behavioral problems during the loading or unloading process, which requires your full attention. Wait until students have finished loading or unloading and have reached a place of safety before turning your attention to other matters. If necessary, pull the bus over to handle the problem.

**Railroad tracks:** Stopping at railroad tracks is another situation when driving demands your full attention. You must follow specific procedures when approaching a railroad-highway grade crossing. These procedures demand all of your attention, and demand that students are quiet. Do not let a disturbance on the bus cause you to skip or rush through any of the procedures needed for crossing railroad tracks safely. Address the problem before you reach the crossing, or wait until you have crossed the tracks completely before trying to deal with it.

*Whenever* you are driving, don’t let students’ behaviors cause you to lose focus on the roadway or other drivers. A moment’s distraction could result in a crash.

#### Other Tips & Strategies

There are many tips and strategies you can use to prevent and/or address behavioral problems. Talk to other bus drivers about their strategies. The following list will get you started.

* + Don’t become too close or too tough with students. Your relationships should be friendly but firm.
  + Smile and greet students by name. Say good morning or good afternoon. Show an interest in things that interest them. Your attitude can influence the attitude of your passengers.
  + Have students use a formal title with your name: Mr. Jones, Mrs. Parker, etc.
  + Show respect for students and try to gain their respect. Leave any biases at home.
  + Try not to shout, show anger, or display irritation—to passengers or other drivers (i.e., “road rage”).
  + Praise students who accept responsibility for their actions.
  + Be consistent. Don’t be lax one day and tough the next.
  + Listen to students—their suggestions, complaints, and concerns.
  + Treat all students equally and fairly, or you may lose respect. Don’t have favorites.
  + Be courteous and not sarcastic. Never ridicule a student or his or her family. Don’t exchange gossip with students.
  + Always control your temper. Keep calm; don’t yell.
  + When giving a command, use clear, direct, and concrete language. Tell students exactly what you need them to do. Avoid being vague and wordy.
  + Clearly establish your expectations—what the rules are and the reasons they exist.
  + Be alert to “minor” cases of rule-breaking, because they can easily grow into bigger problems.
  + Stress to students that they each share in the responsibility to ensure safety on the bus.
  + Pay attention to your appearance.
  + Set a good example. Act the part of a person in a responsible position who follows the rules.
  + Be honest in what you do and say.
  + If you make a mistake, admit it.
  + Remember your sense of humor.
  + Don’t hold grudges and don’t take things personally.
  + Watch your language.
  + Communicate at the student’s level: a kindergartner is different from a 5th grader who is different from a 9th grader.
  + Consider using assigned seats and a seating chart if acceptable under district policy. A seating chart can help you learn students’ names and help control student behavior. They can also help during an emergency when you—or a substitute driver—need to account for all passengers.
  + Remember that you are not alone. Talk to other drivers and share experiences and solutions.
  + Keep in mind that safety is your primary objective. Have an assertive attitude that puts safety first.

***Slide 75:*** **Reasonable and Acceptable**

As the captain of your ship, you must recognize the difference between reasonable expectations and unreasonable expectations for student behavior. Students should be expected to follow the rules but not be models of perfect behavior at all times.

Just because you think a rule or expectation is reasonable doesn’t mean that it’s easy to enforce! It takes time, repetition, and patience.

**Reasonable Expectations**

* To expect students to remain seated, because their own safety is put at risk if they move around while the bus is moving.
* To expect students to keep their arms and heads inside the bus.
* To expect students to keep their voices low and their words respectful.
* To expect students to keep their belongings out of the aisle.
* To expect students to never throw things on or out of the bus.

**Unreasonable Expectations**

* To expect students to sit still at all times.
* To expect students to face forward at all times, even though it is safer.
* To expect complete silence from students.
* To expect students to always keep their arms and legs within the confines of the seating compartment.
* To expect students to keep all items stowed in their backpacks or bags at all times.

In general, students on a school bus will be protected in a crash due to “compartmentalization.” This refers to the protective envelope surrounding each student, formed by strong, closely-spaced seats with energy-absorbing backs. For compartmentalization to work, students must be completely seated, fully in the seat, and facing forward.

Students must learn your expectations and adjust their behavior accordingly, until they know (and put into practice) the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior.

Unacceptable behaviors that can jeopardize safety include:

* + Pushing or shoving
  + Running down the aisle
  + Fighting or bullying
  + Use of loud and abusive language
  + Throwing things
  + Smoking or using drugs or alcohol
  + Lewd, inappropriate, or sexual misconduct
  + Vandalism
  + Bringing weapons on the bus

**Rules & Consequences**

Preventing these behaviors starts with rules, along with consequences for breaking them. Rules for acceptable and unacceptable behavior must be clearly spelled out and consistently enforced.

Why? Because unacceptable behavior on a school bus can have potentially fatal consequences. Whenever you are forced to address a student’s behavior while driving, you’re not focused on driving. Instead, you’re focused on the student’s behavior.

For students, riding the bus is a privilege that can be removed if they do not follow the rules.

* + Rules set expectations for acceptable behavior and safety on the bus
  + Many of the rules that students have to follow on the bus are the same ones they follow in school and other locations

You must enforce the rules that are in place on your bus. In general, rules should be:

* + Short, simple, realistic, and enforceable
  + Posted on the bus, where everyone can see them
  + Stated in a positive way, to promote good behavior
  + Reviewed with students on the first day of school and routinely throughout the year
  + Enforced consistently and equitably

Consistent enforcement of the rules is key. Like anyone, your mood, your attitude, and your level of tolerance for bad or annoying behaviors will vary from day to day. However, your students won’t understand if what was acceptable yesterday is not acceptable today. Your reaction to bad behaviors needs to be consistent so students develop appropriate behaviors over the long run.

* Expect safe and appropriate behavior and accept nothing less.
* Don’t set your students up to fail. Make sure they know and understand each rule before you begin enforcing it.

***Slide 76:*** **Developing Good Behaviors**

You can avoid many behavioral problems on the bus, and encourage the development of good behaviors, by:

* + Recognizing good behavior and reinforcing it in a positive way
  + Understanding which behaviors require your attention and which ones are best ignored so you can focus on driving
  + Enforcing consequences when necessary

**Positive Reinforcement**

Positive reinforcement is a powerful way to influence behavior. It involves taking action immediately after you spot good behavior, to increase the likelihood of that behavior being repeated. The goal is to reinforce good behaviors rather than focusing only on bad behaviors. Bad behaviors might be easier to spot and address in a negative way, but positive reinforcement is a much more effective way to improve behavior.

Learn to recognize desirable behaviors and respond to them with positive comments. Desirable behaviors might include:

* + Picking up a piece of trash
  + Offering to share a seat
  + Being on time
  + Using a handrail
  + Waiting quietly in line

Praise is a powerful tool to reinforce these behaviors, and encourages other students to mimic the desirable behavior. Thanking a student for picking up a gum wrapper, for example, increases the odds that he or she will repeat the behavior in the future.

You or your school may use other forms of positive reinforcement, to make good behavior rewarding or even fun. For example, you might reward good behavior with a coupon that students may use to enter a drawing or “purchase” a reward.

***Slide 77:*** **Ignore Annoying Behaviors**

You must immediately address behaviors that affect safety—or that might escalate into a bigger problem that affects safety—but choose your battles carefully and don’t nitpick. Students engage in many behaviors that might be annoying or attention-getting but not dangerous. Sometimes, simply ignoring a behavior will make it go away. If it does not, you may want to address it one-on-one with the student, as long as you are consistent and equitable.

#### Discipline

At times, you may need to discipline students for wrongdoing, the same as a teacher might do in the classroom or a parent at home. If administered properly, discipline should cause a bad behavior to stop or lessen. Discipline might include:

* + Verbally reprimanding a student
  + Denying privileges
  + Changing where students sit
  + Contacting a student’s school or parents

Discipline does not always work and can sometimes backfire—resulting in retaliation against the driver or continued misbehavior—so it needs to be administered appropriately and cautiously. It also needs to conform to any local policies.

There are some things you should never do in response to bad behavior, even if you think discipline is required.

* + Never use physical force or grab, slap, hit, or shake a student
  + Never put a student off the bus (away from their regular stop)
  + Never lose your temper
  + Never use profanity

Keep in mind that students need many of the same things that adults do, including:

* + Respect
  + Recognition
  + To feel in control of their circumstances
  + To associate with their peers
  + To feel important to their peers

**Strategies for Disciplining Students**

Discipline may be one of the hardest problems you face as a school bus driver. It requires “discipline” on your part, to stay in control of your emotions and remain calm, fair, and equitable in your response. You also must administer school rules and work with school administrators and parents in maintaining discipline among your students.

The following strategies can help you control discipline problems on your bus, and even prevent such problems from occurring. The strategies you use in any given situation will depend on the situation at hand.

* + Don’t threaten or punish the entire bus when only one or a few students misbehave; be fair
  + Use private conversations instead of reprimanding students in front of other passengers who were not involved
  + Never threaten students or use physical force; with serious discipline problems, seek help from the school principal or a supervisor
  + If necessary to address a serious behavioral problem while you are driving:
    1. Stop the bus in a safe place
    2. Engage the parking brake, turn off the engine, and remove the ignition key
    3. Pause and relax for a few seconds to think about what you will do and say to control the situation
    4. Stand up, face the students, and use a calm but authoritative voice to address the offender(s)
    5. State specifically what you expect of the student(s), which behaviors are not acceptable, which rules they must follow, and what they must do to fix the situation, without humiliating them
    6. If necessary, state the consequences of failing to follow your commands
    7. Contact the principal or a supervisor for help if needed; in extreme cases, you may need to call the police
    8. Consider moving the offending student(s) to a front seat where you can observe him or her (but not in the seat directly behind you)
    9. If you are near the school, return to the school as necessary
    10. Document the incident and contact your supervisor

If your efforts are unsuccessful and a student’s behavioral problem makes you feel that you cannot safely continue to drive the bus, call a supervisor, a school administrator, or even the police if necessary. They may need to come and remove the student.

Though a firm verbal command may fix the problem, avoid getting into arguments or lengthy discussions while driving, and always stop if there is a fight or other serious problem.

Consequences must be supported by school policy and must be something you are willing to carry out. Don’t make false threats, and never put students off the bus as punishment.

***Slide 78:*** **Bullying & Harassment**

Bullying and harassment are serious issues that cannot be tolerated or ignored. They may be hard to spot and may not cause any immediate concerns for the safe operation of the vehicle, but they can cause emotional or physical harm to their victims and can quickly escalate into serious problems affecting safety on the bus.

If you respond quickly and consistently to bullying and harassing behavior, you send the message that it is not acceptable, which can help stop future bullying or harassing behaviors.

***Slide 79:*** Signs of Bullying

Sometimes bullying will be obvious—like a fight—and other times it will take keen observation to uncover. Not all students react the same way to bullying, and students who are being bullied may not be willing to ask you for help.

If a student report they were bullied, or if a parent reports to you that their child is being bullied on your bus, do not ignore it! Follow school policies for reporting and acting on bullying behaviors.

Some subtle signs of school-bus bullying to watch for include:

* + Students who are afraid of getting on the bus, try to miss the bus, or have excuses for not riding the bus
  + Students who are afraid or nervous about sitting with or near certain other students
  + Students who say something was stolen on the bus or who routinely “lose” things on the bus
  + A student who is typically happy and friendly suddenly acting upset, depressed, anxious, and/or isolated
  + Ripped or soiled clothing
  + Gum, food, saliva, or other objects on a student’s body or clothing
  + A student having a panic attack or showing signs of anxiety
  + A student telling you or hinting that a friend was bullied

Bullying is usually more common among students in the fifth- to eighth-grade range.

**Responding to Bullying**

There are simple steps you can take to try to prevent and/or stop bullying.

Do:

* + Get to know all students and foster a positive environment
  + Instill trust by making students feel like you care about their well-being and will take reports of bullying seriously
  + Encourage students to report incidents of bullying to you or another adult
  + Enforce school policies on bullying
  + Intervene immediately when you see bullying on the bus, using firm but respectful behavior
  + Separate students who are involved in bullying
  + Make sure any victim of bullying is safe and suffers no physical harm
  + Review video from your bus when you suspect there was bullying that you could not see
  + Report all incidents of bullying
  + Talk to other school staff about incidents of bullying—an incident of bullying on the bus may continue in the school

**Avoid these common mistakes:**

* + Don’t ignore bullying or reports of bullying
  + Don’t think the students will “work it out” without any intervention from an adult
  + Don’t think that a quick apology has solved the problem
  + Don’t think a video-camera system on your bus will prevent all bullying
  + Don’t immediately try to sort out the facts or force an apology—your job is to stop the bullying and ensure safety
  + Don’t force other kids to say publicly what they saw
  + Don’t question the students involved in front of other students
  + Don’t talk to the students involved together, only separately
  + Don’t make the students involved apologize or patch up relations on the spot

***Slide 81:*** **Assessing & Reacting to Unexpected Situations**

Safe driving demands that you constantly watch for any potentially hazardous situation. This requires you to be alert, so you can recognize a hazard in time to react. The hazard might be another vehicle, the road itself, an animal or object on the road, a weather hazard, a vehicle problem, or something else.

To react to an unexpected situation, you must:

* + Recognize it as a potential safety hazard
  + Assess the hazard it presents
  + Plan your response to eliminate or minimize the hazard
  + Follow through on your plan

Depending on the hazard, your course of action might include:

* + Using the brakes to avoid a hazard or collision
  + Steering to avoid a hazard or collision
  + Quick maneuvering, with or without braking
  + Slowing your speed
  + Turning on lights to increase visibility
  + Steering off of the roadway
  + Stopping in a safe place
  + Choosing a lesser collision

These actions must be taken in a calm and decisive manner.

Knowing your options for responding to a hazard starts with knowing what equipment you have available.

***Slide 82:*** **Safety Equipment**

Your bus may be equipped with a variety of accessories you can and must use in response to certain driving conditions, especially those related to weather.

**Strobe Lights**

Many school buses are equipped with roof-mounted, driver-activated strobe lights, also known as beacons. These flashing white or yellow lights may be near the front or rear of the bus, along the centerline of the roof.

A flashing strobe light greatly increases the visibility of your bus to other motorists, especially when visibility is reduced by fog, rain, snow, or low-light conditions. Unlike your red flashing lights, a strobe light does not signal to other motorists that they need to stop.

Depending on local policy and state laws, you may need to use your strobe light:

* + When weather inhibits visibility
  + During loading or unloading
  + When you need to drive slowly
  + At night, or
  + At all times

***Slide 83:*** **Brakes & Lights**

As discussed earlier, your brakes and lights are critical safety components when unexpected conditions arise. Slowing or stopping the vehicle is often a critical first step toward keeping everyone safe. Using your lights will increase your visibility and make your vehicle more visible to others. You must become familiar with the types of brakes and lights on your vehicle and how to use them

**Responding to Weather Conditions**

Responding to adverse weather begins with being prepared. Before you drive:

* + Check the weather report for your area
  + Check with dispatch or other drivers if you have any concerns about the weather
  + Listen to the bus radio for weather alerts
  + Check the roads yourself
  + Always do a careful pre-trip inspection that includes making sure your windshield washer, wipers, and defrosters are working properly and you have any special equipment needed for hazardous weather conditions (such as a brush, ice scraper, sand or kitty litter, tire chains, etc.)
  + Wear clothing that is appropriate for the anticipated conditions, both inside and outside the bus

**Keep in mind:** SLOWING DOWN is the most important thing to remember when driving in adverse weather conditions.

Important clothing might include:

* + Layers that can be removed or added
  + A hat with visor (that does not cover your ears)
  + Sunglasses
  + Gloves with leather or suede palms, to help grip the wheel
  + Insulated socks and boots in winter, but not heavy boots that may make it difficult to move quickly

***Slide 84:*** **Rain**

You have undoubtedly driven in rain many times without giving it a second thought, but rain presents several hazards for school bus drivers, including slippery road conditions, reduced visibility for you and students, and hazards from other drivers.

Here are some important reminders and tips for driving in rainy conditions:

* + Before driving:
    - Check your tires. Keeping your tire pressure at the recommended level, and ensuring proper tread depth, will increase traction and help prevent hydroplaning.
    - Make sure your windshield wipers and defrosters are working properly.
  + Anticipate problems and prepare to slow down in the first few minutes after it starts raining or if light rain turns into a heavy downpour.
    - The first 10 minutes after rain begins are the most dangerous. The rain mixes with oil on the roadway and creates slippery conditions until the oil washes away.
    - If it rains heavily, hydroplaning is a risk. When your bus hydroplanes, the tires lose contact with the road and have little or no traction. You may not be able to steer or brake. Hydroplaning risk increases with speed and can occur at speeds as low as 30 mph if there is a lot of water.
  + On your route:
    - Slow down, gradually. Wet roads will increase your stopping distance.
    - Be aware that water can reduce the efficiency of your brakes. You may need to **drag** the brakes slightly for a short distance to dry them out and restore normal braking.
    - Avoid aggressive braking or steering and accelerate smoothly and gradually.
    - Turn on your headlights, strobe lights, and even your four-way flashers if needed.
    - Increase your following distance and practice defensive driving. Give other vehicles plenty of room, especially when turning or pulling onto a road.
    - Be especially careful driving through puddles or other areas where water has accumulated, whether the water is standing still or moving. NEVER drive through floodwaters—call dispatch and find an alternate route.
  + If you find yourself hydroplaning:
    - Don’t use the brakes to slow down. Instead, release the accelerator. Downshift one gear if using an automatic transmission; shift into neutral or depress the clutch if using a standard transmission.
    - Use corrective steering to stay in your lane.
    - Apply the brakes to regain full control.

You can’t see dangers lurking below the water’s surface. There may be debris or power lines in the water, the road surface may have washed away, and/or the water may simply be too deep to cross. Don’t take the risk!

**Snow**

Snowfall can suddenly restrict your visibility and decrease traction. If you encounter heavy snowfall on your route, do the following:

* + Take your foot off the accelerator so you gradually slow to a safe speed
  + Turn on the windshield wipers as needed
  + Turn on headlights and strobe lights; also use four-way flashers if needed
  + Apply the brakes cautiously, and accelerate smoothly and gradually
  + Increase your following distance
  + Give other drivers enough room to the side
  + Steer slowly and smoothly
  + Look out the side windows to keep sight of the road
  + If necessary, pull off the roadway to stop and turn on the hazard warning lights

**Ice**

Ice comes from many sources, including sleet, freezing rain, hail, packed snow, “ice fog,” and the re-freezing of melted snow or ice. It also comes in many forms, including **black ice**, glazed ice from freezing rain, or frozen slush, for example.

Ice generally forms first in or on:

* + Bridges and overpasses
  + Shaded areas
  + Low-lying areas
  + Areas where snow collects and gets compacted

On your route, if you see or suspect icy/icing conditions:

* + Slow down **gradually**
  + Avoid aggressive braking or steering, and accelerate smoothly and gradually
  + Turn on lights and flashers as needed
  + Double your following distance
  + Give other drivers plenty of space
  + Practice defensive driving
  + Turn on your defroster as needed
  + If necessary and safe, you may need to secure and exit the vehicle to check the road surface and/or scrape ice off the windshield, mirrors, and lights

***Slide 85:*** **Wind**

Strong winds are another weather hazard that can affect the handling and safety of your school bus.

* + The side of a school bus acts like a sail on a sailboat; strong winds can push your bus sideways, could push it off the road, or, in extreme conditions, even tip it over
  + Strong winds can blow debris at the bus, possibly even breaking its windows
  + Gusts of wind can catch you by surprise

If you feel wind beginning to affect the handling of your school bus, expect the wind to be worse in higher and more exposed places. Be especially wary of:

* + Crossing bridges and overpasses
  + Crossing between hills
  + Driving through open straightaways

If you are caught in strong winds:

* + Keep a strong grip on the steering wheel
  + Try to anticipate gusts
  + Slow down to lessen the effect of the wind or pull off the roadway, stop in a safe place, and wait for winds to die down
  + Contact your dispatcher to get more information on how to proceed
  + Watch for blowing debris, falling trees, or downed power lines

**Impaired Visibility**

There are many environmental conditions that can limit your visibility, including fog, smoke, dust, snow, rain, sunlight, or darkness. Your actions in each situation will vary depending on the conditions and local policies. When visibility is impaired:

* + Turn on your lights, including the strobe light and, if needed, the hazard lights
  + Maintain a safe following distance
    - Keep a four-second following distance at a speed of 40 mph or less
    - If you can only see 15 feet or less in front of you, pull over and stop if possible
  + Proceed cautiously and slowly unless you need to stop, or if you cannot stop safely
    - Use the lines in the roadway to stay in your lane
    - Sound your horn periodically, if allowed
    - Move students forward in the bus to protect them should you be hit from behind
  + If you need to stop:
    - Pull all the way off the traveled portion of the roadway onto a solid shoulder, a side road, or into a parking lot
    - Turn off the regular lights and turn on your strobe lights and/or your four-way yellow hazard lights
    - Set the parking brake
    - Place emergency triangles outside the bus if required
  + Maintain communication with dispatch and ask for assistance if needed
  + Be alert to other motorists whose visibility may also be limited

Here’s a rule of thumb for how much space you should keep in front of the bus:

* + At least one second for each 10 feet of vehicle length at speeds below 40 mph.
  + At higher speeds, add one second.

For example, if you’re driving a 40-foot vehicle at 40 mph, leave 4 seconds. At 50 mph, leave 5 seconds.

***Slide 86:*** ***Fog***

Driving into a patch of fog can happen suddenly. If you drive into a patch of fog:

* + Slow down
  + Use the low beams on your headlights, activate your strobe light, and turn on the hazard warning lights if needed
  + Use the center lines and edge lines on the highway to help you stay in your lane
  + Watch for vehicles that are driving slowly or stopped on or near the road
  + Do not stop on the roadway; pull completely off the traveled portion of the roadway and make sure your warning lights are on

***Slide 87:*** **Safe Backing Techniques**

Backing a school bus is always dangerous and **strongly discouraged**. You should back your bus only when you have no other safe way to move the vehicle. When you stop and park, try to stop in a location that allows you to move forward when you leave.

NEVER:

* + Back a school bus when students are outside of the bus
  + Back into an intersection, on or over a crosswalk, or around a street corner

If you have no choice and you must back your bus, follow these procedures:

* + Post a lookout, preferably inside the school bus, looking out the rear window
    - Only ask the lookout to warn you about obstacles, approaching persons, and other vehicles
    - The lookout should not give directions on how to back the bus
    - Agree on a hand signal that means STOP
  + If no lookout is available:
    - Set the parking brake
    - Turn off the motor and take the keys with you
    - Walk to the rear of the bus to determine if the way is clear
  + Ask for quiet on the bus
  + Constantly check all mirrors and rear windows
  + Activate your hazard warning lights
  + Back slowly and smoothly
  + Back and turn toward the driver’s side, which allows for better visibility out your side window
  + Tap your horn so others know you are backing, unless your bus has a backup alarm/beeper
  + Yield the right-of-way to moving traffic and pedestrians

If you must back up at a student pickup point, be sure to pick up students before backing and watch for late-comers at all times. Be sure all students are on the bus **before** backing.

When unloading students, drop off students **after** backing.

If you must back into a driveway:

* + Load students before backing, if applicable
  + Drive past the driveway to allow enough space to maneuver
  + Check for any traffic and allow it to pass
  + Use your hazard warning lights
  + Back into the driveway
  + Drop off students after backing, if applicable
  + Check traffic and yield to oncoming vehicles
  + Proceed out of the driveway

Like backing, turning around should be done only when necessary. Plan routes to reduce the need for this maneuver.

***Slide 88:*** **Rear Overhang & Tail Swing**

Rear overhang refers to the part of the vehicle that extends behind the rear axle. The rear overhang on a large school bus can be as much as 10 feet, and it can cause several problems :

* + The rear of the vehicle—the “tail”—will swing to the side when you make a turn (it will pivot at the drive axle), possibly hitting nearby vehicles, pedestrians, or objects.
  + The underside of the tail can “bottom out” if there isn’t enough ground clearance when the road angles upward. You will need to watch for deep dips in the road or a road that suddenly angles upward to avoid bottoming out.

The distance that the rear overhang swings to the side when you turn the vehicle is known as the “tail swing” or “kick out.” That distance may be up to **three feet**, depending on the vehicle’s design. This means you must leave *more* than that amount of space between the vehicle and other objects when turning.

One common type of accident caused by tail swing can occur when you pull away from a curb or other stationary object. The tail will swing over the curb and could strike anything in its way, including a student. Or, the tail could hit a stopped car as you pull away from a row of cars.

You can avoid tail-swing crashes by taking a few precautions:

* + Become familiar with the dimensions of the school bus and how much tail swing you can expect, especially if you are driving a different vehicle for the first time.
  + Maintain several feet of clear space on the sides of the vehicle whenever possible.
  + Avoid sharp turns, because the sharper the turn, the bigger the swing. When stopped, leave extra space in front of your vehicle, if possible, so you can pull out at a shallower angle, minimizing tail swing.
  + Make sure your mirrors are properly adjusted, so you can check for obstacles or pedestrians on the sides of the bus both before turning *and* during the turn. Check the left side of the bus when turning right, and the right side of the bus when turning left, and make sure you have the right of way.
  + Maneuver away from objects slowly, check your mirrors often, and stop if the tail might hit something.

The tail will swing to the right when you turn left, and to the left when you turn right.

***Slide 89:*** **Why Inspections are Critical**

Vehicle inspections are critical to the safety of your students, yourself, and the motoring public. Imagine if your warning lights, the stop arm, or a fire extinguisher suddenly failed to work just when you needed to use it; the result could be tragic. Inspections can help ensure everything on the vehicle functions when you need it. They also provide a variety of other benefits, including:

* + **Revealing potential defects, dangers, or problems** *before* they lead to a vehicle breakdown, crash, or other consequences
  + **Limiting vehicle downtime** by helping the vehicle owner find and fix small problems at a scheduled time rather than having to react to a major emergency that may take days to resolve
  + **Preventing breakdowns** on the road due to undiscovered vehicle defects
  + **Preventing costly towing and repairs** that could have been done earlier and cheaper
  + **Ensuring a safe and secure trip** for students and other passengers
  + **Preventing violations, penalties, and out-of-service orders** that can result from vehicle defects or a failure to perform inspections
  + **Reducing liability** in a courtroom
  + **Maintaining compliance** with federal and state regulations that require daily inspections

Though state and school policies may vary, federal regulations require you to perform inspection activities during the workday:

* + **Every day before driving bus for the first time:** the pre-trip inspection
  + **After you’re done driving each route.:** the post-trip inspection

***Slide 90:*** The Pre-trip Inspection

School bus drivers or designated person are required conduct a pre-trip inspection of the mechanical and safety equipment on the bus prior to driving each day.

* + In most cases, you—the driver—will need to perform this detailed pre‑trip inspection; it is acceptable for someone other than the driver to perform the pre-trip inspection
  + The pre-trip inspection is usually the most important inspection you will perform
  + A pre-trip inspection form must be filled out daily to document their pre-trip inspections and any defects that are found

If your operation of a school bus is subject to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs), then you must:

* + Be satisfied the bus is in safe operating condition before you drive it (Sec. 392.7)
  + Review the last post-trip inspection form that was filled out for the bus and, if there were any problems noted, sign it to certify that any problems affecting the safety of the bus were fixed (Sec. 396.13)

**Checking Critical Vehicle Components**

The following is a six-step inspection routine that breaks the inspection process into logical segments:

* + Vehicle overview
  + Detailed walk-around
  + Engine compartment
  + Inside the vehicle
  + Light check
  + Brake check

Make sure everything gets inspected and that you do the inspection the same way every time. This ensures that nothing gets missed, whether you follow this six-step process or a variation.

This six-step process can apply to all types of vehicles, but not all vehicles will have the components described below. Adjust the process as needed for your vehicle.

**Keep these 6 words in mind!**

During any detailed vehicle inspection, you will be looking for any components that are:

* + Missing
  + Cracked
  + Broken
  + Damaged
  + Loose
  + Leaking

You also need to be aware of anything that was *added* to your bus, like a suspicious object that shouldn’t be there. If you find something that isn’t right and it might affect the safe operation of the vehicle, don’t ignore it! Get it addressed **before** you drive.

***Slide 91:*** **I.*****Vehicle Overview***

Get a feel for the vehicle’s overall condition as you approach. Look for anything obviously missing, suspicious, or otherwise wrong with the vehicle, such as:

* + Body or lamp damage
  + Fluid on the ground
  + Anything hanging from underneath the vehicle
  + Whether the vehicle is leaning
  + Any signs of tampering
  + Missing license plates, transponder, or any required lettering or decals

Look at all your light and reflector covers to ensure they’re intact and not broken.

***II. Detailed Walk-Around***

Start at the front of the vehicle and then begin your detailed walk-around inspection along one side.

**Windshield:** Make sure it isn’t cracked or chipped. Specifically, look for any of the following at a minimum:

* + Damage that’s larger than a penny
  + A crack or chip that’s within 3” of another crack or chip
  + Damage that’s above the steering wheel but more than 2” below the upper edge of the windshield or 1” from the sides
  + Cracks that intersect

If you see any of these, report them to the maintenance department following school or company policy.

**Wiper blades:** Test for a snug fit against the glass. Ensure wiper blades are flexible and not stiff, cracked, or weather-rotted.

**Mirrors and windows:** Verify mirrors and windows are clean, tight, and in good condition. As you walk around the vehicle, check for any windows that appear to be protruding, which could indicate the window isn’t properly latched.

***Slide 92:*** Student crossing gate/bar: Check that the student crossing gate or bar is mounted securely and opens/closes smoothly. Look for any sagging, cracks, or other damage.

**Stop arm(s):** Pull the stop arm(s) open and make sure:

* + It is mounted securely to the frame of the vehicle, with no loose fittings
  + The lights and lenses are intact and not cracked, broken, or loose
  + The “STOP” wording is intact
  + There is enough tension to fully retract the sign

**Bumpers:** Make sure the front and rear bumpers are in place and secured.

**Steer (front) tires and wheels:** Look at the tread and condition of each tire. Steer-tire tread needs to be more than 4/32" deep.

***NOTE:*** *While a tread-depth gauge is highly recommended, you can also use a standard U.S. quarter to measure this. From the top of the quarter to the top of Washington’s head is about 4/32 of an inch. So, as long as the top of his head is inside the tread depth, you should be good to go.*

Look for chunks of missing tread, damage, sidewall bulges, cuts, gouges, uneven wear, and feathering. Front tires take a lot of abuse, so they need to be examined closely. Steer tires cannot be retreaded, regrooved, or recapped. Retreaded tires should be marked or stamped with a tire code that begins with “R.”

Look for chunks of missing tread, damage, sidewall bulges, cuts, gouges, uneven wear, and **feathering**. Front tires take a lot of abuse, so they need to be examined closely. Steer tires cannot be retreaded, regrooved, or recapped. Retreaded tires should be marked or stamped with a tire code that begins with “R.”

**Air pressure:** Gauge your tires during the pre-trip inspection when they’re cold. If you check tires when they’re hot, their pounds per square inch (PSI) will read 5% to 20% higher (if they read more than 20% high, they are likely overinflated).

Make sure the valve stems and caps are in place and undamaged.

**Rims:** Look for any cracks, bends, or welds. All such problems must be reported and repaired.

**Lug nuts:** Make sure lug nuts are tight. Indications they might be loose include shiny metal or new rust, or your vehicle may have built-in indicators. You should never be able to turn a lug nut by hand. If you see cracking from lug nut to lug nut, that’s an indication they’ve been loose for a while.

**Hubs:** Check for oil leaks, which are a common cause of wheel separation and vehicle fires. Be sure to check the hubs inside and out for signs of leakage (look for a spray pattern around the hub). Make sure the hub oil seal is tightly secured.

Having under-inflated tires is the number one cause of tire-related incidents on the road. When tires lose 10 to 20 percent of their optimal air pressure, they start getting strange wear patterns. If they are low by more than 20 percent, you risk a sidewall blowout.

***Slide 93:*** **Suspension and brake components**:

To visually check the suspension and brake components, you may need to turn the wheel.  Make sure, at each wheel, that:

* + None of the suspension or brake components is broken, cracked, loose, or missing
  + All bolts and pins are in place
  + Brake lines are properly secured and are free of leaks
  + Push-rods and slack adjusters are properly mounted and not cracked, damaged, or leaking
  + Shock absorbers, leaf springs, and U-bolts are properly mounted and secured
  + There’s no oil or grease on the brakes or the rim
  + The drum and disc are not unusually or unevenly worn
  + The brake pads and shoes are not excessively worn

Some brake components will need to be checked after you secure the vehicle and open the hood, as discussed below.

**Under the vehicle:** Check for fluid leaks, animals, or obstructions.

**Battery compartment:** Make sure the battery compartment is secure, there are no leaks or excessive corrosion, and check the wiring for any signs of damage. Confirm the vehicle has spare fuses for any required electrical circuits that rely on fuses.

**Fuse compartment(s):** Check the fuse compartment(s) for any signs of frayed or burned wiring, missing or unsecured fuses, or other problems.

Open every compartment door as you walk around the bus (some buses have more compartments than others) and make sure the doors are securely latched and sealed, the hinges are securely mounted, the doors open and close smoothly, and that there is no damage inside the compartment.

**Roadside emergency equipment:** Make sure the reflective triangles, flares, and any other required emergency equipment is clean, in good condition, and readily available.

**Fueling area:** Check if there are any fuel leaks under the vehicle. Open the fueling door and make sure the tank cap is in place and tight. Perform the same steps with any **diesel exhaust fluid** (DEF) filler.

**Rear-axle wheels, rims, and tires:** Check these much like you checked the steer wheels, with these differences:

* + The tires must have a tread depth of at least 2/32” to be legal.
  + Look between the set to make sure the rims are butted up against each other but that the tires are not touching and there’s nothing wedged between them.

***NOTE:*** *Just like a quarter can be used to gauge the steer tires, a penny can be used to gauge the rear tires. From the top of the penny to the top of Lincoln’s head is about 2/32 of an inch.*

**Rear suspension and brake components:** Because these are found behind the inside tire, you may find it easier to check these components by looking under each side of the vehicle and checking the opposite side. Again, look for any broken or cracked suspension or brake components. All bolts and pins should be in place. Verify there is no oil or grease on the brakes or the rim. If there’s a second axle behind the main drive axle, check those brake and suspension components as well.

**Mud flaps:** Make sure required mud flaps:

* + Are present
  + Are in good condition
  + Are securely mounted
  + Reach to within roughly 6" of the ground

**Tailpipe:** Check the tailpipe (rear exhaust) for damage or obstructions

**Spare tire and tools:** If your vehicle is equipped with a spare tire, make sure it is in place, properly inflated, and secured. Check for a lug wrench, jack, and other needed tools, as necessary.

**Reflective tape:** Check all required reflective tape around the vehicle for cleanliness and damage.

***Slide 94:*** ***III. Engine compartment***

Verify the following before raising the hood or opening the engine compartment door:

* + The parking brake is on
  + The wheels are chocked
  + The keys are in your pocket

Open the hood or compartment door and do a visual scan of the entire compartment for any obvious issues, like leaks.

These inspection procedures may need to be adjusted depending on the type of engine in your vehicle.

**Fluid levels** **:** Check the oil, coolant, power steering, transmission, and windshield washer fluid levels, using one of these methods:

* + Find the dipstick, pull it out completely, wipe it clean, reseat it completely, then pull it out and check the level, making sure it is between the “add” and “full” marks
  + Find the sight glass and read the fluid level
  + Find the reservoir and check the level

Top off any fluids that are below the “add” line.

During your inspection, make sure all fluid reservoir caps and dipsticks are secured, including those for windshield washer fluid, coolant, fuel, oil, power steering fluid, transmission fluid, and DEF fluid.

**Belts:** Make sure belts are not worn, loose, frayed, or cracking.

Push down on each belt midway between pulleys and check for excess movement.

If the vehicle has air-powered auto tensioners (which automatically tension the belts), recheck the belts after the engine has been running and the air pressure is built up.

For many buses, a good rule of thumb is that there should be less than 1" of play on a belt, preferably no more than 3/4".

**Alternator, air compressor, and water pump:** Check for any leaks, excessive wear and tear, corrosion, secure mounts, and secure wiring.

**Steering:** Check the steering system for secure mounting, secure connections, and any damage or leaks, including the steering shaft, tie rods, steering arms, gear box, pitman arm, drag links, and steering knuckles.

**Radiator:** Check the radiator and radiator fan for damage and leaks.

**Filters:** Check the air and fuel filter compartments to make sure they are properly mounted and secured.

**Hoses:** Look at all visible hoses and check for cracks, bulges, leaks, loose clamps, and loose connections.

**Exhaust system:** Check for any indication of a leak, such as soot build-up at a seam or bend.

Secure the hood before moving to the next inspection area.

***IV. Inside the Vehicle***

The fourth step of a routine pre-trip inspection process is conducted inside the vehicle, from front to back.

**Passenger Entry/Lift:** Check that the entry (service) door is not damaged, operates smoothly, and closes securely from the inside. Make sure:

* + Hand rails are secure and the step light is working, if equipped
  + The entry steps are clear and treads are not loose or worn excessively
  + If equipped with a handicap lift, look for leaking, damaged, or missing parts and check for correct operation; fully retract and securely latch the lift

**First aid kit:** Confirm the first aid kit is securely in place and fully stocked or that the seal is unbroken. If equipped with a body fluid cleanup kit, check that it too is securely in place and stocked or sealed.

**Seats:** Look for broken seat frames and make sure all seat frames are firmly attached to the floor. Physically pull on each bottom seat cushion and push each seat back to check for proper securement to the frame. Check every seat for loose, missing, damaged, or cracked parts.

**Slider/folding seats:** There are several styles of seats that can move or fold out of the way to make room for a wheelchair. Make sure the seats slide or fold smoothly and lock in place.

**Wheelchair restraints:** Check the wheelchair securement points, tracks, and belts for any damage, debris, corrosion, or looseness.

**Cleanliness:** Check the seats and floor for cleanliness.

***Slide 95:*** **Emergency exits (doors, windows, and hatches):**

Make sure all emergency exits are not damaged, operate smoothly, and close securely from the inside and outside. Check that emergency exit warning devices (such as lights and/or buzzers) are working; they should activate automatically when an exit is opened and then go off when the latch is closed. Also make sure emergency exits are properly labeled.

**Driver’s seat:** Adjust your seat so you can reach the steering wheel and controls comfortably. Check your seat belt and make sure it’s not damaged and it buckles and unbuckles correctly.

**Engine ignition:** Make sure the parking brake is on and the transmission is in park or neutral, then start the engine.

**Gauges:** Check the oil pressure. The needle should come up immediately when the engine starts (if it does not, shut off the engine immediately to avoid damaging it, and seek maintenance). Next, look at all your gauges, including those for voltage, oil, engine speed, water, and fuel, followed by your air pressure gauges, to make sure they are all readable, operational, and in the proper range. You may need to give each of these some time to achieve their “normal” ranges. Make sure the batteries are recharged from the start-up and the air tanks are full (if the vehicle has an air system) before moving on.

While waiting for pressure to build, you may want to use the time to check your interior lights, heater, air conditioner, and defroster.

**Indicators:** Check the turn-signal, hazard, and high-beam indicators. Also check lighting indicators (internal panel lights) for:

* + Alternately flashing red lights
  + Alternately flashing amber lights
  + Strobe light(s)

**Mirrors:** Check the mirrors for their condition and adjustment. Adjust them as needed for proper sight lines.

**Heater, air conditioner, and defroster:** Make sure each of these systems work properly.

**Windshield wipers/washers:** Turn on the windshield wipers to confirm they work, then test the washer(s).

**Steering wheel:** Verify the tilt feature is locked. Check for play in the steering wheel, to see how much it turns before the steer tires move. The free-play should be no more than 5¼" on a 20" steering wheel with power steering, or 2½" with manual steering.

**Horn(s):** Test the horn.

**Interior mirror:** Adjust the mirror so you can see the passenger area from the **driver’s seat.**

**Interior lights:** Check to make sure the interior lights all work.

**Fire extinguisher:** Make sure the fire extinguisher is firmly mounted, completely charged, and ready for use.

**Driver window:** Test window operation to make sure it works as it should.

**Keys:** Ensure you have all necessary keys, including those for the fuel tank door.

***Slide 95:*** **V. Light Check**

**Turn on the low beams and emergency flashers.** Verify the parking brake is on, exit the vehicle, and make sure the lights and four-way flashers are on, front and rear. Also make sure the side marker lights are blinking with the flashers.

**Turn on the high beams.** Check to see that they work.

**Check the following (as applicable):**

* + **Turn signals:**  Front, back, and side
  + **Parking, clearance, side-marker, and tail lights**
  + **Brake/stop lights:** Get a helper for this step, if necessary, since you cannot see the rear of the bus while activating these lights. Your company may also authorize you to use something reflective to check these lights, such as a wall or another vehicle.
  + **Alternately flashing red lights**
  + **Alternately flashing amber lights**
  + **Strobe light**
  + **Stop arm lights**
  + **License plate lamp**

***VI. Brake Check***

If the vehicle has **air brakes:**

* 1. Confirm the wheels are chocked so the vehicle cannot move, and the air pressure is over 100 PSI, which will enable you to perform these tests.
  2. **Shut off the engine** and put the key or ignition switch in the “on” position so you will be able to hear the audible alarms.
  3. **Do a leak check.** Release the parking brake and apply the foot brake for one minute. Watch the air pressure gauge to make sure it doesn’t leak more than 3 PSI during that minute.
  4. **Check the emergency features of the air brakes**, which include both an audible and visual alarm on the dashboard. Pump the air pressure down and notice where the alarm sounds and the lights come on. Most vehicles activate around 60 to 80 PSI. Continue pumping down.
     + The brake button should pop out between 20 and 40 PSI, switching over from the parking brake to the emergency brake.
  5. **Perform a rolling brake check.** Restart the engine, rebuild the air pressure, and remove the wheel chocks. Put the vehicle in drive, release the brake, and accelerate to five miles per hour, then press the brake pedal to stop. Determine if the vehicle is pulling to one side or if there’s a delayed stopping action. Either one is a problem that needs to be addressed before the vehicle can be driven.
  6. **Test the parking brake.** Activate the parking brake, shift into drive, and accelerate slowly. Make sure the parking brake holds the vehicle in place.

If the vehicle has **hydraulic brakes:**

* 1. **Check for leaks.** Pump the brake pedal three times and hold it down after the third pump. The pedal should not fade (i.e., it should remain solidly in place under pressure).
  2. **Check the parking/emergency brake.** Apply the emergency brake and attempt to move the vehicle forward. It should hold steady.
  3. **Check the service brake.** Release the parking brake and roll forward at five miles per hour. Apply the foot brake and make sure the vehicle stops crisply without pulling to one side or the other and without a delayed stopping action. Either one is a problem that needs to be addressed before the vehicle can be driven.

**Keep in mind:** If a safety-related item is not in satisfactory condition during your pre-trip inspection, do not operate the vehicle until the problem has been addressed. Operating an unsafe vehicle is a violation and puts you, your passengers, and the motoring public at risk!

***Slide 97:*** **The Post-Trip Inspection**

After dropping off your last student either at home or at school you must find a safe place to walk through your bus to check for students and to place your empty sign in the back window of the bus. You must also walk through your bus one more time looking for students when you return to base.

At the end of your route, park your bus, set the brakes, and, if necessary, allow the engine to idle slowly per the manufacturer’s recommendations. This permits proper lubrication of all engine parts, which is especially important for diesel vehicles.

Turn off all radios, fans, cameras, and other equipment.

Turn off the ignition and remove the keys.

Walk through the bus to look for:

* + Sleeping or hiding students
  + Articles left on the bus
  + Open windows and doors
  + Damage or vandalism

If you find a student on the bus, that student’s safety continues to be your responsibility. Report the situation immediately to your supervisor. You are responsible to take the student to school/or home depending on which route.

Sweep the floor and steps of the bus and empty garbage as needed.

***Slide 98:*** **School Bus Security**

#### Security Breaches: Do not allow anyone on your bus unless they are on the roster of students. Parents, strangers or others not authorized to ride the bus should not be allowed to board the bus at any time. Advise them that they are not allowed on the bus and they must exit immediately. A person who boards a school bus when the bus is on its route or otherwise in operation, or while it has pupils on it, and who refuses to leave the bus on demand of the bus operator, is guilty of a misdemeanor (MS 609.605). Report all breaches by notifying the dispatcher or calling 911.

#### Security Begins with You

A security incident on or involving your school bus could have tragic consequences. It could endanger lives and property on and around the bus and have long-lasting ripple effects on the school, the bus company or school district, and the entire community.

The security of your bus and its passengers starts with you, the captain of the ship. You must be actively involved in identifying security threats and taking action when needed to prevent harm.

Being able to identify security threats and incidents will help you distinguish between a “prank” and an actual emergency.

**Follow Local Security Policies**

Ensuring security on and around your bus begins with following your state and local security-related policies and procedures. Your state, school, district, company, organization, and/or union may have a variety of policies, procedures, and strategies to ensure security. These might include:

* + Audio/video recording (surveillance) systems
  + Emergency communication systems
  + Vehicle tracking
  + Codes of conduct
  + A “no weapons” policy
  + Security lighting, gates, fencing, and other facility security
  + School-based enforcement officers
  + Periodic driver training

During vehicle inspections, make sure all available security features on your bus are working properly, such as any video cameras or emergency communication systems.

You must also learn which types of safety and security incidents need to be reported to your manager. Be sure to report every incident as required, because it might help prevent future incidents.

***Slide 99:*** **Set Behavior Expectations**

While security issues on a school bus are not common, they do happen. A security threat could surface from *outside or inside* the bus. The potential for this can be minimized by setting rules for the expected behavior and safety of students while boarding, riding, and disembarking the school bus.

* + A “no weapons” policy should be in place and vigorously enforced
  + Students should get on and off the bus in an orderly fashion
  + Students should not change seats while the bus is in motion
  + You will get greater cooperation from students if you build relationships with them and communicate in a straight‑forward, easy-to-understand manner; students who think their bus driver is approachable are more likely to report or share something that doesn’t look right
  + Set standards for your own behavior as the “authority figure” on the bus

During any type of security-related incident, keep your students in mind and remember to control the situation. You do not want students to panic and rush into danger. Maintain clear communication with your passengers about the situation and what you need them to do, being mindful of their ages.

***Slide 100:*** **Pre-Trip Security Inspections**

Security must be a part of your pre-trip bus inspection. During your inspection, keep a watchful eye for anything suspicious that could affect security. Watch for:

* + Unusual wires
  + Any abnormal materials in, on, or attached to the bus
  + Items that may have been intentionally left behind
  + Signs of tampering with the vehicle, such as pry marks, forced entry, or opened compartments

Be sure to check:

* + Under the bus
  + In all compartments
  + In the wheel wells
  + Around the wheelchair lift
  + Under the driver’s seat
  + Under all passenger seats

Maintaining an uncluttered vehicle can make it easier to complete your pre-trip inspection.

**Recognize Potential Security Threats**

The Transportation Security Administration’s (TSA) First Observer Plus™ training urges bus drivers to “Observe, Assess, and Report” anything that does not look right.

**Observing**

Observing means seeing, hearing, feeling, or smelling something that isn’t right. This could be:

* + Someone in a location they should not be in
  + An abandoned or leaking package or device
  + Someone taking photos of your bus or asking questions about how your bus works
  + Someone following your bus
  + Someone carrying a weapon or an unusual object
  + Someone—even a student—acting in a secretive or other unusual manner

Observing means noticing something unusual that is “in plain view.” It does not mean doing something illegal to obtain information. Never put yourself or others in danger. You don’t want to become part of the incident.

If possible, take notes about any out-of-the-ordinary observations. You may think you will remember numbers, colors, directions, etc., but that can be difficult to do in tense, fast-moving situations. Take pictures if you can, not only of what doesn’t look right but the surroundings as well.

Keep in mind that identifying a “suspect” should not be based on national origin, ethnicity, color, race, gender, or age.

***Slide 101:*** Assessing

Assessing what you observed involves using your knowledge, experience, and judgment to determine if there may be a security threat. You know more about your passengers and your school bus than any terrorist does. According to the TSA, you as the school bus driver have 95% of the knowledge needed to make a difference in a suspicious situation. You know the job; you know the environment—you know what doesn’t look right.

You may be surprised to learn that:

* + There have been hundreds of school bus radio thefts; a bus radio could help someone monitor bus activity and understand school bus operations in planning for some type of attack
  + Guns and knives have been used in school bus attacks
  + A package bomb can be small enough to fit in a student’s backpack

**Reporting**

If you determine—through observation and assessment—that a potential security threat exists, remain calm, stay focused, and report the situation. Make a note of any important details you may be asked to provide, including:

* + The location
  + The direction the threat may be headed
  + A complete and detailed description of the threat, activity, or incident
  + A description of any vehicles (license plate number, color, make, etc.) and/or individuals (attire, hair color, etc.) involved

Use state, school district, or employer procedures to notify the proper contacts (dispatch, a supervisor, local law enforcement, etc.). Maintain communication and wait for direction.

When you are reporting, say as much as you can about the “who, what, where, when, and why” of the situation.

If you suspect a bomb is on your school bus, evacuate the bus immediately. Ask a passing motorist or area resident to call for help. Do not use a radio or cell phone within 50 feet of suspected explosives, because the radio signal could cause the explosives to detonate.

**Keep in mind:** By reporting *potential* threats, you may very well keep an active threat from happening. Most active threats involve some sort of planning and rehearsing. If something doesn’t look right, sound right, smell right, or feel right, report it!

***Slide 102:*** Responding to an Active Threat

If you become involved in an active threat—such as an active shooter—remain calm and stay focused on what you need to do to prevent harm to yourself and/or your passengers. This may involve you and your passengers:

* + **Running** — Leaving the area as quickly as possible—whether on the bus (driving away) or off (evacuating and running away)—until you reach safety and can call for help and assist passengers
  + **Hiding** — Getting out of sight of the threat and preventing the threat from reaching you, such as by locking doors, crouching under seats or behind walls, turning off lights, phones, and radios, etc.
  + **Fighting** — Only fight as a last resort, but you may have to fight if there is an imminent threat to life

When a law enforcement officer approaches the scene of an active threat, drop everything from your hands and raise them with fingers spread apart. Try to stay calm and report what you know about the situation.

In a hostage situation, stay calm and do **not** be confrontational.

**Evacuation**

If evacuation is necessary and possible due to a security threat, protect students and yourself from danger or risk of injury by:

* + Shutting down and securing the vehicle in a safe location
  + Relocating students a minimum of 300 feet upwind and upgrade of the vehicle
  + Prohibiting use of cell phones within 50 feet of the vehicle or suspicious device (if applicable)
  + Taking any onboard communication devices with you, if possible
  + Waiting for assistance and direction

***Slide 103:*** **Route and Stop Reviews**

#### Route Planning

Route planning refers to the process of determining where and when school buses need to operate—and where and when they need to pick up and drop off passengers—in order to complete the task of delivering all passengers safely and on time. Many states, municipalities, and school districts have laws, policies, and procedures in place for planning routes, using a variety of methods.

As a school bus driver, you may or may not be involved in the up-front planning of school bus routes. Even if you don’t participate in the development of your school bus route, a basic understanding of the process will help you do a better job of transporting students to and from school. In addition, you may need to plan routes for any extracurricular or out-of-the-ordinary trips.

**Factors Considered**

Generally, state laws, schools, and transportation service providers try to minimize student ride times while considering a variety of factors such as:

* + Student educational needs
  + Geographic boundaries
  + Terrain
  + Traffic congestion
  + Condition of roads
  + Railroad crossings
  + Other hazards that may affect the safe navigation of a route
  + The location of homes
  + The number of school-age children at each home
  + Departure and arrival times and locations for extracurricular trips

**Types of Route Plans**

There are many types of school bus route plans.

* + One of the more common types of route plans is a morning route and an afternoon route using one bus on each route
  + Another type of route plan, well-suited to smaller geographic areas where the population is dense, is for one bus to cover two different routes each morning and afternoon
  + In some localities, one bus may make more than two trips each morning and afternoon
  + In some situations, a school bus may pick up and transport students to a transfer point and then another bus takes the students to the end point

**Your School Bus Route**

As the driver of a school bus, you should be in possession of the following information prior to driving your assigned route for the first time:

* + A list of students on the route
  + Approximate times for pick-up and drop-off of students
  + Route sheet and/or a map of the route
  + Identification of students with medical issues that may require specific actions from the driver

***Slide 104:*** **A Dry Run**

A good practice, if allowed by your school or employer, is to drive the route at least once *in advance of the first time you will have students on board*, using the same equipment that will be used in the actual operation. This “dry run” will give you the opportunity to check times and locations, and to increase your awareness of potential hazards. The more knowledge you have of your route before having students on board, the less distracted you will be with route issues once you do have students on board!

#### Familiarity Helps Spot Hazards

Over time you will become more and more familiar with your route. This will increase your confidence and ability to anticipate and identify hazards.

Dangers along your route and at pick-up/drop-off points may include:

* + Inability of car drivers to see the stopped bus in plenty of time to stop, for any reason
  + Insufficient room for students to wait safely off the roadway
  + Recurrent hazardous weather-related issues like flooding, deep snow, or ice
  + An increase in heavy traffic due to a new venue, warehouse, or other destination
  + Dangerous crossovers, where children need to cross high-speed traffic lanes
  + Societal factors such as a nearby drug house, drug dealers, prostitution, loitering, etc.
  + Landscaping that has grown out of control, affecting visibility
  + Poor or broken lighting

Always be sure to use approved routes and pick-up/drop-off points and never change a bus stop location without prior approval. If you have an immediate safety concern, report it first and get approval before altering your routine.

**Factors to Consider**

When evaluating your route or stopping points for hazards, consider the following questions.

**Along the route**

* + Are there any serious road hazards along your route?
  + Are hazards appropriately marked with signs or other notices?
  + Are you required to back your school bus anywhere?
  + Are there any dangerous crossings?
  + If you need to cross a dual highway, is there enough room for your bus to stop in the median without blocking a travel lane?
  + Do you cross any railroad tracks on your route? If so, are there adequate warning devices (lights, gates, bells) and can you see at least 1,000 feet in both directions along the tracks?

**Pick-up/drop-off locations**

* + Is each stop visible (by other drivers) from at least 200 feet in both directions?
  + Are any of your stops too close together or too far apart?
  + As you approach each bus stop, are you able to see the waiting students?
  + Is there a safe waiting area for students at least 10 feet from the roadway? Do they actually wait there?
  + If students need to cross a roadway to board your bus, do they wait for your signal to cross?
  + Are there any stops where other drivers routinely run your stop signals? If so, are there any visible signs indicating why they might be doing that, such as being unable to see your bus in time?
  + Are there any stops you think need to be evaluated for safety problems?

***Slide 105:*** **Reporting a Hazardous Situation**

If you ever see something unsafe about a pick-up/drop-off point or along the route, report it so it can be addressed. Follow local policies and procedures for reporting a hazard or problem.

This may involve verbal reporting and/or filling out and submitting a form.

In your account of the hazard or problem, be sure to include possible solutions. You have the best vantage point for coming up with a solution to a hazard or problem. The solution may be to change something about the route or stop location. Or, possibly a change could be made to the roadway to minimize or correct the problem.

There may be a hazard that is unavoidable. However, communicating any and all hazards will increase the chances of alleviating the problem.

It’s a good practice to add notes about any route hazards to the route information you keep in your bus. This will be valuable information for a substitute driver.

Remember, **never** alter your route or pick-up/drop-off points without prior approval. Always follow state, district, and company policies with bus routes and bus stops.

**What You Must Know**

To plan an extracurricular trip, you will need to know:

* + **Departure time and location:** The exact time you need to arrive at the school, the exact location for picking up students, and the exact time of departure for the event.
  + **Arrival time and location:** The exact time the group needs to arrive at the event, and the exact location of the event. **Return times and locations:** When you need to arrive at the student pickup location, where that location is, the time of departure, and the exact time you are expected to arrive back at the final destination (typically the initial departure point).
  + **Speed limits:** Know speed limits along your route to estimate travel times. Never expect or plan to drive at (or above) the speed limit for the duration of the trip! Keep in mind that congestion at certain times of day could drastically reduce your speed.
  + **Special stops:** Where you can stop for food, fuel, and comfort, if needed. Ideally, these should all be available at one stop, so multiple stops are not needed. Be sure to include these stops in your time estimates.
  + **Parking:** Whether there is a special parking area for buses near the event or destination, where it’s located, and who’s paying for it.
  + **Size and weight restrictions:** Whether your school bus will fit or is allowed in all areas where you intend to drive, including parking lots, underpasses, bridges, and streets.

Knowing your exact arrival time and location back at the school is critical so parents know when and where to pick up their children.

**Planning Tips**

The following are some tips for planning for an extracurricular trip:

* + Plan your routes in enough detail so that you or organizers can reasonably estimate the time needed.
  + Stay in close communication with trip organizers. Know who to call if you have questions, and exchange cell phone numbers with that person.
  + Include both a primary route and a secondary (backup) route in your plans; in case of a detour, unexpected delay, or closure on the primary route.
  + Become as familiar with the route as possible. Talk to other drivers who have used the route before. Drive the route in a car if possible. Call or go online to get information about current road closures and detours.
  + Build in time to ensure you have a full tank of fuel before the trip starts.
  + Know what to do and who to call if you have an emergency or the bus breaks down.
  + Keep in mind that many students and chaperones on an activity trip will be new to you and your bus. Tell them about your emergency evacuation procedures and other safety concerns before departing.

