

# 2019 OKLAHOMA SCHOOL BUS DRIVER MANUAL

TRAINING MANUAL FOR OKLAHOMA  
SCHOOL BUS DRIVER CERTIFICATION



OKLAHOMA  
Education

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# CHAPTER 1

## The School Bus Driver: Role, Responsibilities and Requirements

### INTRODUCTION

To become a school bus driver charged with the safe transportation of our children is not a quick or easy task. The role of school bus driver involves learning and safely performing many skills. Learning to operate a vehicle the size of a school bus is a difficult task involving knowledge of laws, regulations, visual and mechanical skills, judgments, decisions, and accurate responses. Your performance as a school bus operator is dependent on developing skills, acquiring necessary knowledge and maintaining a positive attitude. The responsibilities include caring for and protecting children. The requirements are designed to specifically allow for the selection of the right people to do this most important job.

### Certification Requirements

(Excerpts from OAC 210:30-5-8)

Below are the rules governing who can be granted a School Bus Driving Certificate in the State of Oklahoma. Verification of these qualifications will be kept on file at the employing school district.

- A. The employing school's Chief Administrative Officer or designee shall certify to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) that **each applicant submitted for a Standard Five-Year Certification:**
  - i. Is at least 18 years of age.
  - ii. Has successfully completed a school bus driver certification course approved by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. (70 O.S. § 9-118)
  - iii. Holds a valid Commercial Driver License (CDL) appropriate for the type of vehicle driven with the proper endorsements required by the Department of Public Safety.
  - iv. Has a health certificate on file signed by a medical provider per OAC 210:30-5-8 (6), and meets all vision requirements.
  - v. Has not been convicted, plead guilty or no contest to a felony during the last ten (10) years.
  - vi. Has passed a driving record check, and no certificate shall be issued to a person who within the preceding three years:
    - a. Has had a license suspended or revoked, canceled, or withdrawn pursuant to the Implied Consent Laws at 47 O.S. § 751 et seq.
    - b. Has a conviction for a violation of 47 O.S. § 11-902 which includes driving, operating or being in actual physical control of a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or any intoxicating drug.
    - c. Has been convicted or plead guilty to a violation of 47 O.S. § 761, operating a motor vehicle while impaired by consumption of alcohol.
    - d. Has been convicted of any municipal violation of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or operating a motor vehicle while impaired, or being in actual physical control of a motor vehicle while impaired.
    - e. Has had four (4) or more moving traffic violations (excluding parking tickets).

- B.** An emergency certificate may be issued to a driver who meets all of the previous certification requirements except (ii) Has successfully completed a school bus driver certification course approved by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. The emergency certificate will be good for up to one year, non-renewable by any school district. A standard certificate may be issued to the driver once the OSDE approved School Bus Driving Course has been successfully completed.

Although not technically required for certification, Federal regulations mandate that a driver pass a pre-employment drug test before a school can allow that person to drive a school bus. Once employed, the school will have to maintain the driver in a random drug and alcohol testing pool. These requirements are outlined in 49 CFR part 40. This is the section of federal regulation that spells out the drug and alcohol testing requirements for drivers of commercial vehicles.

**Substitute school bus drivers, and activity school bus drivers, shall meet the same requirements prescribed by the OSDE for a full-time route school bus driver.**

## **What Steps do I Need to Follow to Become a OSDE Certified School Bus Driver?**

Usually a person interested in driving a school bus needs only to contact a school about driving. Most schools that choose to hire you will guide you through the steps required to drive a school bus. The school cannot contract with a driver until the driver has received the OSDE School Bus Driving Certificate.

### **FIRST STEP: Obtain a Commercial Learners Permit with proper endorsements**

To become a certified school bus driver in Oklahoma, you must first obtain an appropriate Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Learner's Permit. To apply for a CDL Learner's Permit you must pass a series of knowledge tests supplied by Oklahoma Department of Public Safety at one of its examining stations.

The knowledge examination will consist of:

- Vision Test;
- Knowledge Tests including the Commercial Driver License general knowledge test, Passenger endorsement test (P), School Bus endorsement (S), and if you are going to operate a bus with air brakes, the air brake test.

Once you have successfully completed the written exam, you will be issued a Commercial Driver's License Learner's Permit (CLP). The CDL permit (CLP) is a credential that must be carried when driving a school bus. The CLP with P and S endorsement allows the holder to drive a school bus so long as they are accompanied by a fully licensed school bus driver. A permit holder may drive the school bus while other driver CDL candidates are on the bus, but not with public school students.

The CLP is valid for no more than 180 days from the date of issuance. During this time period, you will be required to complete all knowledge and skills testing. The permit may be renewed one time for an additional 180 days without requiring the permit holder to retake the general and endorsement knowledge tests.

The CLP holder is not eligible to take the skills test (pre-trip, basic skills, or on the road tests) for 14 days after the initial issuance of the CLP. It is expected that the CLP holder use this time to practice driving their vehicle with a fully licensed driver.

### **SECOND STEP: Complete the OSDE School Bus Driver Course**

Pupil transportation is an integral part of the overall education program, and provisions have been made for all school bus drivers to be properly trained for their job. The program for training school bus drivers is being carried out by the Transportation Director of the State Department of Education, in cooperation with the Department of Public Safety, local school superintendents, and other school officials.

Completion of the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) School Bus Driver Training Course is required to receive a Standard (not emergency) State Department of Oklahoma School Bus Driver Certificate. Schools are not allowed to hire drivers who do not obtain and maintain this credential.

School bus driving instructors will train you on specific duties and responsibilities of driving a school bus for an accredited school in the State of Oklahoma. They will also provide you with instruction that will help you prepare for the CDL skills test.

The State Department of Education School Bus Driver Course may be completed in two ways:

- Successfully complete 19 hours equivalent instruction either in a traditional class or OSDE approved online course, 5 hours of behind the wheel training with an OSDE certified instructor and be able to demonstrate competency operating a school bus. Many larger districts employ their own qualified trainers, and most of the State's career tech centers frequently offer these courses.
- Successfully complete the online course provided at [www.oaptonline.org](http://www.oaptonline.org). Please know that this course will not provide the 5 hours of behind-the-wheel training. You will need to seek a SDE bus driver trainer to meet all requirements.

If you do not complete the CDL skills examination within one (1) year of completion of the OSDE driver training course you will need to retake the course.

### **THIRD STEP: Complete the CDL Skills Examination**

When taking the skills examination, bring the following documents to the test site:

- A valid driver's license (if you did not surrender it to obtain the CDL learner's permit);
- A valid Oklahoma CDL learner's permit;
- The current vehicle registration card for the bus being driven;
- A valid insurance card or proof of financial responsibility for the bus being driven; and
- A valid CDL of the person accompanying you. Their license must qualify them to drive the bus you are using. If it is a full size air brake bus the driver must have a Class B CDL with P and S endorsements and Air Brake qualification.
- The skills examination will be administered by a state-certified Oklahoma CDL examiner at an approved examining site.

The safety (Pre-Trip) inspection is the first part of the skills examination. It will test your ability to evaluate your vehicle's compliance with accepted safety standards. An inability to correctly perform the air brake check will result in automatic failure of this section of the test. More information on the pre-trip section of the exam can be found in the Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver's Manual.

The basic skills test is the second part of the skills examination. The test will be comprised of a selection of the following exercises:

- Sight-side Parallel Park
- Conventional-side Parallel Park
- Straight Line Backing
- Off-set Backing (Right or Left)
- Alley Dock

More information on the basic skills section of the exam can be found in Section 12 of the Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver's Manual.

The road test is the third part of the skills examination. The examiner will be evaluating your performance on the following;

- Student loading and unloading
- Railroad crossing
- Forward Stop
- Turns (right and left)
- Negotiating Intersections
- Driving on the Expressway
- Straight Driving in Urban or Rural settings
- Handling a road side stop/start
- Executing lane changes
- Approaching and handling a curve
- General Driving

At all times during the test, you must drive in a safe and responsible manner, wear your safety belt, obey all traffic signs, signals, and laws and complete the test without an accident or moving violation.

More information about the On-road section of the exam can be found in chapter 13 of the Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver's Manual.

## Obtaining the Certificate

Once all of the steps are completed, and all qualifications are documented and on file at the employing school, a school official can apply for the OSDE School Bus Driver Certification.

The certification is required before a school board can enter into a contract. The law states that, "No board of education shall have authority to enter into any written contract with a school bus driver who does not hold a valid Oklahoma School Bus Driver Certificate issued by the State Board of Education, authorizing said bus driver to operate a school bus in Oklahoma." (70 O.S. § 9-118)

It is important for Oklahoma school bus drivers to remember they are hired by the local school's board of education with the recommendation of the district superintendent. The district superintendent is responsible for their district's overall student transportation program.

School bus drivers should understand and honor the conditions of their employment and work within the policy formulated.

## Your Role and Responsibilities

Before you get behind the wheel of a school bus, you need to understand your role as a bus driver and your responsibilities for your passengers, your school system, your community and your fellow workers.

## You Are Responsible

**The primary responsibility of a school bus driver in this state is to transport the students to and from school in the safest possible manner.** Additionally, you are responsible for how you drive and for how you feel about your students, coworkers, and position. You need to have a positive attitude, if you want to be a safe and successful school bus operator who enjoys your work, you should like working with and being with students. If you don't, you will find it hard to keep a positive attitude about your position as a school bus operator.

## Attitude

School bus operators must keep a positive attitude while they are driving. They must also learn to recognize and manage their moods. They must recognize when they are angry, and be aware of and modify any tendencies to drive more aggressively.

The mood of a driver not only affects their driving, it also affects those around them, especially the students on the bus. Because of this, it is important for drivers to keep a positive attitude. A positive attitude also helps the driver make allowances for the poor attitude and driving of other motorists. When other drivers perform poorly, the school bus driver must not react emotionally which can result in a collision. School bus drivers must be mentally alert at all times. They must keep their concentration on what they are doing.

## You Are Important

You, the professional school bus driver, are a very important person with an important part to play in the educational system. In many instances, you are the first representative of the school system to meet the children in the morning and the last to see them at night. You are in a position to have a large influence on a child's attitude toward school. Whereas teachers get to work closely with a student for a year, many school bus drivers get to watch students "grow up" on their bus. This provides drivers with an opportunity to notice when students are doing well, and when they are not. Drivers may be able to recognize and communicate concerns about students that others might not.

## You Are a Member of the Safety Team

Safety starts with you. Perhaps no other area of educational operations demands more responsibility for student welfare than the transportation of students in buses on public highways, streets and roads. The driver is a very important member of the safety team, which includes students, parents, teachers, school administrators, and law enforcement officials. As a key member of this team, you must constantly strive to improve operational safety and efficiency.

A school bus driver must stay focused on their driving and the safe loading and unloading of their student passengers. Failure to devote full time and attention to driving may result in an accident and/or injuries. Eating/drinking snacks while driving a bus is also an unsafe practice. Headphones/blue-tooth devices and cell phone use is prohibited (including texting/playing with apps) per the State Department of Education. Mobile data terminals/tablets may be mounted in the driver's area, but may not be used (interacted with) while the bus is in motion. **In all situations, "SAFETY FIRST" must be the slogan for every school bus driver.**

## You Have Professional Obligations

As a school bus driver you have the obligation to keep up with changes in the regulations and standards of the industry. You can do this by consulting supervisors and lead drivers about changes. You can also check with the Student Transportation Section of the State Department of Education. It is also important for you to keep up with changes regarding your responsibilities as a CDL holder.



# CHAPTER 2

## Preventive Maintenance

### INTRODUCTION

The driver is an important part of a successful maintenance program. Drivers are the most intimately acquainted with the operation and performance of their equipment/vehicle, so they should be the first to recognize when something is wrong with their bus. The pre- and post-trip inspections are the first step in establishing a long life for the equipment. Please keep in mind that state and federal laws require a pre-trip inspection by the driver. OSDE rules also require a post-trip inspection after every route or trip when students are transported.

The most important aspect of traffic safety for yourself and others who share the road with you **is that you personally inspect your vehicle**. A vehicle defect found during an inspection could save you problems later. You could have a breakdown on the road that will cost you time and money, or even worse, a collision could be caused by the defect.

**Pre-trip Inspection** — A pre-trip inspection will help you find problems that could cause a collision or breakdown. This will be outlined in detail later in the chapter.

**Trip Inspection** — While not technically an inspection, being aware of trouble signs and symptoms while you are driving can help you keep your bus in good working order. For safety while operating the vehicle:

- Watch gauges for signs of trouble.
- Use your senses to check for problems (look, listen, smell, feel).
- Check critical items when you stop:
  - Tires, wheels and rims
  - Brakes
  - Lights and reflectors

Remember all items in the bus must be secured in such a way that they do not become projectiles in a collision.

**Post-Trip Inspection and Report** — Conduct a post-trip inspection at the end of trip or route on each vehicle you operate. This may include completing a vehicle condition report listing any problems you find. The inspection report helps the transportation department know when the vehicle needs repairs. Drivers of school buses have another very important reason for conducting post-trip inspections. This step is crucial to determine if a child has fallen asleep on the bus. A child left on a bus is a very dangerous situation. Performing the post-trip inspection with a check for sleeping children is required.

### PRE-TRIP INSPECTION

Before starting out, the driver must be satisfied that the motor vehicle is in safe operating condition. If the last vehicle inspection report notes any deficiencies, the driver should review and sign, noting that necessary repairs have been completed. The “rule of thumb” is that if the bus came equipped with an item, the item should be present and in working order. A complete and thorough pre-trip inspection will usually take a driver 15 minutes and should be done every time the bus leaves for any trip. Remember, safety is the most important reason you inspect your vehicle: safety for yourself, your students, and for other users of the road.

Below is a scripted approach to performing a pre-trip inspection on your bus. It is very difficult to completely explain the proper procedure for a pre-trip inspection. Although an attempt is made here to provide thorough instructions for performing a pre-trip inspection this should not be considered a substitute for instruction from a school bus driving instructor. More information about the pre-trip procedure can be found in the Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver’s Manual.

**Approach** – Approach the bus from the front. You will be looking for any indication that something is wrong with your vehicle. Look specifically for;

- Is the bus leaning to one side? This could be the result of a broken spring, shock absorber, or flat tire. If the bus is leaning, investigate further to determine the cause.
- Are there puddles under the bus? If so, look to determine if the bus is leaking any type of fluid such as coolant, motor oil, transmission fluid, or power steering fluid.
- Are there any branches or debris stuck in the axles?

**Front of Bus** – Develop a routine for your pre-trip inspections. Do it the same way each time. Have a logical routine. For the front of the bus, begin at the top of the bus and work down. This will help make sure all critical elements are inspected.

- Check the condition and operation of all lights and lenses. It is the purpose of the pre-trip inspection to verify that all lenses are clean, properly colored, not broken and securely fastened. This includes the 3 clearance lights, 2 red and 2 yellow loading lights, turn signals, and headlights.)
- Verify that all reflectors and reflective tape are securely mounted and is not missing.
- Check the condition of the windshield. Confirm that the windshield is clean, not cracked or broken and that it is not covered with stickers or other things that may impair the vision of the driver.
- Check the wipers. They should be securely mounted. The blades should be soft and pliable and not be dry-rotted.
- Check the mirrors. They should be securely mounted, clean and not broken.
- Check the hood latch. It should fasten securely and unfasten easily. It should not be dry-rotted
- Check the crossover mirrors. They should be securely mounted, clean and not broken.
- Check the bumper. It should be secure.
- Check the crossing gate (if equipped). It should be securely mounted and not broken.

**Engine Compartment (hood up)** – After inspecting the front of the bus raise the hood to continue your inspection.

- Check the fluid levels. Check the oil and power steering fluid levels by taking out the fluid level sticks, wiping them off and reinserting them. Remove once more and read for the fluid level. Add fluid if indicated. (If the bus has hydraulic brakes check the brake fluid at this time) Do the same for the transmission except do it when the engine is warm and running.
- Check the coolant fluid level and the wiper fluid. Both should have securely mounted, undamaged reservoirs with external indicators marking when coolant or wiper fluid is needed.
- Check hoses. The heater, radiator and power steering hoses should be securely fastened, not dry rotted and not be leaking.
- Check for spare fuses. These are usually near the firewall on the left fender well.
- Check the wires. The wires should be wrapped with a protective cover. They should not be rubbing together or in contact with hot engine parts. The wires should pass through grommets as they pass through the fire wall.
- Check the Air Compressor and the power steering pump. Both should be mounted securely. They should not have any cracks or leaks. If they are belt driven, the belt should not have more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of play, and the belt should not be torn or frayed.
- Check the Water pump. Make sure it is securely fastened and it is not leaking. Make sure the belt has no more than  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch of play and that it is not torn or frayed.

- Check the Steering Assembly. Make sure the boot is not dry rotted. The steering rod should be secure. It should not be cracked or bent and should not have more than 1” of play. All bolts on the steering box should be present. It should be secure and not leaking. The Pittman Arm, Drag Link, Tie Rod and Tie Rod Ends should be securely mounted with no cracks and the cotter pins should be in place.
- Check the Suspension. Shocks should be fully extended, with no damage. None of the springs should be missing, shifted, welded or broken. U-Bolts should be secure. Spring hangers should not have any cracks or breaks or damaged bushings.
- Check the air brake components. Air lines should be mounted securely. They should not be frayed. You should not hear any leaks. The brake chamber should be securely mounted with no dents or cracks and no audible air leaks. The slack adjusters should not have any missing parts and the pushrod (on manual slack adjusters) should not move more than one inch when checked by hand, and the cotter pin should be in place.
- Check the Brakes (Drum Brakes). Check the drums for cracks, dents, welds or holes. Also check for loose or missing bolts. Check for contaminants such as debris or oil/grease. Brake linings (where visible) should not be worn dangerously thin. NOTE – on some brake drums, there are openings where the brake linings can be seen from outside the drum. For this type of drum, check that a visible amount of brake lining is showing.
- Brakes (Disc Brakes). Check the discs and linings in the same manner you would check for drum brakes.

## WHEELS

**Tires -Tread** - The front tires should have a tread depth of at least 4/32. Tire Condition - Check that tread is evenly worn and look for cuts or other damage to tread or sidewalls. There should be no bulges or cuts on the tires.

Also, make sure that valve caps and stems are not missing, broken, or damaged. Tire Inflation – Check for proper inflation by using a tire gauge, or inflation by striking tires with a mallet or other similar device. NOTE – Tires are not to be mismatched by size or type and recaps are not allowed on the steering axle.

- Rims. The rim should not be damaged or bent. They cannot have welded repairs.
- Hub Oil Seals/Axle Seals – See that hub oil/grease seals and axle seals are not leaking and, if wheel has a sight glass, confirm that the oil level is adequate
- Lug Nuts – Check that all lug nuts are present, free of cracks and distortions, and show no signs of looseness such as rust trails or shiny threads. Make sure all bolt holes are not cracked or dis-torted.

### **Right (Door) Side of the Bus (You will need to do an under bus inspection to complete the right side inspection)**

- Mirror – The mirror should be clean, mounted securely and not broken.
- Service Door – The door should open and close freely. The hinges should be secure and not rusted. The seals should be soft and pliable, not dry-rotted. The glass should be clean, not broken and mounted securely.
- Windows – The windows should be mounted securely and not broken. Emergency Exit Windows should be clearly identified and marked with reflective tape.
- Lights – The running lights, entrance light, turn signal, and reflector should be securely mounted, properly colored, clean and not broken or damaged.
- Fuel Door – The fuel door should close and open easily, the opening should be free of debris or other foreign material.
- Fuel Cap – The fuel cap should be tight and secure.
- Fuel Tank – The fuel tank should not have holes, excessive rust, or leaks. It should be securely mounted. The protective cage should be mounted securely and not damaged. No fuel lines from it should be leaking.
- Drive Shaft – The drive shaft should not be bent or broken and should be secure. Safety hangers should be in place and securely mounted. U-Joints should be free of any foreign objects.

- Exhaust – The exhaust system should be free from cracks, dents, holes, soot and rust. The system should be mounted securely.
- Frame – The frame, cross members, and floors should be free from cracks and unauthorized welds or other damage.
- The Rear Suspension – The inspection of the rear suspension should follow the inspection criteria of the front suspension system. This includes the springs, spring hangers, and U-bolts. If the suspension uses air bags, inspect the condition of the bags. They should be securely attached, free from dry-rot and not leaking.
- The Rear Brakes – The inspection of the rear brakes should follow the inspection criteria of the front brake system. This includes the brake chambers, air hoses, drums and brake linings.
- The Rear Wheels – The inspection of the rear wheels should follow the inspection criteria of the front wheels. This includes the rims, tires, axle seals and lug nuts. The rear wheels may use Spacers or Budd Spacing. Make sure the spacers are not bent, damaged, or rusted through. Also make sure they are spaced evenly. Make sure there is no debris between the dual wheels.

### The Rear of the Bus

- Exhaust Pipe – The exhaust pipe should not extend more than 1” beyond the bumper.
- Lights – Make sure all lenses are clean, properly colored, not broken and securely fastened. This includes the 3 clearance lights, 2 red and 2 yellow loading lights, turn signals, 2 big brake lights, 2 small brake lights, 2 turn signals, 2 back up lights and tag light. Additionally, check the strobe light if equipped.
- Reflectors - Verify that all reflectors and reflective tape are securely mounted and properly colored
- Emergency Door – The rear emergency door should be clearly identified and marked with reflective tape. It should open and close freely, and it should latch and unlatch easily from the outside. The hinges should be free from excessive rust. The glass should be clean, not broken and secure.

### The Left Side of the Bus (Driver Side)

The inspection of the left side of the bus will be done in the same way as the right side of the bus for all parts that are present on both sides. The left side inspection will include the stop arm.

- Stop Arm – The stop sign should be clean and not damaged. The lenses on the lights should be clean, properly colored, not broken and securely fastened.
- Battery Box – The battery box should be securely closed and not damaged.

### Inside the Bus

- Step Well – The step treads should not be cracked or broken and should not have any holes. The hand rail should be securely fastened and not broken. The step well light should be clean, not damaged and securely mounted.
- Emergency Equipment – Check the bus for proper emergency equipment. This includes spare electrical fuses (if equipped, these may be located under the hood), three red reflective triangles, and a properly charged and rated fire extinguisher, an emergency first aid kit, and a body fluid clean up kit.
- Driver’s Seat – The driver’s seat should be secure not broken. The seat belt should be free from tears, adjust easily and latch correctly. Seat belt cutter should be within reach of the driver while the driver is seated with seat belt attached.
- Mirrors – Mirrors should be adjusted to provide maximum coverage around the bus. Student mirror should be secure, clean and not broken. Adjust it to maximize your view of the student area.
- Windshield – The windshield should be secure, clean and not broken. There should be no illegal stickers, signs or other material on the windshield.

- Dashboard switches – Make sure all switches work. This includes the Noise Kill Switch (if equipped), front and rear heater (all speeds), defroster (all speeds), windshield wiper and wind-shield washer, fans, and crossing arm.
- Wipers and Washers – Check that the wipers operate smoothly (inspection of the arms and blades happened outside). Washers must operate correctly if the vehicle is equipped with them.
- Lights – Make sure all lights work. This includes the dashboard indicator lights for the 8 loading and unloading lights, turn signals, emergency flashers and high beam headlight, and the stop sign. Confirm that all the exterior loading lights, clearance lights, turn signals, back up lights, and brake lights are operating. Also confirm that the strobe light works if equipped.
- Interior lights – Make sure all of the dome lights work.

### **Air Brake Check (Air Brake Equipped Vehicles Only)**

To begin the air brake check use wheel chocks if the bus is parked on an incline. This process will make sure that all safety devices operate correctly.

- With a fully-charged air system, typically at 120 psi, turn the engine off but turn the key on, chock the wheels, release (push in) the parking brake button and time the air pressure drop. After the initial drop, the rate of pressure loss should not be more than 2 psi per minute for school buses.
- Fully apply the foot brake and hold it in for one minute. After the initial loss in pressure, the rate of pressure loss should not exceed 3 psi in one minute.
- Begin fanning off the air pressure by rapidly applying and releasing the foot brake. Low air warning devices (buzzer, light, flag) should activate before air pressure drops below 60 psi.
- Continue to fan off the air pressure. At approximately 20 to 40 psi the parking brake valve should close (pop out). This should activate the spring brakes.
- Turn the engine on. In a dual air system the pressure should rise from 85 psi to 100 psi in 45 seconds at 1200 rpm.
- With the engine on and the parking brake engaged, check that the parking brake will hold the vehicle by gently trying to pull forward with parking brake on.
- Accelerate the bus to 5 mph and apply the brakes normally. Check to see if the bus pulls to one side or the other. Also check for any delayed stopping action.

### **Hydraulic Brake Check**

- With the engine on and the parking brake engaged, check that the parking brake will hold the vehicle by gently trying to pull forward with parking brake on.
- With the engine running, apply the foot brake and hold for five seconds. The pedal should not move (lose pressure) during those five seconds.
- If equipped with a hydraulic brake reserve system, with the key in the off position, depress the brake pedal and listen for the sound of the reserve system electric motor turning on.
- Check that the warning buzzer and light is off.
- Check the proper operation of the foot brake by moving the vehicle forward slowly at about 5 mph and applying the brake firmly.

### **Continue the Interior Check**

- Oil Pressure Gauge – Confirm that the oil pressure gauge is working. Make sure the gauge shows increasing or normal pressure. If the vehicle is equipped with an oil temperature gauge, it should begin to gradually rise to a normal operating range.

- Temperature Gauge – Confirm that the temperature gauge is working. It should begin to climb to and then stabilize at the normal operating range.
- Ammeter, Voltmeter – The gauges should show the alternator and/or generator charging.
- Speedometer – The speedometer should not be obscured or obviously broken.
- Steering Play – Power steering equipped vehicles: With the engine running, play should not exceed 10 degrees (or about 2 inches on a 20-inch wheel) before the front left wheel barely moves when you turn the steering wheel back and forth.
- Horn – Check that the horn is operational.
- Heater and Defroster – Check that the blower motors are working
- Seats – Make sure the seat frames are securely fastened to the floor. Make sure each seat cushion is securely fastened to the frame. Make sure the seats are not cut or torn in a way that exposes the flammable padding material.
- Emergency Exits – The emergency exit door, hatches and windows should open and close freely. The latches should open easily and shut firmly. The buzzer should sound when emergency exit opens with the key on.
- Aisles – All aisles should be clear.

**PROCEED only when the entire pre-trip is complete.**

## POST-TRIP INSPECTION

A post-trip inspection must be completed at the end of every route or activity. A proper post-trip inspection can catch problems before they become more serious, help identify the source of vandalism and protect children.

During the post-trip inspection a driver should walk their bus and;

1. Turn off all lights and accessories before stopping the engine.
2. Make sure all defects are written down on the daily report sheet.
3. Look for the following:
  - a. Sleeping students. (record on the post-trip report that you have completed the child check, if sleeping students are found report it to your supervisor immediately)
  - b. Articles left on the bus.
  - c. Open windows and doors (close windows and secure bus).
  - d. Mechanical/operational problems with the bus, with special attention to items that are unique to school buses – mirror systems, flashing warning lamps and stop signal arms.
  - e. Damage or vandalism.
4. Report any problems or special situations to your supervisor or school authorities.
5. Visually inspect exterior of bus as you depart. Mentally record the position and characteristics of the bus so that when you return will be able to tell if something is strikingly different about your bus.

Remember that many younger students may slip out of their seat and fall asleep on the floor of the bus. Because of this, a thorough search of the bus is necessary. Many districts have electronic de-vices that force a driver to the back of the bus every time the bus is shut down. Remember, just walking to the back of the bus to push a button is no guarantee you will find a student. Other districts are urged to use some system to assure that the driver has completed the child check at the end of each trip or route.

## Field Trip Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Inspection

Each driver is required by law to perform a pre-trip inspection on his or her vehicle before leaving on a field trip. The procedures for field trip pre/post-trip inspections are exactly the same as for a route bus.

## Daily Report Sheets

State School Board regulations require that a pre/post-trip inspection form be completed daily and retained on file for three months. It is very important these forms are properly completed and turned in.

- Fill out a Daily Report Sheet for your regular routes each day. Make sure to complete it fully and place it where specified by the district.
- If you discover something on your bus that needs immediate attention, write the problem on your District's designated form. If you don't write it down it won't get fixed.



# CHAPTER 3

## Danger Zones and Mirror Adjustment

### Danger Zones

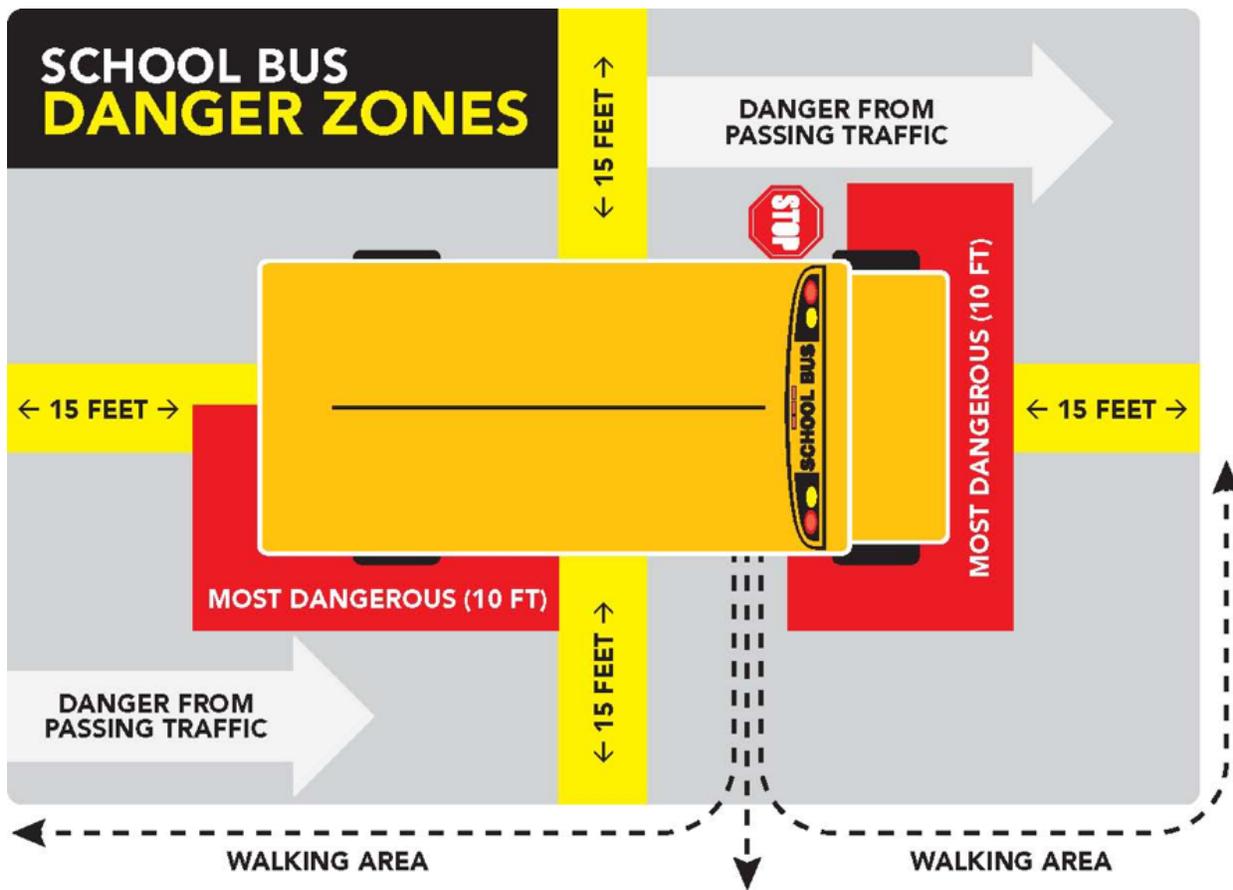
School bus drivers and the students they transport must be aware of the danger zone that extends 15 feet in all directions from the bus. This is the area where injuries and deaths can occur when students pass around and through the danger zone to load and unload.

This area around the bus is dangerous because the shape and size of the bus creates blind spots. The most dangerous blind spots are the areas directly in front of the rear wheels and the area just in front of the front bumper. These areas are hard to see and require special equipment and procedures to keep students safe.

Other danger zones include the left and right side of the school bus. In these areas traffic is a considerable hazard for students who are loading and unloading. Although traffic is required by law to stop when a school bus activates the red flashing lights and stop sign, this does not always happen. Since the driver is not in a position to make these drivers stop, the driver must use the mirror system to monitor traffic and then provide guidance to the students.

Although it is easy to see the danger reckless drivers pose to our students who are loading and unloading on our buses, the fact remains that the number of students killed by their own bus is about equal to the number of students killed by reckless drivers. This can happen when drivers overlook any step in their loading and unloading procedures.

Figure 3.1  
Danger zones surrounding the school bus



## The Bus Driver

The most important safety item on the bus is the driver. The driver makes sure the children are trained to cross the road and load safely. The driver watches out for reckless traffic and warns students when there is a problem. The driver monitors all students when they are loading and unloading and is diligent to make sure all students are safely away from the bus before proceeding. Without specialized mirrors this would be an impossible task.

Buses are equipped with extensive mirror systems. Not only do these systems help the driver monitor traffic, they also give drivers the ability to see if students are in the danger zones. For this system to work as designed, it must be in working order, properly adjusted and used properly. Proper inspection of the system is covered in the Pre-trip section of this manual. This section will deal with proper adjustment and use of the mirror system.

Although drivers are given an extensive mirror system to monitor students, traffic and hazards in the danger zone, it is always best to keep students out of this area from the beginning. To accomplish this, students must be taught to recognize the danger zone and avoid it as much as possible.

If students always wait for the school bus a safe distance from the roadway, wait on a signal from the driver that it is safe to cross the road, stay away from the rear of the bus, and walk far enough in front of the bus for the driver to see their shoes, students will be in much less danger.

## Mirrors

All school buses are equipped with a minimum of seven mirrors. These mirrors are designed to help the driver keep up with students, traffic and objects in and around the bus. They are specifically designed to provide visual access to the most dangerous areas around the bus. The mirrors must be adjusted correctly to help the driver monitor the danger zones correctly.

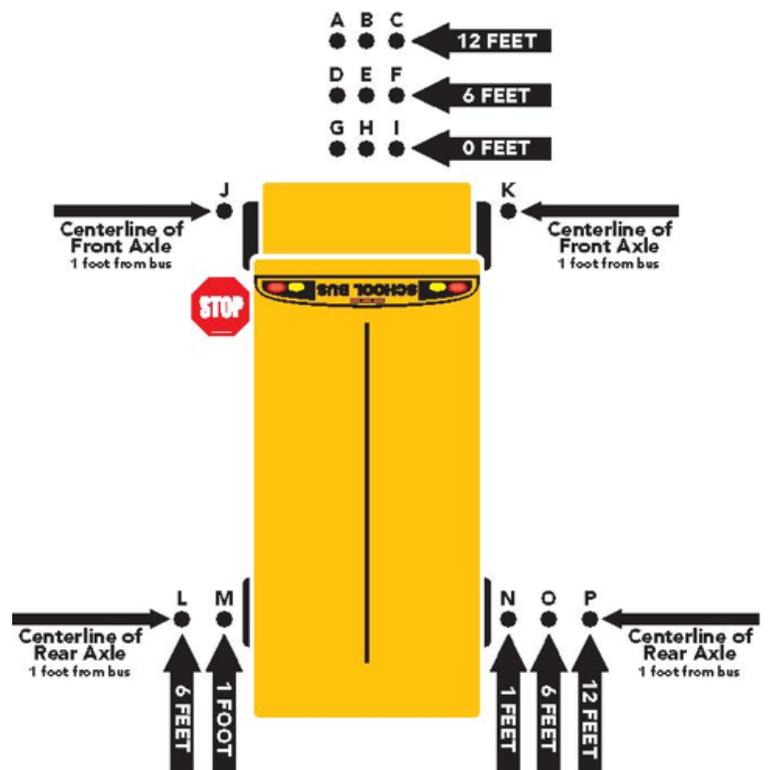
## Proper Adjustment Guidelines

The Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 111, sets the requirements for proper mirror adjustment on school buses. This standard is driver specific. In other words a driver that is much shorter than another may have to readjust mirrors to be compliant with the standard. To help illustrate the requirements for the safety standard a graphic of the Federal Field-of-View test has been included as Figure 3.2.

The Federal Field of View test uses cones placed at specific points around a school bus. By labeling the cones around the school bus this test will be provide an excellent reference point to help a driver make sure the mirrors are adjusted properly.

Following this graphic will be a description of proper adjustment for all school bus mirrors. Each description will reference Field-of-View Test cone placements. A driver is not expected to set up the Field-of-View test every time they readjust their mirrors, but drivers are expected know and follow the general principles of school bus mirror adjustment.

Figure 3.2  
Federal Field-of-View Test



FMVSS 111 – effective for school buses manufactured after December 1993

### Outside Left and Right Side Flat 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, check clearances and students on the sides and to the rear of the bus. 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 and could extend up to 400 feet depending on the length and width of the bus. Ensure that the mirrors are properly adjusted so you can see:

- 200 feet or 4 bus lengths behind the bus
- Along the sides of the bus
- The rear tires touching the ground

Figure 3.3 shows how both the outside left and right side flat mirrors should be adjusted. This would include cones L-P in the Federal Field of View Test. See Federal Field of View Illustration. The driver may need to lean forward to see cone P in the right side flat mirror.

### Outside Left and Right Side Convex Mirrors

The convex mirrors are located below the outside flat mirrors. They are used to monitor the left and right sides at a wide angle. They provide a view of traffic, clearances, and students at the side of the bus. These mirrors present a view of people and objects that does not accurately reflect their size and distance from the bus. You should position these mirrors to see:

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

Figure 3.4 shows how both the outside left and right side convex mirrors should be adjusted. This would include cones L-P in the Federal Field of View Test. See Federal Field of View Illustration.

### Outside Left and Right Side Crossover Mirrors

These mirrors are mounted on both left and right front corners of the bus. They are used to see the front bumper “danger zone” area directly in front of the bus that is not visible by direct vision, and to view the “danger zone” area to the left side and right side of the bus, including the service door and front wheel area. The mirror presents a view of people and objects that does not accurately reflect their size and distance from the bus. The driver must ensure that these mirrors are properly adjusted. Ensure that the mirrors are properly adjusted so you can see:

- The entire area in front of the bus from the front bumper at ground level to a point where direct vision is possible. Direct vision and mirror view vision should overlap.

Figure 3.3  
Left and right side flat mirrors

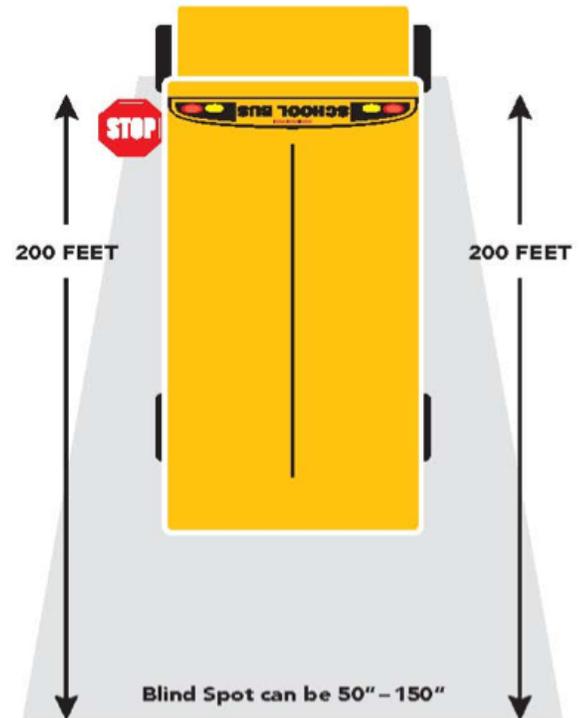
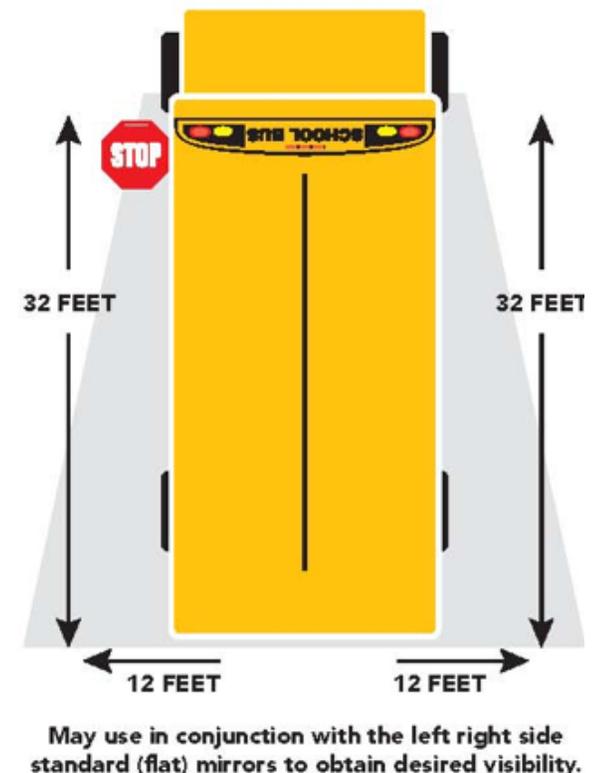


Figure 3.4  
Left and right side convex mirrors



- The right and left front tires touching the ground.
- The area from the front of the bus to the service door.
- These mirrors, along with the convex and flat mirrors, should be viewed in a logical sequence to ensure that a child or object is not in any of the danger zones.

Figure 3.5  
Left and right side crossover mirrors



Figure 3.5 illustrates how the left and right side crossover mirrors should be adjusted. This would include cones A-K in the Federal Field of View Test. See Federal Field of View Illustration.

When used together all cones in the Federal Field of Vision Test should be visible using the school bus mirror system. The only cones excluded from this requirement are those cones in front of the bus directly visible by the driver from their normal driving position.

### Overhead Inside Rearview Mirror

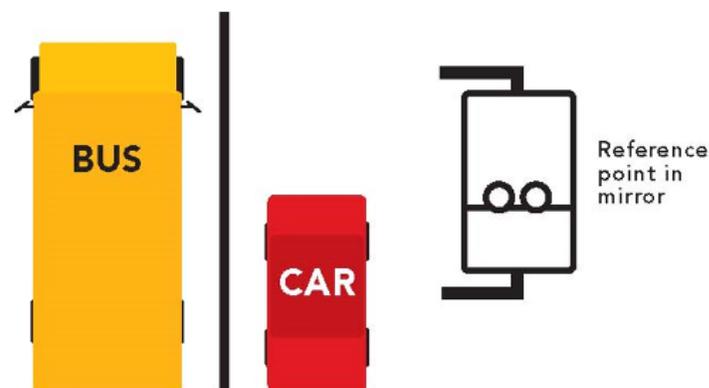
This mirror is mounted directly above the windshield on the driver's side area of the bus. This mirror is used to monitor passenger activity inside the bus. It may provide limited visibility directly in back of the bus if the bus is equipped with a glass-bottomed rear emergency door. There is a blind spot area directly behind the driver's seat as well as a large blind spot area that begins at the rear bumper and could extend up to 400 feet or more behind the bus. You must use the exterior side mirrors to monitor traffic that approaches and enters this area. You should position the mirror to see:

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

### A Rearview Mirror Technique for Passing Vehicles Safely

If you have ever been driving on a two-lane road at night in the rain, and had to pass a car or truck, you may have looked into the rearview mirror and wondered, "Is it safe to move back into my lane?" Figure 3.6 shows a way to estimate when it is safe to proceed back into your lane of traffic. For this demonstration you will need a bus, car, two people, and water-based marker.

Figure 3.6  
Left and right side crossover mirrors



1. Park a school bus in an open area such as a parking lot.
2. Park a car three (3) feet away, to the right of the bus. The car's driver-side rear bumper should be even with the bus's right rear bumper (car lights off).
3. Sitting in the driver's seat of the bus, look into the right rearview mirror and find the headlights of the car.
4. Direct someone outside the bus to mark the exact spot on the bus mirror where the bus driver sees the car's headlights (car lights off). Using a water-based marker, have the person to draw a horizontal line across the mirror at that spot. This is the reference point for the bus driver.
5. The bus driver should look at the line on the mirror, while a second person slowly drives the car forward. The bus driver will see that the car's headlights will move above the reference point (line on the mirror) as the car approaches and is side-by-side to the front of the bus.

# CHAPTER 4

## Maneuvering a School Bus

### Backing the School Bus

Driving in reverse/backing any vehicle is a risky and dangerous maneuver even under the best conditions. Backing a school bus should be avoided unless there is absolutely no other alternative. Improperly backing a school bus is a common cause of accidents involving a school bus. The contributing factors for “backing” accidents in a school bus are:

- The size of the bus
- The driver’s limited vision causing “blind spots”
- The driver not following proper techniques for backing/driving in reverse

The limited view from the driver’s seat may create as much as a 45-foot blind spot behind a bus moving in reverse. Most school bus backing accidents are preventable when the proper safety procedures are followed, and the driver has designated an assistant.

To safely back a bus when circumstances require it, the bus driver must use the following safety procedures required both in the bus and outside of the bus:

1. Assure there is a **clear sight distance of at least 500 feet before** proceeding with a turnabout.
2. **Before the bus moves**, designate a passenger to be the inside assistant. Direct him/her to walk to the back window and look behind the bus. The assistant must speak loudly to advise the bus driver of any hazards behind or near the back of the bus (people, structures, animals, other vehicles, poles, trees). A dependable student chosen at the discretion of the driver is acceptable. The bus driver may also choose to do a visual inspection, but always have the inside assistant continue to watch behind the bus while it is backing.
3. The bus driver must **assure that all student passengers are inside the bus before** backing the bus during any turnabout maneuver.
4. **On school grounds avoid backing a school bus if at all possible.** If backing a school bus on school property is absolutely required, **ALWAYS** designate an adult outside the bus to visually check all areas around the bus. Have the outside assistant safely direct the bus driver both verbally and with hand motions. *Again, never back a bus on school grounds unless it is absolutely necessary.*
5. Always turn on the bus’s four-way hazard warning lights before backing/driving in reverse. The light switch is usually on the steering column, similar to a car.

### The Turnabout Maneuver

There are times when the nature of a school bus stop will require a school bus to complete a turnabout maneuver. This could be caused by the lack of an outlet on the on the road where a school bus stop is located or by route efficiency considerations. In each of these cases it should be the transportation supervisor who approves regularly scheduled route turnabouts. At other times road closings or emergency situations could prevent a school bus driver from completing their route as scheduled. In these situations a turnabout may be necessary for a school bus driver to complete their route. In situations like this it is ideal for school bus drivers to contact their supervisor about the situation by radio or cell phone. If cell phone use is required, make sure to follow all local district policies and state and federal laws.

A *turnabout* maneuver is usually conducted at an intersection of two roads/streets, or at an intersection of a road and a private driveway. When performing a turnabout always back the bus from a primary road onto a secondary road.

A *primary road* is one on which traffic has the right-of-way. A secondary road usually has traffic control devices such as a stop or yield sign. If the intersection is a public road and a private driveway, the public road is the primary road. When completing a turnabout maneuver, the driver should remember the Oklahoma traffic law concerning backing a vehicle on a public road. A vehicle may be backed only as far as is necessary to enter the proper lane.

Remember, a **bus driver should never back the bus across a lane of traffic.**

### Turnabout from a Primary Road

To complete a turnabout from a primary road, a driver should reduce the speed of the bus to less than ten miles per hour, check for traffic in and approaching the intersection. When safe, proceed cautiously through the intersection. Once the bus has passed through the intersection, the driver should bring the bus to a complete stop in the right lane of traffic with the rear of the bus clearing the intersection. When the backing portion of the maneuver is completed, the bus must remain stopped until the driver's assistant is safely seated. See Figure 4.1.

**It is illegal for a driver to put a school bus in motion when any person is standing in an aisle.**

When the helper has been seated, the driver may select the proper gear, check traffic on the roadway, signal for a left turn, and when traffic permits, turn left to proceed.

Figure 4.1

Turnabout from a primary street

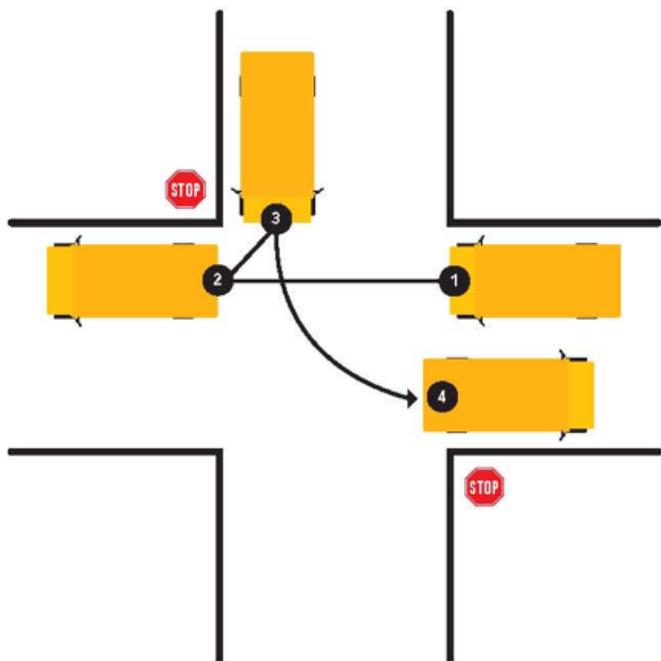
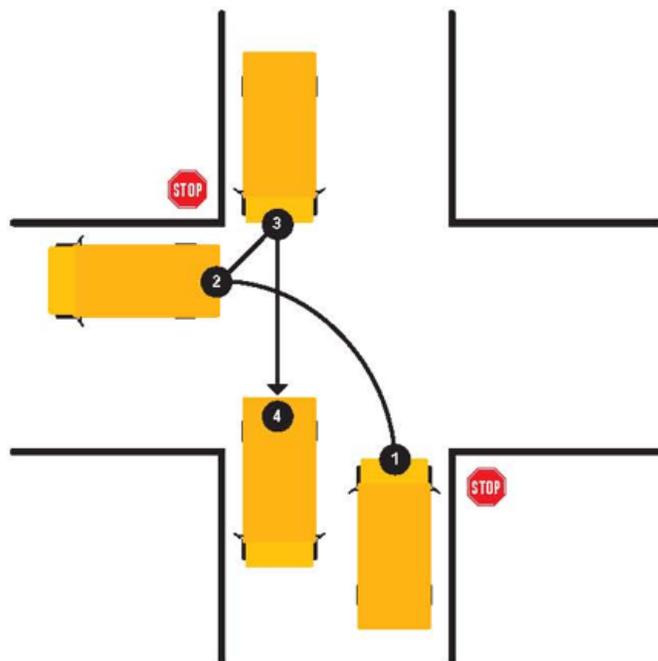


Figure 4.2

Turnabout from a secondary street



### Turnabout from a Secondary Road

When a driver approaches an intersection in which a complete turnabout must be made, and the street is regulated by a traffic sign, the driver should recognize they are on a secondary road. The driver should then reduce speed, signal a left turn, and obey the traffic sign. If there is no traffic present, the driver may then turn left and bring the bus to a complete stop after clearing the intersection. See Figure 4.2.

After asking a helper to go to a rear seat of the bus to assist, the driver can shift to reverse and await backing instructions.

The backing portion of the maneuver will be conducted in the same manner as in the preceding turnabout. When backing is completed and the helper is seated, the driver may select the proper gear, wait for traffic to clear and proceed on the route.

## Tail Swing

Tail swing occurs when the rear of a vehicle swings out in the opposite direction that the bus is traveling. For example, if a school bus is attempting to turn right the rear of the bus will swing outside the arc traveled by the rear wheels. This swing can be as much as 3 feet on some buses. This means that on buses with the potential for a large tail swing, the driver could accidentally hit another car, sign, pole or even pedestrian while executing a turn. Because of this bus drivers must understand the factors that affect tail swing and some basic strategies to monitor it. See Figure 4.3.

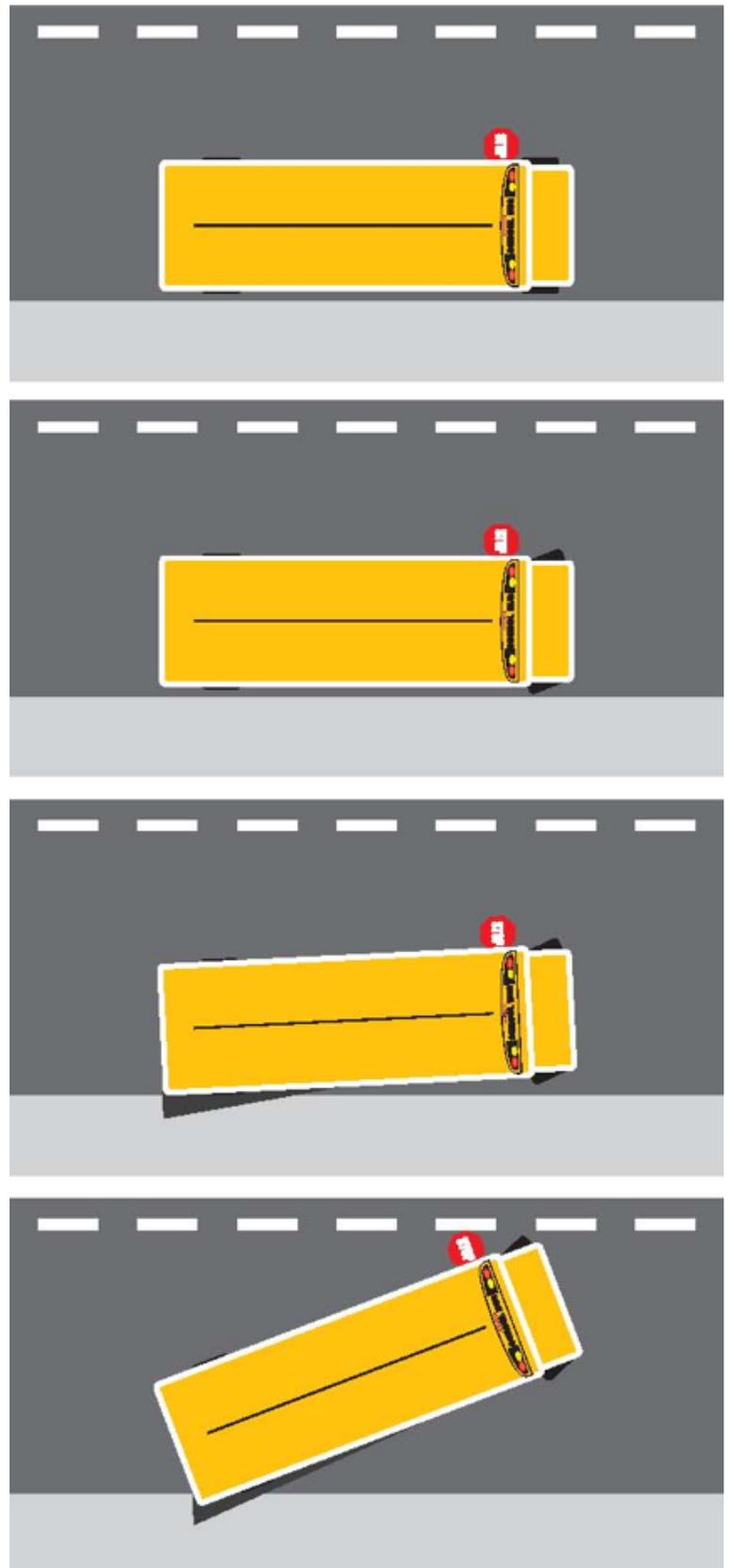
The tail swing potential of a school bus is determined by the amount of bus that extends behind the rear axle. The greater the extension behind the rear axle, the greater the potential tail swing will be. Another factor that affects tail swing is the radius of the turn. The tighter the turn, the greater the tail swing.

When school bus drivers are making turns they must remember that when the front part of the bus goes right, the back part will go left, and vice versa. This means school bus drivers should not only monitor the right side mirror for curb clearance, but they should also check the left side mirror for obstacles that could be struck with tail swing. Most instructors agree there should be a check of the left side mirror on a right hand turn as the bus begins the turn and another check about halfway through the turn. A similar strategy of checking the right mirror should be practiced on left turns.

Drivers should be mindful of traffic approaching the bus when the bus is making a right turn. If drivers of other vehicles attempt to pass the bus they may be surprised by the bus's tail swing and cause a collision.

Similar precautions need to be taken when the bus makes left hand turns. When making left hand turns near a curb the driver should be aware of mail boxes, stop signs, and pedestrians that may be struck by tail swing.

Figure 4.3  
School bus tail swing



## Turning the School Bus

Not all buses handle alike. A conventional school bus with a longer wheel base will turn differently than a transit style school bus with a shorter wheel base. A bus with a longer wheel base will start to turn later than a bus with a shorter wheel base. Drivers need to practice in each type of bus they drive.

Before driving any school bus, the driver should make sure the mirrors of the bus are adjusted properly for them. Drivers should orient themselves to the bus they are about to drive by carefully checking where blind spots are for that particular bus. Check to see how far forward and backward you must rock in your seat to see around all blind spots caused by mirrors and other obstacles.

When turning a school bus, the set up for the turn is the most critical part of the whole maneuver. A proper set up will allow a driver to make a perfect turn. In a perfect turn the entire bus will clear the curb at the corner and the bus will stay in its own lane of traffic as much as possible. Running the rear wheels of the vehicle over curbs and sidewalks is dangerous and may damage the tires or suspension of your bus.

The first question you should ask before making a turn is: Can I make it? If you don't think you can, don't try. If you get into the turn and decide you can't make it, stop. On narrow streets, move well into the intersection before starting your turn. If the space is tight, remember that it is usually better to use extra space on the road you are entering than extra space on the road you are leaving. In other words, you may have to move over the center line of the street you are entering. You must be extremely careful if this is necessary. Use your mirrors to make sure that smaller vehicles like motorcycles and bicycles are not moving up on the right side of your bus. See figure 4.4.

If you decide you can make it, follow the steps below.

This example is for a right turn. See figure 4.5.

1. Move into the far right-hand lane.
2. Turn on your turn signal.
3. Check all mirrors for traffic surrounding the bus.
4. Slow to 10 mph or less.
5. Put your hands in the correct turning position
6. Check that you are 4 feet from the curb or parked cars.
7. Keep your wheels straight.
8. Check all mirrors for pedestrians and other vehicles before starting your turn.
9. When you can see straight down the curb line of the lane you are turning into, turn your steering wheel into the full-lock position.
10. As you begin to turn, check your left side mirror for tail swing.
11. Check tail swing again in the middle of the turn.
12. Make adjustments (e.g., straighten the wheel, slow down).
13. Stop if you are about to come into contact with a problem object.
14. Check right side mirrors and complete your turn keeping the full-lock position.
15. Straighten the front wheels.
16. Check all mirrors after you complete your turn.

Figure 4.4  
Right turn

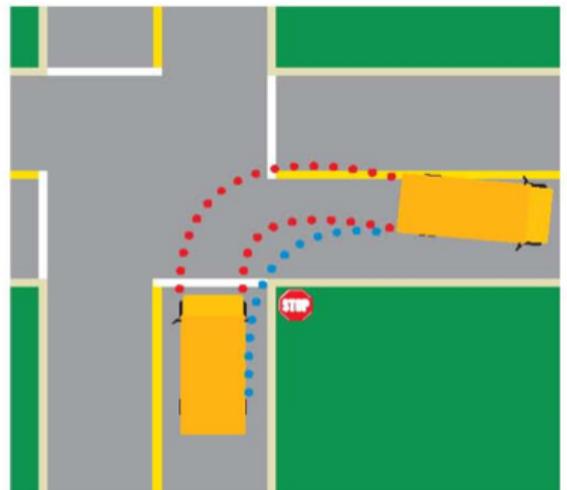
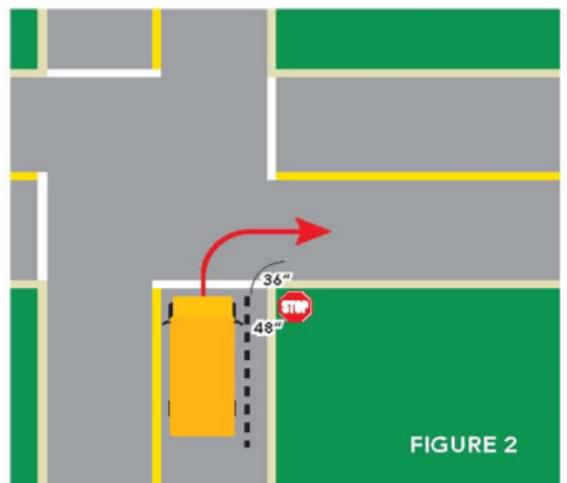


Figure 4.5  
Right turn

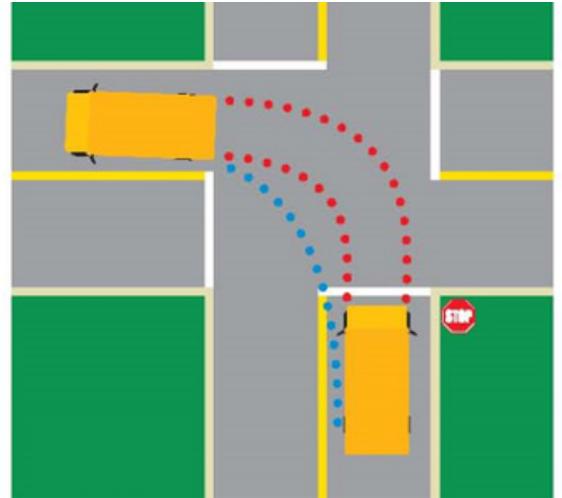


The next example is for a left turn. See Figure 4.6. Remember that in a left turn, the bus should stay in its own lane of traffic as much as possible. Do not try to change lanes until you have completed your turn and have determined it is safe to do so. Some larger buses may have a significant amount of tail swing. Be sure to use your mirrors to monitor your progress through the turn.

1. Turn on your turn signal.
2. Move to the far-left lane.
3. If there are two turning lanes, use the right lane of the two.
4. Check all mirrors for traffic surrounding the bus.
5. Slow to 10 mph or less.
6. Put your hands in the correct turning position.
7. Keep your wheels straight.
8. Bring the front of the bus to the center of the intersection before you start the turn. Don't move into the intersection until traffic in front of you has completed the turn.
9. Check all mirrors and blind spots for pedestrians and other vehicles before starting your turn.
10. Watch for problem objects.
11. As you begin to turn, check your right side mirror for tail swing.
12. Check tail swing again in the middle of the turn.
13. Make adjustments (e.g., straighten the wheel, slow down).
14. Stop if you are about to come into object with a problem object.
15. Complete your turn and check mirrors again.

In an August 7, 2014 article, *School Bus Fleet* reported that permitted left turns pose an “alarming” risk to pedestrians. Permitted left turns are different from protected left turns because the bus is not protected by an arrow allowing it sole use of the intersection. The study found that the busier the traffic in the intersection the less likely the driver is to shift their focus from the signal and traffic to look for pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Figure 4.6  
Left turn





# CHAPTER 5

## Student Loading and Unloading

### INTRODUCTION

The one area of student transportation in which a child is at the greatest risk of injury or death occurs when the bus is stopped for the purpose of picking up and discharging students. The two greatest risks of injury/death to student passengers are from (1) traffic around the bus, and (2) the bus itself.

More students are killed while getting on or off a school bus each year than are killed as passengers inside a school bus. As a result, knowing what to do before, during, and after loading or unloading students is critical. This chapter will give you specific procedures to help you avoid unsafe conditions which could result in injuries and fatalities during and after loading and unloading students. The information in this chapter is intended to provide a definitive set of actions. It is imperative that you learn and obey the procedures governing loading/unloading operations while you also maintain student behavior and follow proper driving procedures.

Drivers of all vehicles must be aware of the blind spots that are unique to the vehicle they are in. This is especially important when driving a school bus because the blind spots on a school bus are greatly increased due to the vehicle's large size. If a student enters a blind spot, the school bus driver may not be able to see the student from their driver's seat and possibly not even with the use of the bus's mirrors. Because of this extreme danger, the driver of a school bus must completely focus on their job during this crucial time. The most hazardous blind spot areas are:

- Directly in front of the bus
- Directly behind the bus
- Areas close to each side of the bus
- Especially all areas near the rear wheels

### The Danger Zone

The **Danger Zone** is the area immediately surrounding the school bus. It includes the 15 foot area immediately surrounding the bus. It is in this Danger Zone where children entering and exiting the school bus are at greatest risk of being hit by another vehicle, or accidentally run over by their own bus.

Bus drivers must be aware of the danger zones around their school bus when loading and unloading students. The chapter on mirrors and danger zones gives detailed information about how to adjust mirrors for maximum coverage. Always check your mirrors before you begin your route to make sure they are adjusted correctly.

### Tools for the Bus Driver

To help the driver accomplish the task of safely loading and unloading students, a professional school bus driver must use every tool available to keep their children safe.

### Education

The school bus driver's most effective tool for promoting school bus safety is education. Drivers who take advantage of a child's first step onto a school bus to teach them how to safely approach the bus stop, board the bus, behave on the bus, exit the bus and walk home safely, will have fewer accidents than drivers who leave these matters to chance. Although we may want teachers and parents to teach these skills to children, we cannot assume that someone else has done this for us.

## Warning Devices

School buses that transport children from home to school and from school to home must be painted National School Bus Yellow. This helps drivers identify the school bus quickly and hopefully encourages them to prepare for the frequent stops a school bus makes.

Additionally, school buses are equipped with a special eight-way light system. This system includes two amber flashing lights and two red flashing lights mounted on both the front and rear of the school bus. School buses also have a stop arm with a flashing stop sign mounted to the driver's side of the school bus.

Some buses in Oklahoma have a crossing control arm. The crossing control arm is a metal or plastic arm that extends out from the front bumper of the bus when loading or unloading. It reminds children to cross far enough in front of the bus to be seen easily by the driver. If the bus is equipped with a crossing arm it should be operational.

## Mirrors

School buses are equipped with an extensive mirror system to enable the driver to see the danger zones around the bus. The mirrors must be used "continuously" when loading and unloading students. See the chapter on Mirrors and Danger zones for more information on adjusting and using mirrors on the school bus.

## Condition and Use

Although the bus has numerous tools to help a driver keep children safe when loading or unloading, they will not protect students if they are not in operating condition. Because of this it is vital that the school bus driver complete the pre-trip inspection every day.

Not only is it important to make sure all of the devices on the school bus are in working order, it is also important to make sure they are used properly every time you load or unload students.

## Important Bus Stop Guidelines

As a school bus driver you should never change a school bus stop without the permission of your supervisor. Many factors are considered before determining a school bus stop to be safe. Although you may feel you are helping students when you alter a stop, you may be putting them in danger. Also, undocumented school bus stop changes can frustrate substitute drivers.

Students should wait a safe distance from the road at the school bus stop. Usually this is ten feet away from the roadway. Students who crowd the road to be first in line create a serious safety hazard. School bus drivers must frequently remind students to keep a safe distance from the road.

Students should be reminded to follow district policy for arriving at the school bus stop. Most districts expect students to be at the bus stop five to ten minutes before pick-up time. Remember that late arriving students can be a safety hazard. Many times late students will rush to get to the bus. This should be discouraged and students should be instructed to never run close to the bus. Students have been injured and killed when running across the street or tripping into the path of the bus. When the bus AND students are on time it is not only more efficient, it is also safer.

If a student is not at the bus stop when the bus arrives, the driver must exercise extreme caution. Early morning routes sometimes involve dark or low light making late arriving students difficult to see. In these situations the driver must be extra diligent to look for students running toward the bus.

A bus driver must not speed to make up lost time when running late. The driver's first priority is safety.

Districts are encouraged to develop signals for all bus drivers to use to signal students when they may load and unload, and when they should seek safety. Such signals can be misinterpreted by motorists. This could result in a vehicle going around the bus as students are attempting to load. Because of this, signals should be clearly directed at students in a way that won't allow motorists to think they are being signaled.

All children should be picked up and discharged from the right side of the road to eliminate the possibility of a child stepping directly into traffic when exiting the bus. This primarily refers to situations where a student lives on the left side of a one-way street. In these cases the bus should still pull to the right to discharge or pick up the student.

## Loading and Unloading Procedures

School bus drivers must warn traffic of their intentions, and allow motorists time and space to bring their vehicle to a complete stop. Motorists cannot be expected to stop for a bus picking up or discharging passengers unless a proper school bus stop area has been selected and the procedures for loading and unloading passengers have been followed.

The loading and unloading sections of this chapter will discuss proper use of the school bus's amber and red flashing light warning system. According to state law 47 O.S. 12-22, the red flashing light warning system is not to be used for any purpose other than loading and unloading students.

## LOADING PROCEDURES

### Approaching the School Bus Stop

Approach the school bus stop slowly and carefully. This is especially important for substitute drivers who may not be familiar with the route.

While you are approaching the bus stop, look for things that may not belong at there. This could include pedestrians, traffic, animals or objects.

Make a visual search to determine if any vehicles are passing the bus or attempting to stop. Also, observe the number of students at the bus stop and their positions.

Make visual checks continuously of the area around your bus. This should include using your mirrors to check for students approaching from the rear of the bus. Be especially mindful of students who may be running late and rushing to get to the stop.

Activate the flashing amber warning lights at least 200 feet or approximately 5-10 seconds before the school bus stop. Turn on the right turn signal about 100-300 feet or approximately 3-10 seconds before pulling over.

Check all mirrors to see if traffic is clear and it is safe for you to stop.

Continue to check all mirrors to monitor the danger zones for students, traffic and other objects. Move as far as possible to the right on the roadway. Approach the students with extreme care giving due consideration to surface on which you are stopping. When the road surfaces are hazardous due to weather or condition stop short of the bus stop by as much as 20 feet and then ease the bus carefully to the stop. Instruct students to wait a safe distance from the flow of traffic, especially in inclement weather.

### Stopping

The driver should pull the bus completely off the road if a secure pullout area is provided, or stay as far to the right as possible.

Make sure the place where you load does not have an obstacle such as a pothole that will be hazardous to the student.

Bring the bus to a full stop with the front bumper at least 10 feet away from the students at the designated stop. This forces the students to walk to the bus so you have a better view of their movements. The students should also be waiting for the bus 10 feet from the edge of the roadway. If students are not complying with this, remind them as they board the bus.

When stopped, set the parking (emergency) brake. There will be times when you are tempted to skip this step and just keep the service brake covered. This is not acceptable. The parking brake must be set at every school bus stop.

Place the transmission in neutral.

Activate the red flashing lights, side stop arm, crossing arm (automatically deactivating the amber flashing lights of the eight-way light system).

Check to confirm that all traffic is stopped, that students inside the bus have remained seated and those students outside the bus are awaiting the driver's commands. Once this is done, and only then, the service door may be opened and the students may be invited onto the bus.

## Loading

Since not all buses allow the driver to activate the red lights before the door opens, students must learn not to board the bus when the door opens. Instead, students should wait until the bus driver invites them to board the bus. When you, the driver, are ready for students signal the students to board the bus, but do not extend your hand out the window because drivers may misinterpret this as a sign to pass your bus. The driver should count the students while loading to ensure all students assigned to the stop have been picked up. Knowing the names of students is always advisable. If a student is missing, ask the other students where the student is.

The school bus driver should be able to see all students at all times. This is especially true when the students must cross the street to board the bus. Students must be taught to stay out of the Danger Zone as they cross the street. This means they should cross **at least 10 feet in front of the bus** or far enough in front of the bus for the driver to see the children's feet.

If you have a concern about street crossing conditions at a particular stop (poor sight distance, long crossing distance for the student, etcetera) let your transportation director/supervisor know immediately.

Students should know to look both ways before they cross the street to board a bus, even if they have been invited to cross the street and board the bus by the driver. The school bus driver should have a signal (continuously honking the horn) to alert children if a danger arises (an oncoming car that is not slowing). When the signal is given the children should know what to do – get out of the street quickly.

The driver must not tolerate crowding or pushing as students cross the street or board the bus. Students should board the bus slowly, in single file, using the handrail.

Once on the bus students should be seated according to district policy. Aisles should be unobstructed at all times. Students must not be sitting in each other's laps, no more than three (3) students can sit in a single bench seat, and students are not permitted to stand while the bus is in motion. Don't proceed until all students are seated.

**This step can save a child's life!** Check all mirrors, especially the crossover mirrors, for students. Make sure no one is running to catch the bus. If you cannot account for a student, secure the bus, take the key, and check around and underneath the bus.

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

- A. Closing the door
- B. Engaging the transmission
- C. Releasing the parking brake
- D. Turning on the left turn signal
- E. Checking all mirrors again
- F. Allowing congested traffic to disperse

When it is safe, and all students are seated move the bus to enter traffic flow and continue the route. Turn off the left turn signal.

## Unloading Procedures

When unloading students, the school bus driver must make sure students know to get out of the danger zone quickly and how to cross the street safely. Unload students only at properly designated school bus stops. Use the following procedures when unloading students at a bus stop.

### Approaching the Bus Stop

Approach the school bus stop slowly and carefully. This is especially important for substitute drivers who may not be familiar with the route.

As you approach the bus stop, look in your mirrors to check traffic conditions. Remember to **continually** observe and use your mirrors to check on traffic and students.

Activate the flashing amber warning lights at least 200 feet or approximately 5-10 seconds before the school bus stop. Turn on the right turn signal about 100-300 feet or approximately 3-10 seconds before pulling over.

Students must remain seated until the bus is fully stopped and the driver instructs or signals them to disembark.

Check all mirrors to see if traffic is clear and it is safe for you to stop.

### Stopping

The driver should pull the bus completely off the road if a secure pullout area is provided, or stay as far to the right as possible.

Come to a full stop. Check to make sure you will not be unloading students into a pothole or some other hazard.

When stopped, set the parking (emergency) brake. This should be done every time a driver unloads students.

Place the transmission in neutral or park if the bus transmission has park. Now the driver may cancel the right directional signal.

Activate the red flashing lights, side stop arm, crossing arm (automatically deactivating the amber flashing lights of the eight-way light system).

Check traffic and open the door completely after traffic stops, and **ONLY** after traffic stops move on to the next step.

### Unloading

Students should only be unloaded at their regularly assigned bus stop unless they have special permission from the school administrator. Follow your district's policy regarding this procedure.

Students should exit the bus in an orderly manner and walk at least 10 feet away from the side of the bus. This will allow the driver to see all students easily. Count the number of students while unloading and confirm the location of all students before pulling away from the stop.

Students who do not have to cross the roadway should know to stay a safe distance away from the bus. They must know to never re-approach the bus without first getting the attention and permission of the driver.

Elementary students may need extra time to understand these instructions. Be extra patient and overly cautious when working with young riders. You may have to re-teach these procedures several times a year.

## Additional Procedures for Students

### Who Must Cross the Roadway

Below are guidelines for students who must cross the roadway after they exit the school bus. The school bus driver should understand that students might not always do what they are supposed to do. Students should use the following procedures when crossing the roadway from the bus;

1. Walk approximately 10 feet away from the side of the school bus to a position where you can see them. You can tell students they should always be able to see you, because that means you can see them.
2. Walk to a location at least 10 feet in front of the right corner of the bumper, but still remaining away from the school bus and road way
3. Walk toward the roadway. When they get to the road way they should;
  - a. Stop and look in all directions, making sure the roadway is clear and safe.
  - b. Check to see if the red flashing lights are still flashing.
  - c. Wait for the driver to signal that it is okay to cross.

The bus driver should conduct a visual search prior to directing students to cross the street. The bus driver should make certain no vehicles are attempting to pass the bus, and when safe, give a designated hand signal, easily visible to the students outside, to direct them to proceed safely across the street. The bus driver should never extend his/her arm or hand outside the bus, as that type of signal could confuse motorists that are stopped for the bus.

Upon your signal the students should;

1. Cross far enough in front of the school bus to be in your view
2. Stop at the left edge of the school bus
3. Look for traffic in both directions, making sure roadway is clear
4. Proceed across the roadway, continuing to look in all directions

Note: The school bus driver should deploy the student crossing gate from the front of the bus if the bus is so equipped.

## Check and Proceed

**This step can save a child's life:** It is essential that the bus driver's last visual search utilizes the "crossover mirrors" to determine if any students have entered the blind spot areas. Additionally the driver should do a visual check of the service door area. Clothing, coats/coat strings, or backpacks can easily be caught in the handrail or door mechanism. Children have been injured and killed after getting caught in the door and dragged by the bus.

Close the Service door to deactivate the flashing red lights, side stop arm, and crossing arm.

Confirm that all students counted when unloading are a safe distance away from the bus.

Activate the left turn signal, check all mirrors and do a visual search for traffic and students.

Proceed into traffic and shut off the directional signal.

## Unloading Procedures at School

When unloading at the school you should follow these procedures:

Perform a safe stop at designated unloading areas as described below;

Secure the bus by:

- Setting the Parking Brake
- Putting the transmission into neutral
- Have the students remain seated until told to exit.
- Position yourself to supervise unloading as required to insure student safety.
- Have students exit in an orderly fashion.
- Observe students as they step from bus to see that all move promptly away from the unloading area.

- After the last unloading stop walk through the bus and check for hiding/sleeping students and items left by students.
- Before leaving the school, recheck all mirrors. Make certain no students are returning to the bus.
- If you cannot account for a student outside the bus and the bus is secure, remove the key and check around and underneath the bus.

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

- Closing the door
- Fastening safety belt
- Starting engine
- Engaging the transmission
- Releasing the parking brake
- Turning off alternating flashing red lights
- Turning on left turn signal
- Checking all mirrors again
- Allow congested traffic to disperse
- When it is safe to do so, pull away from the unloading area.

Loading zones at the school site should be located so that the **bus door will be on the curb side** nearest the school building entrance. It is recommended that a zone be assigned to each bus for loading in the afternoon and these buses be placed in their individual zone well in advance of the dismissal of school in the afternoon. The bus that occupies the front zone should leave first, number two next, and so on. A bus driver should never pull out from behind another bus or pass another bus in a loading or unloading zone.

School bus loading zones must be kept open/clear at all times. Pupils should be properly instructed on how to use the bus zone areas by classroom instruction, but bus drivers cannot assume this has been done. Bus drivers need to be prepared to patiently instruct children how to board the bus at the school.

Another important safety issue in the school loading zone is the bus driver's ability to **stay alert to students entering blind spots surrounding the bus**. The blind spots around a bus cannot always be seen from the drivers' mirrors. Remember, all types of mirrors can distort distances and proportions. If you see anything in the bus mirrors that you think should not be there, look again! Then stop and get out of the bus if need be, and see exactly what and where the object is. When in doubt, taking an extra minute to stop and verify what you are actually seeing may help to avoid a collision or possible injuries. If ever in doubt, an adult may be assigned outside the bus to indicate a safe driving path.

## Loading and Unloading Steps

The following is a summary of the loading and unloading procedures:

**The "15-Step Procedure" for student pickup or discharge is as follows:**

1. Start the amber warning lights within 300 to 100 feet before the bus stop.
2. Turn on the right directional signal.
3. Pull as far to the right as safely possible and stop.
4. Set the parking brake, then shift gear to neutral.
5. Turn off the right directional signal.
6. Visual search.

7. Activate the red loading lights.
8. Visual search.
9. Open the bus door.
10. Visual search and then direct students (on to or off of the bus).
11. Close the bus door.
12. Shift to appropriate gear, then release parking brake.
13. Visual search.
14. Turn on the left directional signal.
15. Visual search (traffic, students, door) and proceed.

## Unique Dangers of Loading and Unloading Zones

**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 the driver's 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 zones and attempt to get the driver's attention to retrieve the object.

**Handrail Hang-ups** – Students have been injured and killed when clothing, accessories, or even parts of their body get caught in the handrail or door as they exited the bus. You should closely observe all students exiting the bus to confirm that they are in a safe location prior to moving the bus.

**Schools** – Another area where serious incidents occur is the loading and unloading zones at the schools. You as a driver must train your students not to push and shove other students when they get on or off the bus. Teach the students to use handrails and go directly to their seats and face forward at all times.

**Students Left on the Bus** – Being left alone on a bus is a dangerous and traumatic experience for a child. When your bus is in a safe location check your bus after your last drop off, make sure students are not sleeping or hiding before returning to the bus barn. Doing a complete child check after every route is very important. Always make the check.

**Problems with Students** – To get students to and from school safely and on time, you need to be able to concentrate on the driving task. Loading and unloading requires all your concentration, especially considering the number of injuries and incidents that occur during these times. Don't take your eyes off what is happening outside the bus while loading or unloading. If there is a behavior problem on the bus, wait until the students have finished loading or have unloaded to a place of safety before you deal with it. If necessary pull the bus over to handle the problem.

## Enforcing the School Bus Stopping Law

Motorists have a duty to stop for a school bus that is stopped with the red loading lights activated to load or unload children. The same section of law also outlines the duty of school bus drivers to report violators. The text of 47 O.S. § 11-705 is below.

- A. The driver of a vehicle meeting or overtaking a school bus that is stopped to take on or discharge school children, and on which the red loading signals are in operation, is to stop the vehicle before it reaches the school bus and not proceed until the loading signals are deactivated and then proceed past such school bus at a speed which is reasonable and with due caution for the safety of such school children and other occupants. Any person convicted of violating the provisions of this subsection shall be punished by a fine of not less than One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00).
- B. Visual signals, meeting the requirements of Section 12-228 of this title, shall be actuated by the driver of said school bus whenever, but only whenever, such vehicle is stopped on the highway for the purpose of receiving or discharging school children.

- C. The driver of a vehicle upon a highway with separate roadways need not stop upon meeting or passing a school bus which is on a different roadway or when upon a controlled-access highway and the school bus is stopped in a loading zone which is a part of or adjacent to such highway and where pedestrians are not permitted to cross the roadway.
- D. If the driver of a school bus witnesses a violation of the provisions of subsection A of this section, within twenty-four (24) hours of the alleged offense, the driver shall report the violation, the vehicle color, license tag number, and the time and place such violation occurred to the law enforcement authority of the municipality where the violation occurred. The law enforcement authority of a municipality shall issue a letter of warning on the alleged violation to the person in whose name the vehicle is registered. The Office of the Attorney General shall provide a form letter to each municipal law enforcement agency in this state for the issuance of the warning provided for in this subsection. Such form letter shall be used by each such law enforcement agency in the exact form provided for by the Office of the Attorney General. A warning letter issued pursuant to this subsection shall not be recorded on the driving record of the person to whom such letter was issued. Issuance of a warning letter pursuant to this section shall not preclude the imposition of other penalties as provided by law.

The loading and unloading procedures specified in this manual and in section 10 of the Oklahoma Commercial Driver's Manual demand a driver's full attention. Drivers must properly signal to traffic their intent to load or unload, properly manage students during the process, verify that traffic is complying with their stop signals, signal to students when the way is clear, continue monitoring traffic, and ensure that all students get on or off the bus safely. Because of this, when the driver attempts to record the tag numbers of vehicles that illegally pass the school bus with the red lights activated, that attempt should never compromise the driver's effort to ensure that all students are safely entering and exiting the school bus.



# CHAPTER 6

## Railroad Crossings

### INTRODUCTION

The worst school bus collision that can possibly occur is one involving a train. The tremendous size and massive weight of a train, at any speed, has the potential for a catastrophic collision. Statistics show that collisions involving a train and a school bus have resulted in serious injuries and/or death of the bus passengers. A moment's negligence by a bus driver at a railroad crossing could result in a tragic collision that costs many lives. At every railroad crossing remember: "Stop, look, and listen!"

### Railroad Crossing Law

Oklahoma state traffic law (47 O.S. 11-702) states that the driver of **any school bus** shall:

- Not cross a railroad track or tracks unless the driver stops the bus within fifty (50) feet of, and not closer than fifteen (15) feet of the tracks.
- Listen and look in each direction along the tracks for an approaching train, and make certain no train is approaching.
- When it is safe to do so, the driver may drive the bus across the tracks in a gear that permits the bus to complete the crossing without a change of gears.
- The driver shall not shift the gears while crossing the tracks.
- Stop at all railroad crossings whether or not they are carrying passengers.

### Railroad Crossing Maneuvers and Safety Education

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### Railroad-Highway Crossings

When approaching railroad crossings in a school bus it is important to know what kind of crossing you are about to encounter. Although drivers who run the same route everyday are very aware of the locations and types of railroad grade crossings on their route, drivers who substitute or who drive activity trips must be alert to the signs and signals that indicate railroad crossings. These signs include valuable information to assist drivers who must face railroad crossings.

### Types of Crossings

**Passive Crossings** – This type of crossing does not have any type of traffic control device. You must stop at these crossings and follow proper procedures. However, the decision to proceed rests entirely in your hands. Passive crossings require you to recognize the crossing, search for any train using the tracks, and decide if there is sufficient clear space to cross safely. Passive crossings have yellow circular advance warning signs, pavement markings and crossbucks to assist you in recognizing a crossing.

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

## Warning Signs and Devices

**Advance Warning Signs** – The round, black-on yellow warning sign is placed ahead of a public railroad-highway crossing. The advance warning sign tells you to slow down, look and listen for the train, and prepare your bus to stop at the tracks. See Figure 6.1

Figure 6.1  
Advanced warning sign

**Pavement Markings** – Pavement markings mean the same as the advance warning sign. They consist 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.

**Cross buck 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. See Figure 6.2.



**Multiple Tracks Sign** – When there is more than one set of tracks at a crossing, there is a sign beneath the crossbuck with a number indicating how many tracks are present. Watch for additional trains coming from either direction.

Figure 6.2  
Crossing buck sign

**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. See Figure 6.3.



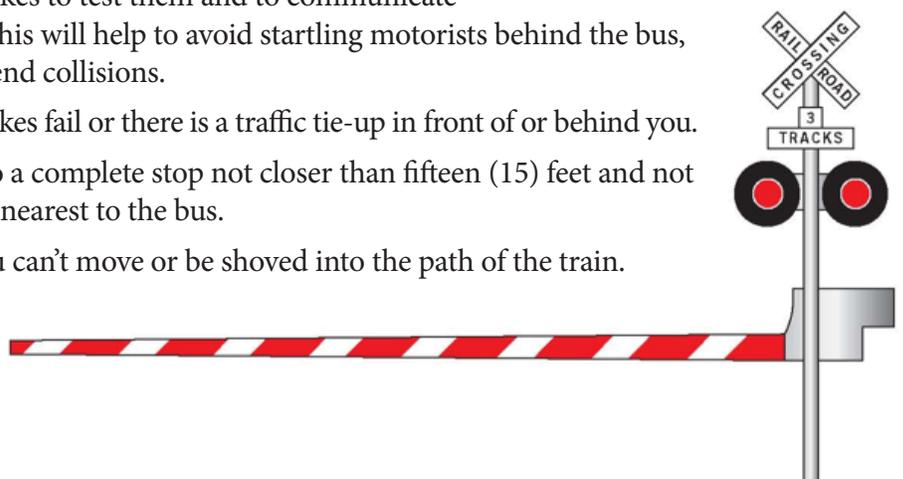
**Gates** – Many railroad-highway crossings have gates with flashing red lights and bells. Stop when the lights begin to flash and before the gate lowers across the road lane. Remain stopped until the gates go up and the lights have stopped flashing. Proceed when it is safe. If the gate stays down after the train passes, do not drive around the gate. Instead, call your dispatcher. See Figure 6.3.

## Procedure for Railroad Grade Crossings

The following section provides instruction to help drivers comply with the law and operate safely. The driver of a school bus must conduct the following steps at each railroad grade crossing.

- A. When making stops for railroad crossings, carefully observe all traffic.  
Activate the 4-way hazard warning lights between 300 and 100 feet of the railroad grade crossing, and tap the brakes to test them and to communicate to traffic that the bus is about to stop. This will help to avoid startling motorists behind the bus, which could cause panic stops or rear-end collisions.
- B. Choose an escape route in case your brakes fail or there is a traffic tie-up in front of or behind you.
- C. The driver must bring the school bus to a complete stop not closer than fifteen (15) feet and not farther than fifty (50) feet from the rail nearest to the bus.
- D. Keep your foot on the brake so that you can't move or be shoved into the path of the train.
- E. On multiple-lane roads, stop only in the right lane unless it is necessary to make a left turn immediately after crossing the railroad tracks.

Figure 6.3  
Flashing signal



- F. After stopping the bus, open the driver’s side window, turn off all noisy equipment (radios, fans, etc.), and instruct students to be quiet. Make sure you look in both directions along the track or tracks and listen carefully for approaching trains. (**NOTE: service door may be opened if visibility is reduced due to weather.**)
- G. If the view of the railroad track or tracks is not adequate; do not attempt to cross the tracks.
- H. For railroad crossings equipped with warning devices such as lights, bells and/or gates, always obey the signals. Never ignore railroad crossing signals. If a police officer or flagman is present at the crossing, obey their directions, but be sure to make your own visual check.
- I. Before crossing the tracks, ensure there is adequate room on the other side of the tracks and train right-of-way for the entire bus. It is always possible that the bus may have to stop immediately after crossing the railroad tracks. Remember, “If it won’t fit, don’t commit.”
- J. If a train is approaching, hold the bus in position and activate the parking (emergency) brake. Once the train has passed, and you have made sure another train from another direction is not on the track or tracks, proceed to the next step.
- K. When the tracks are clear, place the transmission in a gear that will not require changing gears while crossing the tracks. Leave all noisy equipment turned off, and continue looking in all directions as the bus crosses the tracks. After safely crossing the tracks, turn off the hazard warning lamps.
- L. If the bus stalls while crossing the tracks, evacuate the students and move them a safe distance away from the bus as quickly as possible. If a train is approaching, have everyone walk in the direction of the train at a 45 degree angle away from the train tracks. If a radio or telephone is available, notify the school dispatcher of the situation.
- M. Report malfunctioning railroad signals or hazardous railroad crossing conditions to the appropriate school transportation personnel.

## Special Situations

### Evacuations on Crossings

If a school bus “stalls” on train tracks and there is a train approaching, the bus driver must:

1. Evacuate the bus immediately, using both the service door and the emergency exit.
2. Direct the children to walk at a 45-degree angle away from the tracks, in the direction of the approaching train. (It has been proven that any debris from the impact of a collision would travel in a direction away from the children who are standing at this location.) If possible choose a landmark as a gathering point for the children. Communicate this point to the children as they evacuate.

If a school bus “stalls” on train tracks and there is no train approaching, the bus driver must follow these safety procedures:

1. Do **not** attempt to restart the bus engine after it stalls.
2. Immediately evacuate all passengers/children from the bus. Have all children gather in one place at least 100 feet perpendicular to the tracks (following drill procedures).
3. Contact the school district for assistance with the disabled bus and transporting passengers.

### Activated Warning Signal

If a railway warning signal is activated, it is never legal for a school bus to be driven across the track unless a representative of the railroad or a police officer directs the school bus driver that it is safe to proceed. (This could only happen if a signal is activated in error due to a technical problem.) If there is no police officer, and you believe the signal is malfunctioning, call your dispatcher to report the situation and ask for instructions on how to proceed.

## Multiple Tracks

When there are multiple tracks and one set of markings, perform the required crossing procedure and cross all tracks. When there are multiple tracks, each with separate markings, perform the required crossing procedure at each track, but do not stop at a track if there is not enough room to allow the bus to clear the prior track.

## Gate Lowers as Bus Begins to Cross

If the gate comes down after you have started across, drive through it even if it means you will break the gate.

## 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. Remember you are to stop between 15 to 50 feet of the tracks. Use this space to find a position that maximizes your view of the tracks you are about to cross. Passive crossings are those that do not have any type of traffic control device. Be especially careful at passive crossings. Even if there are active railroad signals that indicate the tracks are clear, you must look and listen to be sure it is safe to proceed.

## Containment or Storage Areas

If it won't fit, don't commit! Know the length of your bus and the size of the containment area at highway-rail crossings on the school bus route, as well as any crossing you encounter in the course of a school activity trip. When approaching a crossing with a signal or stop sign on the opposite side, pay attention to the amount of room there. Be certain the bus has enough containment or storage area to completely clear the railroad tracks on the other side if 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. In some situations you will need 15 feet in front and back of your bus, or in most cases 70 feet. Examples might include the distance between 2 sets of tracks, the distance between a set of tracks and an upcoming stop sign, or a set of tracks and an unmarked intersection.

Additional information and training materials on railroad crossing safety are available from: Operation Lifesaver, Inc., 1420 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314, 1-800-537-6224

**Operation Lifesaver** provides a training supplement to help bus drivers remember the steps to cross railroad tracks;

1. Advance Warning- when you see this sign slowdown because tracks are ahead.
2. Check Traffic Behind- Engage bus's parking lights; pull out of lane, if necessary.
3. Prepare Bus- Quiet Students before stopping, turn off radio and fan.
4. Stop Bus- Stop at least 15 feet from the crossing, further back if necessary.
5. Look and Listen- For train in both directions. Open the door, and the window to listen. Double check before crossing.

# CHAPTER 7

## Collision and Emergency Procedures

### INTRODUCTION

Professional drivers don't depend on their skills to get them out of potentially dangerous situations. They depend on their judgment to avoid these situations. It is a lot easier to avoid potentially dangerous situations than to get out of them. However, if you are involved in a collision or emergency, you will need to take certain emergency actions. There are two major sections in this chapter. The first describes emergency evacuation techniques designed to get you and your passengers out of harm's way. The second section covers collision and emergency procedures.

Each year approximately 7,500 Oklahoma school buses travel a total of about seventy (70) million miles. It is imperative that each school district in Oklahoma have an emergency procedure policy for a school bus collision situation. Every pupil who rides a school bus, whether daily or occasionally should receive instructions for safe emergency evacuation procedures.

### SECTION 1

**Emergency evacuation techniques designed to get you and your passengers out of harm's way**

#### Emergency Exit and Evacuation

An emergency can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere. It could be a collision, a stalled school bus on a railroad-highway crossing or in a high-speed intersection, an electrical fire in the engine compartment, or a medical emergency. Knowing what to do in an emergency—before, during and after an evacuation—can mean the difference between life and death.

#### When to Evacuate

Usually, students remain on the bus during an emergency. This is because in most situations students are safer on the bus than off it. Four situations, however, require that you evacuate the bus immediately; existing or imminent smoke or fire condition, presence of hazardous materials, unsafe position of the bus, or vehicle submersion or immersion.

#### Existing or Imminent Smoke or Fire Condition

Stop the bus and evacuate it immediately, if the engine or any portion of the bus is smoking or on fire. An existing fire near the bus or the nearby presence of gasoline or other combustible material is a "danger of fire." Evacuate students as described below.

- Evacuate students through the door farthest from the fire or potential source of fire,
- Evacuate students closest to the danger first,
- Give the students a specific location to go to that is far away from the bus but still within your visual range, and
- Give clear, concise and EXACT instructions.

#### Presence of Hazardous Materials

If any hazardous materials are present in or near the bus, evacuate the students. This includes vapors or fumes, which may enter the bus from outside sources and may be dangerous to the passengers.

## Unsafe Position

In the event of a collision, mechanical failure, road conditions, or human failure, determine immediately whether it is safer for the passengers to remain in the bus or to evacuate. You must evacuate when:

- The final stopping point of the bus is in the path of any train or adjacent to any railroad tracks.
- Evacuations when a bus stalls on a railroad track must be immediate and efficient. The bus driver must pick an evacuation point at least 100 feet away from the bus in a direction that is 45 degrees away from the tracks and toward the oncoming train. It is essential that drivers communicate this information and provide proper supervision to the students.
- The position of the bus might change and increase the danger. For example, evacuate if a bus comes to rest near a body of water or cliff where it could still move and go into the water or over the cliff.
- The location of the bus creates the danger of collision. In normal traffic conditions, the bus should be visible for a distance of 300 feet or more. A position over a hill or around a curve where such visibility does not exist is reason for evacuation.

## Bus Evacuation Procedures for School Bus Drivers

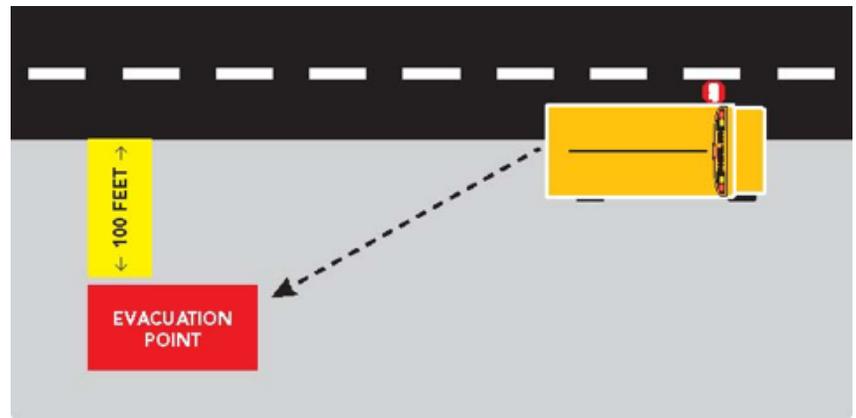
In any situation requiring evacuation, remain calm and take charge of the situation. Before beginning the evacuation ask yourself if the position of the bus is safe based on criteria listed in the “When to Evacuate” section. If not, determine if it is possible to move the bus to a safer location, and if you cannot move to a safer location, is there a safe place for the riders to assemble? Remember, if possible we want to keep the students on the bus. Only evacuate if it is necessary to maximize the safety of the children on your bus.

As the bus driver, YOU are the leader.

1. Determine the best type of evacuation:
  - a. front, rear or side door evacuation, or some combination of doors or
  - b. roof or window evacuation.
2. Secure the bus by:
  - a. placing transmission in Park, or if there is no shift point, in Neutral,
  - b. setting parking brakes
  - c. shutting off the engine
  - d. removing ignition key
  - e. activating hazard-warning lights
3. Use electronic voice equipment to summon help.
  - a. If time allows, notify dispatch office of evacuation location, conditions, and type of assistance needed.
  - b. Dangle radio microphone or telephone out of driver’s window for later use, if operable.
  - c. If there is no radio, or radio is inoperable, dispatch a passing motorist or area resident to call for help. If you use a personal cell phone, be sure to follow district prescribed protocols for its use.
  - d. As a last resort, dispatch two older, responsible students to go for help.
4. Use kick-out windows or emergency escape exits.
5. Help small pupils out of the bus.
  - a. Do not move a student you believe may have suffered a neck or spinal injury unless his or her life is in immediate danger.

- b. Always use special procedures to move neck or spinal injury victims to prevent further injury.
  - c. Direct a student assistant to lead students to the nearest safe place.
  - d. Walk through the bus to ensure no students remain on the bus.
  - e. Retrieve emergency equipment.
6. Get passengers to a safe place
- a. A safe place will be at least 100 feet off the road in the direction of oncoming traffic. This will keep debris from hitting the students if another vehicle collides with the bus. See Figure 7.1.
  - b. Lead students upwind of the bus if fire is present.
  - c. Lead students as far away from railroad tracks as possible and in the direction of any oncoming train at a 45-degree angle away from the tracks. (see figure 1)
  - d. Lead students upwind of the bus at least 300 feet if there is a risk from spilled hazardous materials.
  - e. If the bus is in the direct path of a sighted tornado and evacuation is ordered, escort students to a nearby ditch or culvert if shelter in a building is not readily available, and direct them to lie face down, hands covering their head. They should be far enough away so the bus cannot topple on them.
  - f. Avoid areas that are subject to flash floods.
7. Gather any pertinent medical or emergency information you may have that may be essential for emergency personnel. Join waiting students. Account for all students and check for their safety.
8. Protect the scene. Set out emergency warning devices as necessary and appropriate.
9. Prepare information for emergency responders.
10. Perform other assignments as required.

Figure 7.1  
Safe evacuation point



## Evacuation Drills

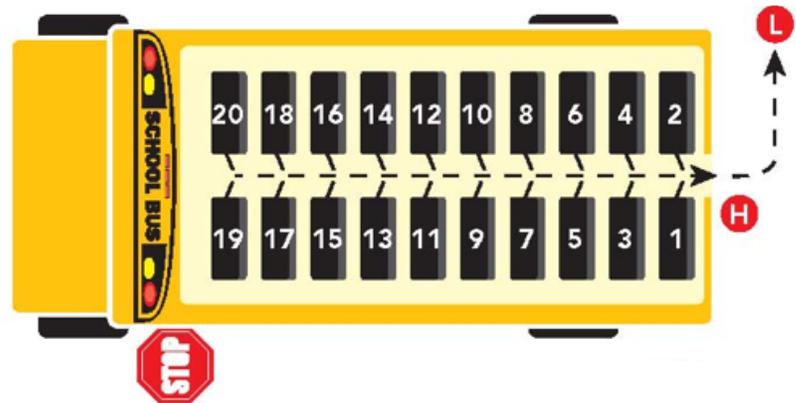
In order to be ready to perform an evacuation immediately and efficiently when the need arises, school bus drivers are required to conduct regular evacuation drills with their passengers. Oklahoma Administrative Code 210: 30-5-6 states, **“At least twice during each school year, each pupil who is transported in a school vehicle shall be instructed in safe riding practices, and participate in emergency evacuation drills. This instruction should be conducted during the first two weeks of each semester.”** Due to the large number of pupils transported and the ever-increasing number of highway collisions, there is a real need to instruct pupils to evacuate a school bus in an emergency. Bus evacuation drills can save children’s lives.

## Guidelines for School Bus Evacuation Drills

In order to ensure the safety of school bus passengers in an actual emergency, every school bus driver assigned to transport students should know and follow the guidelines for evacuation drills. Check with your district to see if they have any other evacuation guidelines.

1. Schedule regular bus evacuation drills. OSDE rules state these drills **shall** happen at least twice a year, and schools **should** conduct them in the first two weeks of each semester.
2. Bus evacuation drills should be conducted under the supervision of school officials or driver in a safe location designated by the school district.
3. Teach students the correct method for exiting the rear emergency door of the bus. This procedure involves sitting on the floor and scooting off the bus onto the ground. Have two older responsible children exit first and assist other students as they exit. (Follow your school policy regarding school bus evacuation drills using the rear or side emergency exit. Students have been injured when not properly supervised performing this drill.) See Figure 7.2.

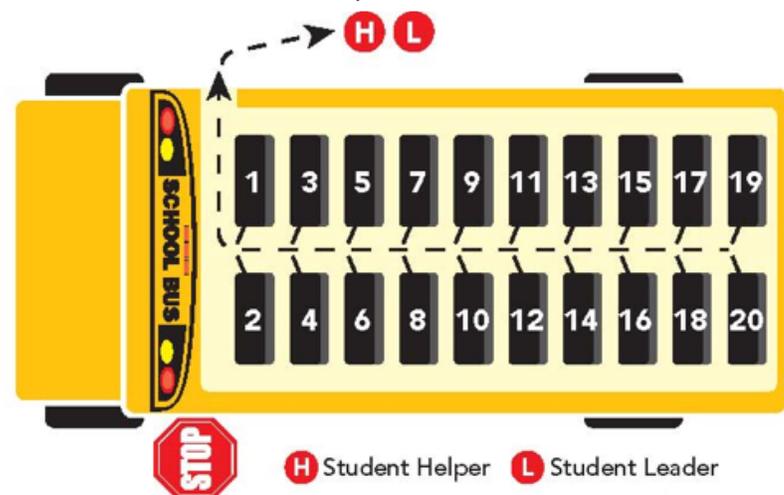
Figure 7.2  
Rear emergency door evacuation



4. Vary the methods of bus evacuation during drills. Practice with students exiting the front door only, the rear door only, and using both doors. In every case, instruct students how and when to use alternative evacuation exits such as the emergency exit windows and the emergency exit roof hatches.
5. The driver should stay in the bus during a drill unless the bus driver has set the parking brake, shifted to the proper gear, turned the engine off and removed the key.
6. Pupils should leave all personal items such as lunches and books on the bus when they exit during a drill. The objective is to get pupils off the bus safely, in the shortest time possible and in an orderly fashion.
7. Pupils should travel a distance of at least 100 feet from the bus in an emergency drill and remain there until given further directions.
8. All pupils who ride school buses, even those who ride buses only occasionally (sports activities, field trips, etc.), should participate in evacuation drills.
9. Instruct each pupil in proper safety precautions. Pupils should be instructed how and where to obtain adult assistance in an emergency. Instruct students how to use the radio, and the location of emergency equipment on the bus.

10. In a real emergency, you might be incapacitated and unable to direct the student emergency evacuation. During the drill, be sure to review procedures with students, so they know what to do if you are unable to help. Do not assign a student as a leader without written consent from a parent or legal guardian. Make sure you follow your district's guidelines in this matter. See Figure 7.3.
11. Written emergency instructions and telephone numbers should be posted in the bus and be easily accessible to students.

Figure 7.3  
Student leader and helper



H Student Helper L Student Leader

## 12. Utilize different scenarios of school bus emergency evacuation drills:

- a. Everyone exits through the front entrance door.
- b. Everyone exits through the rearmost emergency door.
- c. Passengers in the front half of the bus exit through the front door; and the passengers seated in the rear half of the bus exit through the rearmost bus door

## Evacuating a Special Needs Students School Bus

### 1. Non-emergency Evacuation Procedures:

- a. Bus drivers must notify the school of their location as soon as possible via their two-way radio or by cellular phone.
- b. When a replacement “back-up” bus arrives, the driver and assistant should transfer the ambulatory students from the disabled bus into the usable bus sent by the district.
- c. One at a time, each student in a wheelchair should be unloaded from the disabled bus and taken to and secured into the usable bus, before the next wheelchair student is transferred bus to bus. It is not safe to unload every wheelchair passenger from a disabled bus, and then begin loading them into the usable bus.

### 2. Emergency Evacuation Procedures:

- a. The bus driver must notify the school of their location and the exact nature of the problem as soon as possible via their two-way radio or by cellular phone.
- b. The special needs bus assistant should open the rear door and spread a fire blanket on the floor of the bus.
- c. The driver must help the assistant in releasing the students from their seat belts.
- d. In some emergency situations, **seat belt cutters** must be used to facilitate a quicker removal of students from a wheelchair or from a Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS).
- e. Students in wheelchairs are placed on a blanket one at a time and moved to the emergency door.
- f. The driver should stay in the bus and pass each student, one at a time, to the assistant standing outside the bus. This procedure is repeated until all wheelchair students are off the bus.
- g. The driver and assistant can then assist any ambulatory students that have not previously been able to evacuate the bus.
- h. Move all students at least 100 feet (1/3 block) away from the bus to a safe location.
- i. Next, account for all students being transported.

Only if it is safe to do so, the driver or assistant can return to the bus to retrieve the First-Aid Kit and the Body Fluid Cleanup Kit.

### Everyone Involved in Drills Should Keep These Points in Mind:

- The first consideration is the safety of the students. Getting students off the bus safely, quickly and in an orderly fashion is the objective.
- You are responsible for conducting the drill in an organized manner.
- Students should be familiar with the operation of both side and rear emergency windows, and roof hatches.
- Every school bus driver must ensure that the students are familiar with the emergency exit setup of the student's assigned bus. For example, all rear engine buses are equipped with a left side emergency door (in lieu of a rear emergency door). Some buses also have side emergency doors in addition to rear emergency doors.

## Bus Evacuation Procedures on Activity Trips

In order to ensure the safety of school bus passengers in an actual emergency, every school bus driver assigned to transport students on activity trips or field trips must make sure all passengers are familiar with evacuation procedures and methods. Since it is possible that an emergency could include an incapacitated driver, it is vital that the driver make certain there are other responsible people on the bus who can assist with the following:

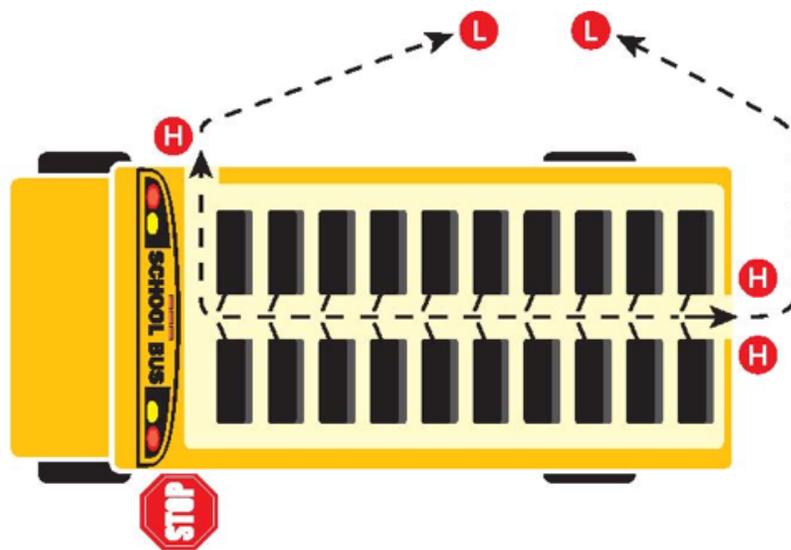
- setting the parking brake, turning off the engine, turning on warning flashers and reporting the incident to the Transportation Department, in case the driver is unable to do so
- choosing an appropriate evacuation strategy
- leading passengers off the bus and to a safe location at least 100 feet from the bus
- taking the first-aid kit off the bus
- helping students exit the bus
- taking the fire extinguisher from the bus for possible use
- setting roadside reflectors if necessary

## Other Emergency Evacuation Procedures

In an actual emergency, it might be necessary to evacuate students through the bus windows or roof vent. Maintain order as much as possible in these situations and work to evacuate all passengers as quickly and safely as possible. Before leaving the bus, you should always check under all seats to make sure no students are on the floor. This applies to all types of evacuations. In addition, keep in mind the fastest way to evacuate the bus may be to have half the students exit through the front door and half through the rear, if feasible. See Figure 7.4.

School buses should be equipped with a seat belt cutter within reach of the driver. In buses with seat belts installed for students, it may be necessary to use this device to free students who are having difficulty releasing the seat belt buckle. For situations with special needs students who are in child safety restraint systems (CSRS) the driver should review the special needs transportation section and seek more training on how to safely and efficiently evacuate students from a special needs bus.

Figure 7.4  
Front and Rear door evacuation



## SECTION 2

### Collision and Emergency Procedures

Collisions are events that can cause injury, death or property damage. If you have a collision or find yourself in some other emergency, you should know the proper procedures to follow and the proper use of emergency equipment on the bus.

School bus drivers need to be familiar with their school district's policy concerning accident procedures. Use the instructions in this manual as guidelines. You should never talk to any media person unless you get permission from your supervisor.

## What Are Accidents, Collisions and Emergencies?

School bus accidents, collisions and emergencies include at least one of the following:

1. A motor vehicle accident resulting in personal injury, death, or property damage to one or more motor vehicles/school buses, with or without a student on board the bus.
2. A collision in which the bus incurs disabling damage requiring the vehicle(s) to be transported away from the scene by a tow truck or other vehicle.
3. A collision involving any vehicle, any pupil or a school bus at any time during the loading or unloading process, or
4. The negligent or unsafe acceleration, deceleration, or other movement of a school bus that results in the injury of any student(s) inside the bus.

## General Guidelines for Emergencies on the Bus

As a bus driver, prepare yourself for any kind of emergency. It does not happen very often, but there is always the possibility of a collision, mechanical breakdown or other emergency. In any case, your first priority is to make sure all students are as safe as possible. It is important in an emergency to remain calm. Some rules to remember if your bus is involved in a collision are represented by the word “**KNOW**.”

**K = Keep** all students on the bus calm. It is safer for the students to remain on the bus if there is no other immediate danger.

**N = Notify** authorities. Always call for help. Use an available cell phone, two-way radio or other communication device on your bus; know whom you should call and how to do so. If you do not have any means of communication on the bus, you may need to identify a responsible bystander to make a call for assistance. **Only in EXTREME EMERGENCIES, send older, responsible students for help. Refer to your school district policy for additional information.**

**O = Off** the road. If you break down, try to position the bus completely off the road and away from other dangers. If it is not possible to do this, remember to evacuate the students and take them to a safer location.

**W = Warning** devices. Use portable emergency warning devices that satisfy current state regulations (at least three portable emergency reflective triangles) to warn other motorists of your position on the road.

## Collision Procedures

Prior to any other responsibility at any collision scene, the school bus driver must always take care of the children first. Postponing first aid at a collision scene could turn a minor collision into a fatal one for the injured person(s).

If you have a collision, **CARRY OUT THE LOCAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE.** These include bus-related and scene-related procedures. The following should serve as a guide.

## Bus-Related Procedures

Immediately after a collision, your first actions take place in and around the bus.

1. **Assess the situation.** You should immediately do the following:
  - a. Stop the bus in as safe a place as possible.
  - b. To some drivers it may seem unnecessary to state the requirement to “stop the bus.” There have been many serious and even fatal collisions where an involved driver never stopped at the scene of the collision.
  - c. Assess the location of the bus. Is it in a safe location or should it be moved to protect students? Is it possible to move the bus? If it becomes necessary to move the bus, mark the location of the bus’s tires. If possible, the driver should plan to keep the students on the bus unless doing so poses a greater risk than evacuation.

- d. Set the parking brake, turn off all lights and electrical switches and turn off the ignition switch and activate the hazard lights.
  - e. Remain calm, assess the situation, plan your actions, and reassure the students.
  - f. Remember, if the school bus is stopped in a hazardous position, and you are unable to move the bus you will need to begin evacuating the students from the bus and directing them to a safe location away from the scene. (More information about evacuation is in the “Evacuation” section of this chapter). The primary responsibility of the driver is always the welfare of the students.
2. **Be alert for fire.** If a smoke or fire condition is present or imminent, evacuate the students. Do NOT fight the fire unless all of your students have been evacuated safely, you and your students are in a secure location, you have provided necessary first aid and you feel comfortable re-approaching the bus to fight the fire. In determining the potential for fire, check for the following:
- a. Ruptured fuel tank or fuel lines,
  - b. hot tires, which may catch fire,
  - c. presence of smoke, and
  - d. possible electrical fire or sparks.

Presence of any of these circumstances may warrant an evacuation of your students from the bus.

3. Be alert for hazardous materials. Check for and identify any possible hazardous materials that may present a danger to you and your passengers. Evacuate the students, if a danger exists from the following hazardous materials:
- a. Chemicals;
  - b. vapors; and
  - c. other toxic substances.
4. Assess the students. Check for injury to students. Keep the students on the bus unless conditions such as the possibility of fire or other dangers warrant their removal. This is the easiest way to account for all students. If evacuation becomes necessary, keep them together.

NOTE: School bus drivers are not to release any students to anyone until cleared to do so by a supervisor. Be certain to know and follow local procedure regarding the release of students. Use First Aid to treat any student injuries.

## Collision Scene Procedures

Once you have taken the above procedures, your next steps should consider the collision scene.

- 1. Notify authorities.** Notify local police if the collision is within a town, if in a rural area, call the state highway patrol, and summon medical aid, if required. Notify school administrators as required by local school policy. Remain at the scene until an officer arrives. 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 an emergency, always follow local school policy, especially about sending students to obtain assistance. When you communicate information about the collision you should use the “Three W’s”:
  - a. Who:** bus number, number of students and types of vehicles involved,
  - b. Where:** location of bus or directions to the scene; and
  - c. What:** what kind of help is needed, and what is the nature of the problem(s).
- 2. Protect the scene.** If possible, do not move the vehicles involved in the collision; leave them as they are until the police arrive. However, if the vehicles are creating a hazard, mark the position of the tires before moving the vehicles and wait for the arrival of police. Protect the students and the bus from further collisions and injuries by placing warning devices to warn other drivers, and if necessary, evacuate the bus, or both. Protect the scene from traffic and people, so evidence is not destroyed.

## Placement of Emergency Reflectors

It is important for school bus drivers to know where the reflectors are stored in their bus. Normally they are kept in a compartment near the front or rear of the bus. When the school bus is involved in a collision or disabled for any reason, the bus driver must appropriately place the required emergency reflectors on the roadway as soon as possible, whether it is day or night.

- On a **two-way road or undivided roadway**, use three reflectors which must be placed as shown in Figure 7.5.
- **First reflector** must be as near to the bus as possible on the traffic side, within 10 feet of the bus’s bumper closest to approaching vehicles/traffic. The reflector must face toward traffic.
- **Second reflector** must be 100 feet behind the bus (about forty paces) in the same lane.
- **Third reflector** must be 100 feet in front of the bus, in the same lane as the bus.

On a **one-way road or divided roadway**, use three reflectors, placed as follows:

- First reflector must be as near to the bus as possible on the traffic side, within 10 feet of the bus’s bumper closest to approaching vehicles/traffic. The reflector must face toward traffic.

Figure 7.5  
Emergency reflector placement

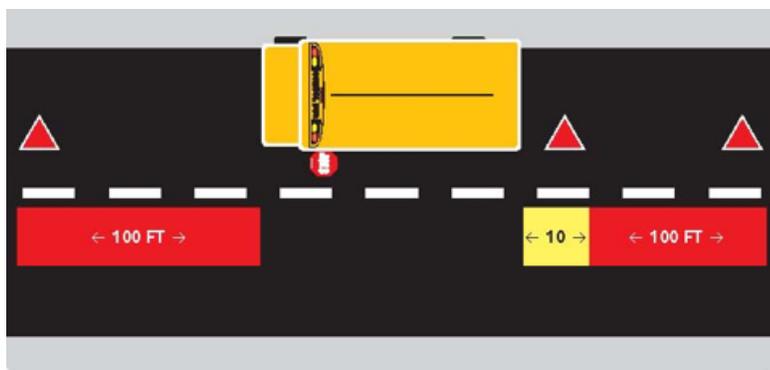
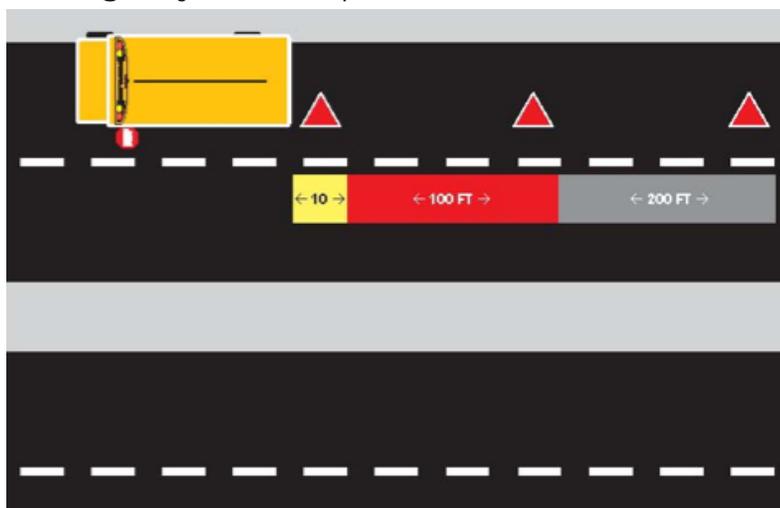


Figure 7.6  
Emergency reflector placement



- Second reflector must be 100 feet behind the bus, approximately forty paces.
- Third reflector must be 200 feet (2/3 of a block) from the bus in the center of the same lane as the bus, with reflector facing traffic approaching the bus. See Figure 7.6. (O.S. 47 §12-408)

**On a curve, hillcrest, or other such obstruction:** Should a bus become disabled within 500 feet of a curve, a hill or other such visual obstruction, the bus driver must place a reflector facing the curve or hill at least 100 feet from the disabled bus, but not more than 500 feet. Keep in mind that approaching drivers on a hill or a curve will need ample warning to avoid the disabled bus.

See Figure 7.7. (O.S. 47 §12-408)

### 3. Cooperate with the collision investigation.

After you have handled all potential dangers to your passengers, cooperate with officials investigating the collision. You should ONLY discuss the facts of the collision with those officially concerned (police, school officials, insurance personnel). Do not discuss the collision with other motorists or passers-by. Be patient, evaluate questions, and give clear and concise answers to any questions asked by officials. Only respond to the questions asked; do not add your own opinion.

The bus driver should be prepared to provide the following information: name, age, residence address, and driver license number. Also, provide the make, model, vehicle number, and year of the bus, license plate (tag) number, and the bus's registered owner and address, which is normally the employing school district and any insurance information, to officials investigating the collision. All such information, including emergency telephone numbers, a seating chart of all passengers (if applicable), and local directives covering collisions and emergencies should be contained in an emergency packet carried on the bus. Check with your supervisor to get the proper documentation.

If a parked vehicle is involved and you cannot locate the owner, you should always leave your written information where the owner will find it. Also, write down the parked vehicle's description, tag number, and location for your records.

A driver involved in a collision is required to give his or her own name, address, driver's license number, and other pertinent information to any other driver involved, and to obtain the same information from any other driver(s) involved in the collision. Get the names, addresses and license numbers of all witnesses' – both for and against you.

A school bus driver involved in a collision meeting Federal Highway post-collision testing thresholds is also required to submit to testing for alcohol and controlled substances.

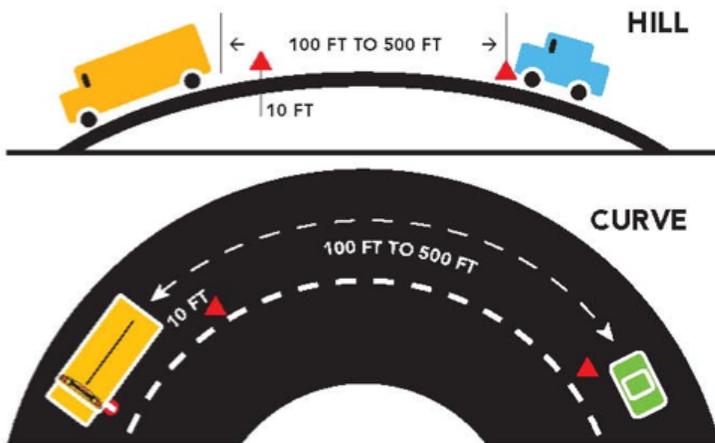
- ### 4. Keep students at the scene.
- During the collision investigation, do not release any of your students to anyone unless instructed by school administration officials or medical aid is required. Always keep students on the bus unless the situation requires emergency evacuation.

## Reporting Procedures

You must report every collision to your supervisor. There are no minor collisions involving a school bus! It is likely a supervisor will travel to your collision site. If not, you should know what information your district wants you to collect for their records. This information is likely to include the following:

- School bus ID number,
- Driver's name, address and driver's license number,
- Date, time, weather, and direction of travel;

Figure 7.7  
Emergency reflector placement



- Damage to vehicle,
- Name of owner of other vehicle or property, address, license number, make and model of vehicle, and damage to other vehicle,
- Injuries to persons involved, their names, addresses, extent of injuries,
- List of passengers on the bus and in other vehicle(s),
- Names and addresses of passengers in other vehicles,
- Name of insurance companies involved,
- Name of police at scene, and
- Diagram of collision scene.

Remember to follow your district's policy regarding the reporting of any collisions in which you may be involved.

### **Mechanical Failure or Breakdown**

In the event of a mechanical breakdown, know what to do, how to do it and when to do it.

The following is a suggested procedure:

1. Stop the bus as far to the right of the road as possible or on the shoulder of the road.
2. Keep the students on the bus. However, if the location of the bus is unsafe, evacuate the students to a safer location (see evacuation procedures in the beginning of this chapter).
3. Activate hazard-warning lights and place warning devices on the highway (see "Placement of Emergency Reflectors" earlier in this chapter).
4. Contact the proper school authorities and give the location of the bus and a description of the breakdown; and
5. See that arrangements are made for the delivery of all students to their destination.

### **USING EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT**

When an emergency or collision happens, it is too late to learn how and where to use emergency equipment. Take time to learn location and the proper use of each item.

All school buses are required to carry the following:

- First Aid Kit;
- Portable emergency warning devices (at least three portable emergency reflective triangles);
- Fire extinguisher;
- Spare electrical fuses unless the bus has circuit breakers,
- Seat belt cutter (also known as a web cutter)
- Body Fluid Clean-Up Kit.
- In some situations, you may be required to have a bus roster with names of students, medical conditions of students and parent contact information. This is usually true of special needs buses.

The use of emergency devices is discussed below. The school bus pre-trip inspection should verify that each of these is on your bus in working condition.

#### **First Aid Kit**

It is the driver's responsibility to verify the bus has a properly equipped first aid kit. Most kits have a list of contents which will serve as a guide should you need to restock one. You must follow your local school district procedures and guidelines regarding receiving first aid training and administering first aid on your school bus. Ask your supervisor about your district's policies regarding first aid.

## Portable Emergency Warning Devices

The proper placement and use of these devices has been discussed in the section regarding collision procedures.

## Fire Extinguisher

A portable fire extinguisher must be located in an accessible location in the driver's compartment of every school bus. Before using a fire extinguisher, make sure it is properly charged. The gauge at the top of the extinguisher indicates if it is fully charged. If the needle on the indicator stays in the charged area, the extinguisher is properly charged. If the needle is in the overcharged or undercharged areas, report it to your mechanic. This should be checked as part of your pre-trip inspection (refer to Chapter 2). Only try to extinguish a fire, if you know what you are doing and it is safe. Your first priority is to evacuate all students and quickly get them somewhere safe. Do NOT waste your time fighting a fire when you need to get students off the bus.

You should seek guidance and training on how to operate a fire extinguisher from your local district.

## List of Student Names

Although not required every bus should have a list of names for all students who ride the bus and the appropriate pick-up and delivery time and bus stop location for each student. This list is useful for accounting for the students in an emergency. Also not required, a seating chart for students on the bus is strongly recommended. It can also be helpful in emergencies. Follow your district's policy regarding student rosters and seating charts.

## Spare Electrical Fuses

All buses should carry the proper spare electrical fuses in case a fuse is blown. The location of these varies by bus type and manufacturer. If the bus is equipped with circuit breakers, this is not necessary.

## Seat Belt Cutter

Your school bus should be equipped with a seat belt cutter that is mounted in a visible location in the driver's compartment within reach of the driver from a seated position. If you ever have to use it, do not try to cut straight across the webbing. It will work much better if you cut across the webbing diagonally.

## Bodily Fluid Clean Up Kit

Every school bus is required to be equipped with the following:

- an absorbent powder specifically designed for bodily fluids
- latex gloves,
- pick up scoop with scraper,
- germicidal disinfectant,
- wet wipes,
- biohazard waste bag, and
- odor mask.

The kit should have instructions for proper use.

All of these items must be securely fastened in the vehicle and not blocking the aisle way.

# CHAPTER 8

## Student Management and Discipline

### INTRODUCTION

A school bus driver has several important jobs. These jobs include; operating the bus in a safe manner, avoiding distractions so they can focus on safe driving, and protecting students from harm. This is a great deal of responsibility, but it is up to the driver to be in charge of the bus and the students on the bus. The more the driver worries about disciplining the students the more difficult the safe operation of the bus will be.

### Standards for Acceptable Behavior

#### Deciding what's reasonable and unreasonable

Each school board is responsible for adopting policies that govern student management and discipline during transportation. School bus drivers must know the local policies and rules that have been established for students riding the school bus in their district.

Usually, district rules will relate to either school bus safety (stay seated while the bus is moving) or acceptable social behavior (no vulgar language, don't damage the bus).

Generally, the rules for acceptable student behavior are simple. Students should stay seated and keep body parts within the school bus seat compartment while the bus is moving. Students should face forward and keep their arms and head inside the bus. Students should speak in a quiet voice that will minimize distractions for the driver.

Your job as a school bus driver would be much easier if students followed the rules all the time. Although this is the ideal situation, many times the students may not. Drivers should remember that students are young people who are developing physically and emotionally. Students are constantly exploring and adjusting, and may need some help understanding what acceptable and appropriate behavior on a school bus is.

Students need to control their actions. Their behavior has a direct bearing on the safety of every person on the bus. If they act up, they could be putting everyone at risk. When they misbehave, they distract you, and when you are distracted you can't drive safely. It is up to you, usually the only adult on the bus, to set the stage.

#### Reasonable Expectations

It is reasonable to expect students to remain seated. It is not safe for them to be moving around while the bus is in motion. It is also reasonable to expect students to keep their arms and head inside the bus at all times. Although reasonable, getting students to face forward may be much harder, even though it is safer if they face forward.

Remember that just because an expectation is reasonable, it does not mean it will be easy. Some drivers have a hard time keeping students seated while the bus is moving. Giving up and letting students stick their arms and head out the window or letting them move around the bus whenever they want is not acceptable.

Remember that school buses keep students safe through a concept called compartmentalization. This provides protection for students without requiring them to use seat belts. Compartmentalization provides safety by creating a protective envelope consisting of strong, closely-spaced seats that have energy absorbing backs. Compartmentalization works as long as students are seated fully in the seat and facing forward.

#### Unreasonable Expectations

Although it is reasonable to expect students to talk in a quiet voice to avoid distracting the driver, absolute silence is not a reasonable expectation. As a driver you must learn to tolerate some talking, but consistency is important. Remember that as your state of mind changes daily, your ability to tolerate noise may also change. However, students will not understand if what is acceptable one day is not acceptable the next.

## Situations That Create Risk

School bus drivers have a duty to operate their school bus safely. However, there are situations inside a school bus that could distract the driver and compromise the driver's ability to operate the bus safely. A distraction is something that takes a driver's concentration away from driving. It is usually something that will make you have to look in the rear-view mirror.

Many situations on a school bus can be distracting. A partial list of potentially distracting situations is below.

- Loading and unloading
- Pushing, shoving, running down the aisle
- Fighting/bullying
- Use of loud and abusive language
- Throwing objects
- Smoking
- Lewd behavior
- Use of drugs and alcohol
- Vandalism
- Weapons
- Inappropriate or sexual misconduct

As much as possible a school bus driver needs to handle these situations in a way that will not compromise the safe operation of the school bus.

## How to Maintain Control

The first step to maintaining control of the student's behavior on the bus is to remember what students need. Just like adults, students need:

- Respect,
- Recognition,
- To feel in control of their circumstances
- To associate with their peers
- To feel important to their peers.

Some things bus drivers do help maintain control of their bus. Things like a one-on-one talk, a friendly smile, reward programs, concentrating on the ringleader, calling the difficult person to the front of the bus, and telling the good students they really are good can help a driver get or maintain control.

Some things bus drivers do don't help maintain control of their bus. Things like screaming or yelling, disciplining a student in front of the whole group, being grumpy, threatening, and not saying good morning can cause problems for a school bus driver.

## General Guidelines

Remember a school bus driver should never hit or touch a child unless there is a danger to you or to other students. Some exceptions may be when a small child initiates a hug. Regardless, it is essential that you know and follow your districts guidelines on these matters. Below is a list of guidelines that will help you avoid pitfalls as you maintain discipline on your bus.

1. Save discipline for safety-related behavior; don't nitpick.
2. Don't get drawn into an argument with a student.
3. Don't threaten to do something you cannot do.
4. Don't threaten something and then not do it.
5. Don't discipline the whole group; take the ringleader aside.
6. Handle negative comments away from other students.
7. Don't let the situation get out of hand.

### Handling a Serious Problem

1. Stop the bus.
  - a. Park in a safe location off the road.
  - b. This may be a parking lot or a driveway.
2. Secure the bus.
  - a. Take the ignition key with you if you leave your seat.
3. Stand up and speak to the offender or offenders.
  - a. Speak in a courteous manner with a firm voice.
  - b. Remind the offenders of the behavior expected of them.
  - c. Don't show anger but do show that you mean business.
4. If a change of seating is needed, move the student to a seat near you.
5. NEVER put a student off the bus except at school or at his or her residence/school bus stop.
  - a. If you feel that the offense is serious enough that you cannot safely drive the bus, call your dispatcher.
6. Know and follow your district's student discipline procedures for the school bus.

Although maintaining order on a school bus is a challenging task, there are drivers who have learned how to be successful. If you face challenges that are difficult, find someone who can help you be successful too. This could be an experienced driver or a supervisor.



# CHAPTER 9

## School Bus Security, Threat Management, and Danger Awareness

Below are general guidelines regarding the importance of school bus security, and how you can play a part in keeping your bus, students and communities secure. The Oklahoma School Security Institute provides training specifically designed to help school officials and employees and employees prepare for these types of emergencies. They can be reached at (405) 425-7296.

### Why School Buses Can Be Targets

1. They are relatively unprotected and vulnerable;
2. They have predictable routes and schedules;
3. They have the potential for a large number of casualties;
4. There are schools all over the nation;
5. They have unquestioned access to high-value destinations;
6. They represent an emotional target; and
7. The effects of a terrorist attack on school buses would be demoralizing.

### School Bus Drivers

You, as a school bus driver, are the eyes, ears and protectors of your communities the same as the Neighborhood Watch Program. You know your routes and know what is usual and unusual. Therefore, you need to be informed on how to react in security-related situations.

1. Learn state and school district security guidelines;
2. Never open the bus door to speak with someone you do not know. If you must talk, direct the person(s) to the driver window.
3. Never allow someone you do not know on the bus. Communicate with your dispatcher regarding new students and always follow district policy.
4. Be aware of suspicious activity or behavior in areas around school buses, school bus facilities and schools;
5. Notice and report any unusual conditions of vehicles, those belonging to the school district and those vehicles that may enter into parking lots or facilities. Pay attention to suspicious people or vehicles in the school bus area outside a school or at school bus stops;
6. Be vigilant with respect to strange packages, items or substances, which are brought on or around school buses;
7. Know who your supervisory contacts are in the school district and have their phone numbers immediately available;
8. Recognize threats and know how to properly handle them;
9. Learn emergency operating plans and procedures, and stay familiar with the operation of emergency equipment. For example, remove keys from the ignition when your bus is unattended;
10. Inspect your bus whenever you have left it unattended for any length of time; and
11. Keep a clean bus.

## Characteristics of Suspicious Items

1. Items that are abandoned or hidden in an unusual place;
2. Items having leaking gas, vapor, odor, or suspicious substance, including excessive grease;
3. Any items containing exposed wires or timer;
4. Any items having an attached message with a threatening note or suspicious markings; and
5. Any canister, propane style tank, metal box, bottle, or out of place items.

## School Bus Safety and Security Checklist

You need to be vigilant when checking the following items in a pre-trip inspection, or anytime you have left the bus unattended for any length of time.

1. Seats: Look for lumps, bulges, damaged upholstery, and any suspicious packages on a seat;
2. Floor Surface: Look for modifications to material/unusual thickness;
3. Passenger Compartment: Smell for strange odors, raised floor, unusual welds, unusual items, or excessive weight;
4. Exterior Surface: Look for missing screws, unusual scratches, welds, signs of tampering, or recent paint;
5. Undercarriage: Look for items taped or attached to the frame or fresh undercoating;
6. Engine Compartment: Look for odd wires or liquids, unusual welds or new tape;
7. Tires: Look for unusual odor from air valve;
8. Fenders: Look for unusual thickness.

## Identifying Suspicious Behavior or Activities

Suspicious activities are anything you may feel is unusual or out of place. In addition, pay particular attention to the following:

1. Anyone appearing interested in school facilities, vehicles or their surroundings;
2. Anyone who has been sighted within a school or school bus stop numerous times;
3. Anyone who has put a package in a public place and left quickly;
4. Anyone soliciting information on school facilities, buses or schedules;
5. Anyone taking pictures or videotaping areas of school bus facilities, schools or school bus stops;
6. Anyone looking lost or wandering around at school bus stops or school grounds, or anyone who seems to be somewhere they are not supposed to be;
7. Anyone showing disruptive or potentially distracting behavior; anyone showing an unusual interest in employees or students, the school or school bus locations; anyone wearing a uniform who appears to not be part of the setting;
8. Anyone wearing clothing that is not appropriate for the weather;
9. Any person possessing a weapon or dangerous item; and
10. Using a vehicle in a suspicious way (illegally parked, erratic driving, following).

## Reporting Suspicious Items and Unusual Activities

1. Remain alert and calm. Be as observant as possible, paying attention to the location of the item or device;
2. **IMMEDIATELY** report suspicious items and behavior to your dispatcher or local authorities. If you suspect a serious situation, call 911 right away;
3. Be able to report the location, color, year, make, model, and license plate number. Be sure to include the direction of any suspicious vehicles;

4. Never touch a suspicious item. You need to move as far away as possible and be aware you could be injured by flying glass or debris; and
5. **DO NOT USE** your radio or cell phone within 300 feet of a suspected timer or device.
6. Remember, these guidelines are only to assist you, the bus driver, in recognizing and responding to potential threats to your bus, students and community. Please refer to your district emergency plans for specific reporting procedures.

## Bus hijacking history

Hijacking school buses is not a new happening. For years, other countries have dealt with school bus hijackings and bombings. Many school buses in the middle east have armed guards on board to deter terrorists.

There have been notable school bus hijackings across America in the past. Some of the most high profile hijackings include Chowchilla, CA in 1976, Miami, FL in 1995, and the 2013 hijacking in Midland City, Alabama. It could happen anywhere and at any time; school bus drivers must be ever vigilant.

## Anticipating threats

Potential hijackers are not always adults. School bus hijackings have been committed by students. A shooter in a bus in Kansas City was reportedly a student at a local school, and a North Carolina school bus driver was able to disarm a seventh-grader by talking to the student.

When adults hijack school buses, there can be a variety of motives. The hijackers in 1976 wanted money, the hijacker in 1995 was angry at his previous employer, and we may never know the motive of the hijacker in Alabama. The adult could be a complete stranger or a parent of one of the students on board. Additionally, terrorism might be a motivator for hijackings.

In short, a potential hijacker could be anyone of any age, race, ethnicity, sex or background. This is why it is so important to follow policies of not allowing anyone on the bus unless they are authorized. This must include both adults and children.

## Plan and practice

Every school bus driver should have an emergency plan of what to do if they are hijacked. These emergency plans should be practiced just like evacuation drills.

Understandable codes should be used by drivers to inform other drivers, dispatch or supervisors of situations. Instead of calling over the radio that they “have been hijacked” or that they “think a student has a gun,” drivers should use codes, like radioing a special predetermined code before bus number, “bus H J 15 to base” or “bus G 15 to base”, or even radio call to an imaginary bus number “Bus 15 to Bus 99.” Of course these codes should be known by all drivers, dispatchers, and administrators.

Alternatively, drivers could use a code nine system to notify the dispatcher if there is a serious situation involving a student or parent. The driver adds No. 9 to the route (i.e., route No. 15 would become route No. 159 or 915), and the office staff then calls 911.

Additionally, drivers could have periodic check-ins with dispatch or a supervisor. If one of the check-ins is missed, that can alert others of a potential problem.

School districts should also work closely with law enforcement. Local police should have an understanding of bus routes and attempt to patrol those routes. This can deter hijackers, and it is effective at reducing stop-arm violations.

Creating and maintaining “Bus Captains” from the student riders can also be effective for emergencies. In programs like these, older students are taught what to do in case of various circumstances. One possible situation might be that the bus captain will call 911 if someone attempts to hijack the school bus.

In today’s world, most kids have cell phones. While the student is calling the police, the driver can focus on the hijacker, knowing that someone else is calling for help. Again, these scenarios should be practiced in drills.

## Assess the situation

If a school bus is hijacked, the driver must make some very important decisions in a very short amount of time. There are two schools of thought: The first is for the driver to obey the hijacker's commands and wait for assistance. The second is for the driver to resist. There are many factors that must go into the decision on which approach to take. It is the totality of the circumstances that should lead the driver to the correct decision.

Regardless of whether the driver obeys the commands or resists a hijacker, every single school bus driver must understand that their No. 1 priority is the protection of the children on board.

## Be Prepared

Each year school districts in Oklahoma are required to conduct an in-service to help prepare drivers for the safe transportation of students to and from school and school events. Preparing for incidents that could put students' and employees' safety and security in jeopardy is something that everyone at a school bus operation should participate in so that they can effectively respond. Establishing an emergency plan and bus inspection procedures and covering security issues during training sessions are equally important components of the preparation process.

When the district's buses can be parked at a fenced facility and locked it makes tampering more difficult. Also, the drivers should check them during their pre-trip inspections to make sure they don't see anything suspicious. If they see suspicious devices, they should notify dispatch immediately so that they can contact 911.

Each school district's transportation department should have an emergency plan that it shares with all of the district's schools. The plan should address such issues as where students will be taken and where buses will be parked in the event of various emergency situations. The plan should address issues such as weather, terrorism, or fire caused school evacuation, or the need to evacuate school buses into storm/tornado shelters. All of the district's schools, as well as all of the county's EMS facilities, fire departments and some churches can be used as safe houses.

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