

OPERATOR INFORMATION

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

PHONE NUMBER _____

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE NUMBERS

<u>NUMBERS</u>	<u>AGENCIES</u>	<u>PHONE</u>
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1. Schools Served

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

E. _____

2. Transportation Department _____

3. Highway Patrol _____

4. Sheriff's Department _____

5. City Police _____

6. Fire Department _____

7. School Bus Garage _____

8. OTHER PHONE NUMBERS

FOREWORD



In 2006-07 Florida's public school buses transported over 1,033,088 students to and from school and traveled over 300,046,293 miles annually. The primary concern of those involved in this tremendous undertaking is the safety of the students transported.

The transportation of school students is an important part of Florida's public education system and requires the cooperation and conscientious efforts of many individuals. Because the school bus operator is the person in contact with children while they are on the bus, he or she is the most important member of the school transportation team. No school transportation operation can be safe and efficient unless it has highly competent bus operators.

The purpose of this book is to provide present and prospective operators with safe driving procedures, rules, regulations, and laws pertaining to school bus operation, supervision, and management of bus passengers. The contents of this book were designed to cover situations confronting school bus operators in carrying out their responsibilities. Everything an operator might encounter could not be and was not intended to be included.

We are proud of the school bus operators in our 67 school districts who have maintained commendable driving records. We also commend the many shop technicians, transportation directors, and other personnel who have made our school transportation programs safe, efficient and successful.

INTRODUCTION

The transportation of pupils to and from school is a necessary part of our educational system. In no other area of education do we accept more responsibility for student life and welfare than during the mass movement of children in school buses on public highways.

The bus operator is perhaps the most important factor in achieving safety, economy and efficiency in school transportation. Plans involving every other factor may be carefully formulated, but unless we have competent, professional bus operators, much of this planning will be useless. The following are some examples:

1. Minimum standards for school buses assure that buses are constructed to maximize student safety. However, children may be injured or killed in crashes caused by careless bus operators.
2. A good bus maintenance program may be established, but maximum efficiency will not be achieved unless the operator is carrying his/her part of the responsibility for the program.
3. Carefully planned bus schedules may be established, but bus operators must adhere to them.

A successful transportation operation depends upon a high quality of performance by all those who are associated with it. This includes the Florida Department of Education, the district school board, the superintendent and staff, vehicle maintenance and service personnel, teachers, students, and most importantly, the operator of the school bus.

Operators of commercial vehicles and buses are carefully examined and trained before beginning their jobs and they are periodically reexamined and retrained. School bus cargo is far more valuable than that of other professional operators. Therefore, school bus operators must be carefully examined and trained before beginning the job (pre-service training) and carefully examined and retrained on a continuing basis (in-service training). Every precaution must be taken to assure that school bus operators are in excellent physical and mental condition.

Many people never visit a school and have no basis for evaluating a district's program. Often, the total school program is judged solely by those activities that are seen from the outside, especially on school buses. For example,

- a. School buses are seen by the public. A bus with an untidy exterior has the appearance of being ill-kept. It may be perceived as unsafe.
- b. Misbehavior on the bus is observed more readily than in the classroom.
- c. A crowded school bus may be seen daily by the public while overcrowded classrooms may go unnoticed.

School bus operators interact with students, parents, school officials, bus maintenance personnel, traffic officers and the motoring public in general. Good public relations skills are a must.

GENERAL ASPECTS OF PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

A. Need for Transportation

Public school transportation and the modern educational program have grown together in Florida because of the following reasons:

1. Today's modern curriculum is not confined to the school building and immediate grounds. Field trips to outlying recreational areas, as well as museums, art galleries, industrial, and commercial sites have become commonplace in school districts throughout Florida.
2. State and local governments have recognized the need for transporting pupils, thereby improving educational opportunities. This is especially important on the secondary level, as pupils in remote areas can now receive adequate secondary education with a broadening of school offerings. This is also true of pre-kindergarten students who are now transported to a wide variety of pre-school programs.
3. Bus transportation is necessary for development and improvement in programs and facilities available to students with special transportation needs. The concept that the local district shall provide educational opportunities to all children is possible through a modern bus transportation system.
4. The need to consolidate attendance centers has been used in Florida as justification for laws authorizing pupil transportation at public expense.

B. Transportation Objectives

Pupil transportation is expensive. It is carefully monitored so that the greatest benefit will accrue from the dollars expended. Listed below are the major objectives which guide the administration of pupil transportation.

1. To provide safe transportation.
2. To furnish transportation to pupils whose age, health, or distance from the school makes transportation essential.
3. To operate the transportation program efficiently and economically.
4. To adapt transportation to the requirements of the instructional program.
5. To promote public understanding of the entire transportation program.

SCHOOL BUS OPERATOR QUALIFICATIONS



The school bus operator has been called the silent teacher. His/her importance cannot be overemphasized, as all efforts to insure safety, efficiency and economy require the bus operator's cooperation. By example, he or she shows qualities of good citizenship, including courtesy and respect for law and authority. The professional bus operator is trustworthy, considerate, respectable, and neat in appearance. He or she must work in cooperation with school principals, the administration, the school board, the community, and the officials whose duty it is to see that laws are properly enforced. The operator should be courteous and refrain from questionable conduct and speech. He or she must be of good moral character, display superior driving skills, and be able to manage children in a firm but tactful manner.

The success of the pupil transportation program is more dependent on the school bus operator than any other factor. When the bus is moving, the welfare of the child depends upon the skill, attitude and decisions of the operator. If the operator is properly trained, courteous, and firm with passengers, the likelihood of crash involvement is reduced. If the bus operator is careless or reckless while driving or discourteous to passengers or passing motorists, he or she is more likely to be involved in a crash.

The following is taken from the Florida Statutes:

Chapter E – Duties of the School Board 1006.22(1) District school boards shall use school buses, as defined in s. 1006.25, for all regular transportation. Regular transportation or regular use means transportation of students to and from school or school-related activities that are a part of a scheduled series or sequence of events to the same location. “Students” means, for the purposes of this section, students enrolled in public schools in kindergarten, disability programs through grade 12.

The following is taken from Rule **6A-3.0141, FAC, Employment of School Bus Operators (State Board of Education Rules)**:

- (1) School bus operators are defined as any persons employed or contracted to the school district to transport prekindergarten through grade 12 students in school buses as defined in Section 1006.25, Florida Statutes.
- (2) At the time of initial employment the school board shall assure that the operator of a school bus meets the following requirements:
 - (a) Has five (5) years of licensed driving experience.
 - (b) Has submitted to the superintendent a written application for employment in a form prescribed by the school board.
 - (c) Has filed a set of fingerprints for the purpose of the required background check for determining criminal record.

- (3) Form ESE 479, Florida School Bus Operators Medical Examination Report for Commercial Driver Fitness Determination is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of this rule to become effective November 2006. The form and printing requirements are included in the electronic mailing. Each district is responsible for printing the form.
- (4) Prior to transporting students on a school bus, each operator shall meet the following requirements:
 - (a) Hold a valid commercial operators license with a passenger and a school bus endorsement.
 - (b) Successfully complete forty (40) hours of pre-service training consisting of at least twenty (20) hours of classroom instruction and eight (8) hours of behind-the-wheel training based upon the Department's Basic School Bus Operator Curriculum which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of this rule. This document may be obtained from the School Transportation Management Section, Department of Education, The Florida Education Center, Tallahassee, Florida, 32399 at a cost not to exceed actual production and distribution costs.
 - (c) Demonstrate the ability to prepare required written reports.
 - (d) Be physically capable of operating the vehicle as determined by a physical examination, Form ESE 479, prescribed by the Commissioner and given by a physician designated by the school board and as determined by a dexterity test administered by the school district.
 - (e) Demonstrate physical and mental capabilities required to carry out all assigned responsibilities as a school bus operator.
- (5) A certification of training provided by the Commissioner shall be issued by the district to each operator successfully completing the forty (40) hours of pre-service training.
- (6) Each district school board shall obtain a driver's history record from the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles for each regular school bus operator, substitute operator, or any other individual certified to drive a school bus by the district. The schedule for reviewing these records shall be:
 - (a) Prior to initial employment;
 - (b) Prior to the first day of the fall semester
 - (c) Thereafter the district shall continuously screen operator records using the automated weekly updates, ensuring proper retrieval documentation for every week.
- (7) Driver records history shall be requested in a manner prescribed by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles using the Automated School Bus Driver's License Record Check System through the Department's data base. All school districts shall obtain and review records for school bus operators using the automated data base system. For any operator licensed in another state, the district shall obtain and review the driver's history record from the appropriate state.

- (8) Each school district shall establish a school board policy that specifies which infractions of the traffic code deem an applicant unqualified for hire and which causes any employee to be subject to a prescribed follow-up action. At a minimum, this policy shall state that any district school bus operator or contracted operator who should have known that his or her license has expired or has been suspended or revoked shall be subject to prescribed disciplinary measures up to and including dismissal by the school board.
- (9) At least annually, the school district shall assure that the operator of a school bus meets the following requirements:
 - (a) The requirements of paragraph (4)(a) of this rule.
 - (b) Successfully complete a minimum of eight (8) hours of inservice training related to the operator's responsibilities for transporting students.
 - (c) Successfully pass a dexterity test administered by the school district and maintain a valid Medical Examiners Certificate.
- (10) At the time of reemployment, the school board shall assure that each school bus operator meets all of the requirements of subsections (2) and (3) and paragraph (4)(a) of this rule. If not more than a twelve continuous calendar month break in service has occurred, an operator shall be required to complete eight (8) hours of inservice training related to their responsibilities for transporting students prior to driving a school bus with students. If a period exceeding twelve (12) calendar months has occurred, the operator shall be required to successfully complete all of the requirements of subsections (2) through (5) of this rule.
- (11) All school bus operators shall be subject to the Federal requirements of 49 C.F.R., Parts 382 and 391 related to the substance abuse testing and alcohol detection program.

The following is taken from Rule **6A-3.0151, FAC, School Bus Operator Physical Examination and Medical Examiner's Certificate**

- (1) The physical standards established by the Federal Highway Administration pursuant to 49 CFR Sections 391.41 and 391.43 shall be applicable to all school bus operators within the state. Any individual who has been performing as a school bus operator who is disqualified as a result of the enactment of this rule shall be afforded a priority in reemployment with the school district in another capacity as positions become available for such employment.
- (2) Resolution of conflicts of medical evaluations. In the event that the approved school board medical examiner's determination of non-certification of a school bus operator is inconsistent with a second medical examination administered by a qualified medical examiner chosen by the school bus operator, the conflict shall be resolved as follows:
 - (a) A third medical examiner will be chosen by the two (2) medical examiners in disagreement and shall be a licensed physician who is a specialist in the field of medical related to the condition(s) in questions.
 - (b) The third physician shall be given copies of both medical examiners' forms and the test results upon which the findings are based, and a complete description of the requirements of the bus operator's responsibilities.
 - (c) The third physician shall conduct any applicable tests as are necessary.

- (d) The findings of the third physician shall be the basis of determination for certification or non-certification.
- (3) Waiver of certain physical conditions. A person who is not physically qualified under 49 CFR Section 391.41(b)(1) or (2) and other standards which may be included in Federal Code and who is otherwise qualified to drive a motor vehicle, may drive a school bus if granted a waiver using 49 CFR Section 391.41 as a guideline for evaluation by the Deputy Commissioner for Educational Programs or designee. Applications for waiver shall be made following the procedures and requirements contained in 49 CFR Section 391.49 except that applications shall be made to and administered by the Deputy Commissioner for Educational Programs or designee.
- (4) Form ESE 479, Physical Examination of School Bus Operator and Medical Examiners Certificate, as adopted in Rule 6A-3.0141(3), FAC, shall be used for recording the results of the physical examination. This form is available electronically from the Administrator of School Transportation Management Section, Division of Public Schools, Department of Education, FEC Building, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400, (850) 245-9795.
- (5) The physical examination shall be performed according to the School Bus Operator Physical Standards: Medical Regulatory Criteria for Physical Examinations which is hereby incorporated by reference and made a part of this rule to become effective November, 1994. This document is a compilation of physical evaluation criteria and guidelines which have been published in the Federal Register and which contain specific instructions for medical examiners performing examinations. The procedures for obtaining a waiver referenced in the document shall be consistent with those found in subsection (3) of this rule.
- (6) The Medical Examiners Certificate shall be valid until the date of expiration on the certificate and shall be carried on the operator in person while the bus is in operation.

FLORIDA STATUTES**A. 1006.10 Authority of school bus drivers and district school boards relating to student discipline and student safety on school buses.**

- (1) The school bus driver shall require order and good behavior by all students being transported on school buses.
- (2) The district school board shall require a system of progressive discipline of transported students for actions which are prohibited by the code of student conduct. Disciplinary actions, including suspension of students from riding on district school board owned or contracted school buses, shall be subject to district school board policies and procedures and may be imposed by the principal or the principal's designee. The principal or the principal's designee may delegate any disciplinary authority to school bus drivers except for suspension of students from riding the bus.
- (3) The school bus driver shall control students during the time students are on the school bus, but shall not have such authority when students are waiting at the school bus stop or when students are en route to or from the school bus stop except when the bus is present at the bus stop.
- (4) If an emergency should develop due to the conduct of students on the bus, the school bus driver may take such steps as are immediately necessary to protect the students on the bus.
- (5) School bus drivers shall not be required to operate a bus under conditions in which one or more students pose a clear and present danger to the safety of the driver or other students, or the safety of the bus while in operation. The district school board shall have measures in place designed to protect the school bus driver from threats or physical injury from students.
- (6) District school boards may use transportation, school safety, or FEFP funds to provide added security for buses transporting disruptive or delinquent students to and from school or other educational activities.

- (7) In the case of a student having engaged in violent or blatantly unsafe actions while riding the school bus, the district school board shall take corrective measures to ensure, to the extent feasible, that such actions are not repeated prior to reassigning the student to the bus.

B. Section 316.172, Florida Statutes: Traffic to Stop for School Bus

- (1)(a) Any person using, operating or driving a vehicle on or over the roads or highways of this state shall, upon approaching any school bus which displays a stop signal, bring such a vehicle to a full stop while the bus is stopped, and the vehicle shall not pass the school bus until the signal has been withdrawn. A person who violates this section commits a moving violation, punishable as provided in Chapter 318,
- (b) Any person using, operating, or driving a vehicle that passes a school bus on the side that children enter and exit when the school bus displays a stop signal commits a moving violation, punishable as provided in chapter 318, and is subject to a mandatory hearing under the provisions of s. 318.19.
- (2) The driver of a vehicle upon a divided highway with an unpaved space of at least 5 feet, a raised median, or a physical barrier is not required to stop when traveling in the opposite direction of a school bus which is stopped in accordance with the provisions of this section.
- (3) Every school bus shall stop as far to the right of the street as possible and shall display warning lights and stop signals as required by rules of the State Board of education before discharging or loading passengers. When possible, a school bus shall not stop where visibility is obscured for a distance of 200 feet either way from the bus.

C. Section 1006.22, Florida Statutes: Safety and Health of Pupils being transported

Maximum regard for safety and adequate protection of health are primary requirements that must be observed by district school boards in routing buses, appointing drivers, and providing and operating equipment in accordance with all the requirements of law and rules of the State Board of Education in providing transportations pursuant to s. 1006.21.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL BUS OPERATOR

A. General Responsibilities

Bus operator responsibilities should be included in the district school board policies, rules and regulations. The following responsibilities are found in Rule 6A-3.0171, FAC (State Board of Education Rules):

- a. To pass all required physical examinations and meet such requirements as may be prescribed by law or rules.
- b. To be clean and neat in appearance, and to refrain from wearing shoes which are not securely held on the foot.

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- c. To refrain from the use of tobacco while operating the bus, and to use no profane language in the presence of the students. Operators shall not use or be under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs, or any substance which may impair the operator's alertness or performance while on duty. Operators shall not carry firearms while on school board property.
 - d. To prescribe, in cooperation with the principals, the seating arrangements of students on all buses.
 - e. To report needed changes in school bus transportation to the director or supervisor of transportation (including bus loads, bus deficiencies, road hazards, routes, and schedules.)
 - f. To study and observe all laws and rules of the State Board and the school board relating to the service of transportation.
 - g. To attend and participate in conferences and training classes for school bus operators and to be prepared at any time to pass successfully a reasonable examination concerning traffic laws, state and local transportation rules, and driving skills.
 - h. To ascertain and ensure that transported students observe all rules prescribed by law and by the state and local board.
 - i. To maintain order and discipline, under the direction of the school principal, on the part of every passenger.
 - j. To permit a student to leave the bus only at their assigned stop, except upon written authorization of the school principal or other district designee.
 - k. To observe all procedures incorporated in the Florida Department of Education Basic School Bus Operator's Curriculum as incorporated in Rule 6A-3.0141(4)(b), FAC.
 - l. To instruct transported students in safe riding practices.
 - m. To require all passengers to remain seated and to keep aisles and exits clear.
 - n. To participate in emergency evacuation drills at least once each school semester under the direction of the school principal or the principal's designee.
 - o. To use the bus, if it is publicly owned, only to transport students to and from school, except upon specific direction of the superintendent or from the principal upon written authorization by the superintendent.
 - p. To prepare immediately after every crash involving the bus or a school bus passenger an accident report to be filed with the director or supervisor of transportation.
 - q. To ascertain and ensure that all persons are off the bus before filling fuel tank.
 - r. To drive always at a safe speed and never in excess of legally posted speed limit in business or residential districts, or 55 miles per hour outside business or residential districts.
 - s. To cooperate with duly authorized school officials, technicians and other personnel in the mechanical maintenance and repair of the bus in overcoming hazards which threaten the safety or efficiency of service.

- t. To inspect the bus at least daily prior to the beginning of the first daily trip or more often as required by the school district and to report any defect affecting safety or economy of operation immediately to authorized service personnel. The inspection shall include all items identified in the procedures related to the mandatory daily inspection in the Basic School Bus Operator Curriculum.
- u. To keep the bus clean and neat at all times and not to affix any stickers or other unauthorized items to the interior or exterior of buses.
- v. To prepare reports, keep all required records, and otherwise assist school officials in mapping bus routes, planning schedules, and in obtaining information for a continuous study of all phases of transportation service.
- w. To wear a seat belt at all times when the bus is in operation.
- x. To use roof-mounted white flashing strobe lights (if equipped) at a minimum, whenever headlights are required to be used due to reduced visibility conditions pursuant to Section 316.217(b) Florida Statutes, except that insufficient light due only to the time of day or night shall not require use of the strobe light.
- y. To report immediately to the director or supervisor of transportation, school principal or other designated officials:
 - [1] Misconduct on the part of any student while on the bus or under the operator's immediate supervision.
 - [2] Complaints requiring attention of school authorities.
 - [c] Any hazards arising which would offer either an actual or a potential threat to the safety of students in the operator's care.
 - [d] Causes for failure to maintain school bus time schedule and,
 - [e] Overloaded conditions on the bus which exceed the rated capacity of the bus.
- z. To perform a complete interior inspection of each bus after each trip to ensure no students are left on board.
- aa. To maintain as far as practicable, by patient and considerate treatment of parents, a feeling of security in the safety of students transported.

B. Operating the Bus

In the daily operation of a school bus, situations and operating conditions develop that make it necessary for a school bus operator to make judgment decisions relative to the operation of the bus. The following pointers should help operators in making those decisions.

1. The school bus operator shall at all times maintain a clear and unobstructed path to emergency equipment and exits from the bus.
2. No books, chairs, seats, instruments, equipment or articles shall be transported in the school bus operator's compartment or placed in the school bus aisles.

3. If the operator must leave the bus when children are inside, he or she must be assured that disciplined behavior will be maintained. He or she shall set the parking brake, remove the ignition key, and use the appropriate equipment. He or she shall not leave the immediate vicinity of the bus if there are pupils aboard.
4. The school bus operator shall ensure that the vehicle is free of physical or mechanical defects which present clear or apparent danger to passengers.
5. The bus operator shall report bus defects to the supervisor or person designated by the supervisor, by the best available means and at his or her earliest opportunity upon recognizing a bus condition presents a potential threat to passenger safety.
6. All bus conditions which require mechanical adjustments or repairs should be reported in writing, signed by bus operators, and also by technicians when completed.
7. All crashes involving personal injury or property damage, no matter how small, shall be reported to the operator's supervisor or designee.
8. The school bus operator must avail him/herself of the disciplinary procedures provided by the principal or supervisor.
9. Obey school district policies, rules and procedures:
 - a. School board policies are general principles or guidelines for the operation of the school system, adopted by the district school board.
 - b. Administrative rules or regulations are rules for the operation of the school system, developed by the administrative and supervisory staff of the school. They are designated to implement local school board policies.
 - c. Procedures are the "how to" element in the policies, rules and procedures sequence. Usually, they are developed by the first line supervision in consultation with the people actually driving the bus, outlining the accepted methods of day-to-day operation.
10. Keep all mirrors adjusted.
11. Never coast with an automatic transmission in neutral.
12. Remember that signals from other vehicles do not always indicate the exact intentions of the operator.
13. Never permit a student to stand at the front of the bus or operate the service door handle.
14. About 90 percent of all driving decisions are based on sight. Sun glare can be a hazard to the operator. Sunglasses are recommended to minimize sun glare.
15. Never permit students to occupy the operator's seat on your bus.
16. Remember: The more a school bus stops, the greater the likelihood of a crash occurring.
17. Always operate pupil warning light systems as prescribed by law when stopping to load or unload passengers.

18. Make sure all persons are off the bus before refueling.
19. Always shut off the motor and set the parking brake before leaving the bus. Never leave your bus key in the ignition when your bus is parked or unattended on school grounds.
20. Set the parking brake and place the gear selector in neutral when bus has been brought to a stop to load and unload pupils.
21. Drive always at a safe speed. It is illegal to exceed the posted speed limit. Never exceed 55 MPH.
22. Stop at all railway crossings. Follow procedures for making stops at railway crossings.
23. If circumstances make it necessary to back a bus, do so with proper signals from a responsible person outside and behind the bus, when possible.
24. Treat your bus as if you owned it. The better you treat your vehicle, the better it will perform and the longer it will provide you and your passengers, with safe, dependable transportation. Abusive treatment damages the vehicle, resulting in more money and man-hours being required to maintain it. Responsible operators avoid dangerous potholes and bad bumps. They don't jam on the brakes. Kept in top condition, the bus will be less likely to break down.
25. Drive defensively. Be constantly alert for motorists who are angry, drunk, half asleep, daydreaming, or ill. Many other motorists are on the road when they are not mentally alert.
26. Don't Rush! "Better late than never" is an old saying which applies to all operators. You cannot rush and drive cautiously at the same time. Establish a pattern for driving cautiously and stick with it. Drive according to the motto... "Safety First, Schedule Second." Plan your schedule so you always have plenty of time. Report any difficulties in maintaining the prescribed schedule to your supervisor.
27. Drive Ahead. You can see traffic far in front of the bus. This gives you the chance to spot dangerous situations and react to them. The farther you watch, or drive ahead, the more time you have to react. Your eyes should be constantly screening the traffic ahead. If crash occurs, you will have time to take evasive action to bring your bus to a safe stop.
28. Start braking early. The less you use the brakes, the longer they will last, and the better they will operate. When you apply the brakes, make it a habit to apply them gently and reduce pressure as you complete your stop. When you develop the habit of braking early, you will avoid many panic stops.
29. Don't forget to change your driving habits when driving on wet pavement. Traction is poor on wet roads, and it can easily require twice the distance to stop on wet roads than on dry roads. Double your normal following distance. Move to the right to avoid potential head-on collisions. Roads are most slippery just after the rain starts to fall. The water combines with accumulated road oil and the road surface can become as slippery as ice. Avoid high speeds when the road is covered with water because the vehicle can hydroplane, losing contact with the road's surface. Good tires with deep treads help to maintain traction and maneuverability. Never drive through standing water. Never use cruise control on wet pavement.

C. Transporting Pupils

1. Maintain order and administer discipline fairly to every passenger.
2. Assign seats. It is the duty of the operator to seat pupils so as to produce minimum confusion in loading and unloading pupils and to maximize safety. Operators should maintain a seating chart for each bus load of students.
3. Children who cross the road must cross in front of the bus. The operator shall make sure the road is clear before signaling to the children to cross the highway (use the Universal signal for crossing students.) Riders should be instructed to cross about ten giant steps ahead of the bus. They should cross in front of the bus as far as the left corner and then stop and visually check the traffic themselves before proceeding across the roadway. Operators should carefully observe the number of students leaving the bus and make sure every rider is safely across the road before proceeding on the route.
4. Loose articles of clothing and book bags have been known to become snagged in the entrance handrails of school buses. This has resulted in injuries and fatalities. Be sure you know where each and every one of your students are at all times when entering and exiting the bus. Take special care to check the area around the school bus door and stepwell before moving away from the bus stop. If possible, account for every student before you proceed.
5. The operator can help minimize blind spots by "moving in the seat." By leaning forward and backward while looking in the mirrors, the operator will get a variety of views of the outside of the bus. This will assist in diminishing the area not visible at first glance.
6. Do not allow children to hold on to the sides or rear of the bus when skating, riding bicycles, etc.
7. Require all children to be seated before the bus moves.
8. Children should be instructed to stand off the road at least five feet or more when waiting for the bus.
9. Upon completion of all routes, the operator should walk to the rear of the bus and return up the aisle while checking each seat for sleeping children, forgotten book bags, lost lunches, or any variety of items. This practice could save the operator a return trip to a school, or disciplinary action for unknowingly leaving a student on board unattended. Most buses are equipped with child check systems. If your bus is equipped with this system please use it. If not, make sure the bus is inspected before you leave it after every run.

D. Traffic Caution

1. Be considerate of other motorists.
2. Stop the school bus only where it can be seen at least 200 feet by traffic approaching from both directions.

3. "Move in the seat" in order to help eliminate possible blind spots created by the design of the bus. By leaning forward and backward in the seat while looking to the left and right at an intersection or when changing lanes, the operator can compensate for blind spots created by the design of the vehicle.
4. Avoid tailgating at any time.
5. Observe all Florida Motor Vehicle Laws.

E. Use of Equipment

1. Use the bus only for transporting children to and from school except on specific instructions from the superintendent of schools or persons designated by the superintendent.
2. Never transport anything in a school bus with students aboard that would make the bus unfit for student transportation.
3. Do not drive in a manner that could damage the bus.
4. Do not drive the school bus anywhere other than on the approved route or trip, unless authorized by your supervisor. If it is necessary to deviate from the route to avoid a hazardous situation, report the situation to your supervisor as soon as possible.

F. Maintenance

1. Cooperate with school officials, technicians and other personnel in the mechanical maintenance and repair of the bus.
2. Perform your required daily pre-trip inspections on the bus and report any defect affecting safety or economy of operation immediately to garage personnel or supervisor.
3. Keep the bus clean and neat.
4. Ask garage personnel to explain the intended use and operation of any new or improved features of the bus you may not be familiar with.

G. Records, Repairs and Accounting

1. Prepare reports and keep required records.
2. Report immediately to the principal or designated person the misconduct of pupils on the bus.
3. Report complaints of parents or others requiring attention of school authorities.
4. Report any hazard arising which presents an actual or potential threat to the safety of passengers.
5. Report reasons for failure to maintain school bus time schedule.

H. School Bus Routes and Schedules

1. Follow a strict time schedule, but never sacrifice safety to maintain a schedule.

2. The location of school bus routes and school bus stops shall be determined by the school board, or other official person designated.
3. Permit no loading or unloading through the emergency door. This door is used during emergencies or during evacuation drills only.
4. Keep the route schedule in the bus and amend the schedule only as directed by your supervisor.
5. Follow the route schedule except when to do so would involve unnecessary hazards. For example, construction on the street at the bus stop might require a detour and a temporary relocation of the bus stop. Report this to your supervisor upon completion of the route.

I. General Instructions

The school bus operator is responsible for the safety of the children in his or her care. An operator should place the safety, health and well-being of his or her passengers above everything else on the bus.

1. The school bus operator should maintain a professional attitude.
2. The operator should be patient, firm, fair, and friendly.
3. Safety first! When in doubt, do not take chances.

J. Tips to the Operator

1. A "defensive operator" is defined as a person ready to avoid the mistakes of other operators. Practice defensive driving. Drive as though you never have the right-of-way.
2. The operator should display a cooperative attitude. Do not talk badly about a school or repeat gossip overheard on the bus.
3. Learn to spot dangerous situations.
4. A loose exhaust pipe may rub the brake line and cause brake failure.
5. Never assume that the other operator will stop for your flashing red warning lights. Check traffic and mirrors before opening the door.
6. Turn your head before you turn the wheel.
7. Exercise good judgment and keep your eyes and mind on the business of safe driving.
8. Drinking on the school bus is a dangerous habit to form. Soda cans and drink cups can become missiles that could cause an injury to a student during a sudden stop or crash. Additionally, school bus operators need to keep both of their hands on the steering wheel while driving.
9. School buses carry the most valuable cargo in the world. Children cannot be transported safely except by well- trained, conscientious operators.

INSPECTIONS



A. Pre-trip Inspection

The school bus operator plays an important role in each school district's preventive maintenance program. Pre-trip inspections should be conducted every time the bus is put into service. The operator should be alert for evidence of conditions which may require attention. The operator need not be an expert technician to observe and report problems such as the following:

1. Air brakes leaking;
2. Engine not idling properly;
3. Engine over-heating;
4. Unusual noise under hood of bus.
5. Strange or unusual looking items, packages, wires, liquids, etc. (Notify Supervisor Immediately if found)

Suspicious items discovered during your inside check should be reported immediately. Any unfamiliar articles, odors, substances or changes in your bus during the inside or outside inspection must be reported immediately.

State Board of Education Administrative Rule 6A-3.0171 requires that pre-trip inspections shall be made at least daily prior to the beginning of the first daily trip or more often as required by the school district. Most districts use an inspection form which is filled in and submitted in accordance with district procedures. Failure to use a daily inspection report not only jeopardizes the safety of students and other motorists, but may actually cost the district money for the following reasons:

1. Operators tend to be less observant and less maintenance conscious.
2. Conditions observed may not reach the attention of maintenance personnel.
3. Corrective measures are more likely to be delayed or neglected entirely.

A thorough pre-trip inspection consists of the following:

1. The inside safety check;
2. The walk-around check;
3. The on-the-road check.

THE INSIDE SAFETY CHECK

At the beginning of the inspection, the inside of the bus should be checked thoroughly. Inspect the passenger area, seats, and windows. Make sure there are no loose objects (such as books, lunch boxes, or trash) lying on the seats or on the floor. Then check out the operator's controls. With the engine running check out the following:

1. **Air Pressure Gauge:** This should indicate adequate capacity to operate your brakes. Don't operate the bus until air reaches full pressure. Excessive loss of pressure overnight can indicate a leak in the air system. With air brakes, shut the engine off and hold the pedal down while you listen for air leaks and watch the gauge to see that the brakes are holding pressure.
2. **Service Brake Warning Light:** In buses with hydraulic brake systems, this light should come on during a hard brake application if one or both of the brake systems is not operating properly. With air brakes, the red light and buzzer should come on when you pump down the brakes to below 60 pounds per square inch (PSI).
3. **Oil Pressure Warning Light:** This light should come on as the bus is started, but then it should go off right after the bus starts. If it does not, turn off the engine and report this immediately. Do not race the engine when it is cold. Low oil pressure can destroy the engine.
4. **Oil Pressure Gauge:** Found on buses without a warning light. It should indicate adequate pressure. If not, turn off the engine and report immediately.
5. **Alternator Warning Light:** If this light remains on after the engine is running it means a malfunction exists in the charging system. Do not operate the bus. Report immediately.
6. **Ammeter or Voltmeter:** (Instead of Alternator Light) Ammeter should show a charge, or normal position when the engine is running. If it indicates a discharge (points toward D), turn off the engine and report immediately. Voltmeter should indicate in green area, or over 12 Volts, with engine running.
7. **Water Temperature Gauge or Warning Light:** These instruments show the temperature of the coolant in the engine. If the bus has a gauge, the indicator should point toward cool or warm. When it indicates hot, the engine should be stopped immediately and the problem reported. The same action should be taken if the temperature warning light goes on. Overheating can destroy the engine.
8. **Fuel Gauge:** It should indicate enough fuel for the route.

9. Check Each of the Following:

Directional signals	Clearance and I.D. lights
Pupil warning lights	Stop lights
Wind shield wipers	Body fluid clean-up kit (if equipped)
Interior bus lights	Emergency flashers
Windshield defroster	Headlights
Heater	Stop arm control and lights
Service door and step	Fire Extinguisher
Reflectors/emergency equipment	6" Fan
Operator's seat belt	Horn
First Aid Kit	Operator's Seat
Emergency Exits and Buzzer	Passenger Seats (for Security and sufficient padding)
All mirror	CSRS Securement (if applicable)
Belt Cutter	

Special note: Check passenger lap or three point belts (if applicable).

10. Bus Cleanliness: The bus should be kept clean at all times. A dirty and littered bus is an invitation for students to make it worse. Empty trash receptacles when necessary. Don't allow mildew to collect on the inside roof of the bus. Periodic cleaning of the interior with warm water and detergent will keep the bus clean.

THE WALK-AROUND CHECK

Start the engine. Allow the bus to warm up. The five minutes to inspect the bus is enough warm up.

NOTE: Be sure you follow local policies on checking above items under the hood. Some districts do not require under-hood inspections by the operators.

1. **Tires:** Visually inspect for under inflated, flat, worn or damaged tires. Don't drive unless tires are in good condition.
2. **Wheels:** Check for loose or missing lug nuts, excessive corrosion, or other damage.
3. **Fluid Leaks:** Look carefully at the area under the bus and on the inner wheels and tires for wetness. Any excessive fluid leak can be a potential problem. Leaks can be –from engine oil, water or coolant, fuel, brake fluid, transmission fluid, rear axle fluid, or grease.
4. **Lights and Warning Systems:** These include: pupil warning lights and crossing arm, clearance and I.D. lights, back-up lights, stop sign(s) and lights, reflectors, turn signals, brake lights, hazard flashers, and strobe light (if equipped). All must be clean and working properly with no missing parts.
5. **Windshield and Windows:** All school bus windows should be clean. Be sure all film, dew or frost is removed.
6. **Mirrors:** All mirrors must be clean and properly adjusted. Pay special attention to cross-view mirrors. Proper adjustment allows the operator to view areas in close proximity to tires and stepwell.

7. **Exhaust Systems:** Check for sagging or loose exhaust pipes, collapsed tailpipes, and mufflers. Look for visible exhaust leaks and listen for excessive exhaust noise, vibration, and rattles. All exhaust leaks should be repaired immediately.
8. **Emergency Exits and Buzzer:** Open the exits and listen to the buzzer. These exits must be operable during emergencies, yet properly latched when closed. Any locking device must meet ignition interlock standards as specified in Florida School Bus Specifications requirements.
9. **General Body Condition:** Visually inspect the condition of the bus body for damage. Report all dents, scrapes and scratches on the pre-trip form.

THE ON-THE-ROAD CHECK

A road check, before picking up passengers, will give the bus operator time to test the steering, suspension, transmission, driveline, brakes, and other parts.

1. **Test the Parking Brake:** Place selector in "D" (drive) position and accelerate engine to slightly above idle speed for 2 to 3 seconds. If the bus moves forward, the parking brake is not holding properly and should be repaired.
2. **Check Transmission Operation:** With the transmission engaged in forward or reverse position, the bus should start out smoothly and the transmission should not produce any unusual metallic noises. The automatic transmission should not slip. Report any unusual noises or shifting difficulty.
3. **Check the Brakes:** Don't wait until you are on the highway to check brakes. Test them at low speeds, bringing the bus to a complete stop. The bus should stop in a straight line without swerving, skidding, or pulling to one side. The brakes should not grab, lock, or make excessive noise. Note the air pressure periodically to make sure that pressure is being maintained.
4. **Check the Engine:** Be alert to any unusual engine noises, vibrations, or lack of normal response. Report anything unusual. Never race an engine.
5. **Check the Steering:** Is it responsive? Does there appear to be too much play in the steering wheel? Is the power steering noisy? Does the bus steer easily? Does it go precisely where you steer it? Is steering steady in turns and when going over bumps? Report unusual conditions.
6. **Check the Suspension:** Does one end or side of the bus sag? Is there excessive bounce, or does the bus bottom out when going over bumps? Does it weave or sway when turning corners or when on curves? If it does, this may be caused from broken springs or worn out shocks.

B. Post-trip Inspection

Upon completion of all routes, the operator should walk to the rear of the bus and return up the aisle while checking each seat for sleeping children, forgotten book bags, lost lunches, or any variety of items. This practice could save the operator a return trip to a school or disciplinary action including dismissal for unknowingly leaving a student on board unattended. It could save a child's life or at a minimum, an embarrassing situation for the operator and the school

district. Most districts have adopted disciplinary procedures for failure to complete a post trip inspection.

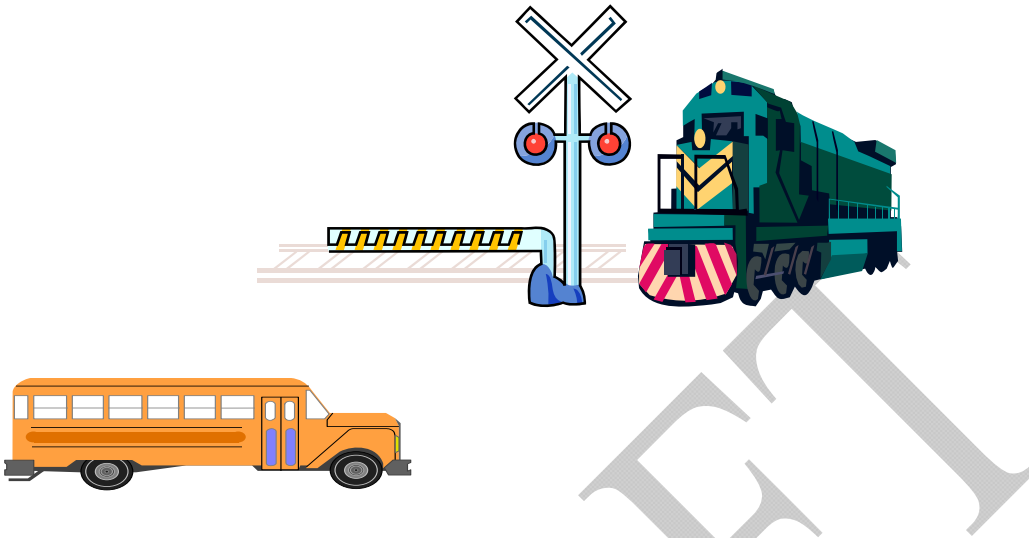
C. Monthly Inspections

The preventive aspect of maintenance on school buses is a must to insure dependability and safety. Monthly inspections are mandatory. Your district has developed a local policy pertaining to monthly bus inspections. It is extremely important that you have your bus inspected when scheduled.

The success of a good preventive maintenance program depends on the full cooperation of bus operators with technicians and management. Bus operators should always call the garage or supervisor before operating a bus if there is any question about the condition of the bus.

DRAFT

PROCEDURES FOR BUS OPERATORS AT RAILWAY GRADE CROSSINGS



With almost 250,000 railway crossings in the United States, the school bus operator must be fully alert when approaching railway crossings. The main reasons for train-motor vehicle crashes identified by the U.S. Railway Retirement Board are:

1. There are fewer trains than there used to be, so operators are may be less alert.
2. Radios and other noise from students or the bus distract operators and drown out train horns.
3. Freight trains don't run on schedule.
4. Buses and trains travel at high speeds.
5. Buses accelerate slowly. It takes about ten seconds to get across the average railway track.

By blocking crossings for long periods of time, carrying out switching operations during peak traffic hours and setting flashers to operate long before the train appears, the railway companies have contributed to negative operator attitude toward crossing warnings.

A. General

1. Before crossing any railway crossings, the bus operator must bring his/her bus to a complete stop not less than 15 feet or more than 50 feet from the rail nearest to the front of the bus.
2. When stopping, operators shall observe traffic and reduce speed, far enough in advance so as to minimize the likelihood that other motorists will rear-end the bus. Using the 4-way hazard flashers as the bus approaches the track should be helpful to communicate the fact that the bus will be stopping. All noisy equipment and radios should be turned off or the operator should use the noise abatement switch (if applicable) and students shall be instructed to be quiet until the bus has cleared the crossing.

3. When stopped, the operator shall apply parking brake, shift into neutral, fully open the service door, operator window, and listen and look in both directions along the tracks for approaching trains. For improved vision and hearing, the operator's window shall be opened. The service door shall be closed before proceeding across the tracks.
4. Operators shall not shift gears or stop when the bus is in any way on or crossing the tracks. Always ensure that there is sufficient space on the far side of the track for the bus to safely stop without any portion of the bus remaining on the track. Any time the route is designed such that the railway track is immediately preceding an intersection, the operator must be certain that when the bus starts across the track, it can proceed without the need to stop. If this situation occurs and the bus needs to make a turn, the operator should check with the route manager to see if the route can be redesigned to eliminate this situation.
5. When a train passes the crossing, no operator shall drive onto the tracks until the train has sufficiently cleared the crossing so the operator is certain that no train, hidden from view by the first train, is approaching on an adjacent track.

B. At Crossing Controlled by Railway Signals Only

1. The operator of a school bus should look and listen at every railway track at which there are in operation flashing red lights and/or bells and shall not proceed across such tracks unless directed by a law enforcement officer.
2. If switching operations or stopped trains delay the use of the crossing for frequent or extended periods of time, a report should be made to the Transportation Supervisor who should notify the railway company.

C. At Crossing Controlled by Crossing Gate or Barrier

1. No operator shall drive his bus through, around or under any crossing gate or barrier at a railway crossing while such gate or barrier is closed or being opened or closed.
2. The operator must never interpret a lack of movement as an indication that the device is either in or out of order; but must always assume the crossing is dangerous, and must not cross tracks.

D. Traffic Control Signal at Crossing

No stop need be made at any crossing where a police officer directs traffic to proceed.

E. Weather Conditions

Before crossing rails during bad weather, the operator must be sure that the crossing can be made safely. Any presence of flares (in addition to warning signals or devices positioned at a railway crossing) must be taken as an additional warning of danger.

F. Behavior of Passengers

When a bus stops at any railway crossing, all passengers must be silent until the crossing is completed. Operators must utilize the noise cancelling switch during railway crossing if his/her bus is equipped with this safety feature.

Bus Stalls on Tracks

Immediately evacuate the bus –walk in the direction of coming train.

G. Operator Responsibility

Ultimate responsibility is always with the school bus operators themselves. Approximately four out of ten grade crossing crashes happen at crossings protected by flashing lights and/or gates. **DO NOT TAKE A CHANCE.**

Crashes

A number of things must be done quickly after a bus crash. The order and number will vary in terms of the severity of the crash, extent of injuries, traffic conditions, and local policies. If the operator is to control the events and passengers after a crash, he or she must keep calm.

Crash Involving Other Vehicles

- A. Stop the bus immediately, no matter how minor the crash may appear to be.
- B. Turn off ignition.
- C. Activate hazard flashers.
- D. Notify Dispatcher
 1. Exact location of the crash.
 2. Approximate number and severity of injuries.
 3. Whether an ambulance is needed.
- E. Do not permit smoking in the vicinity of the bus.
- F. If the bus is in a hazardous location, move it to a safer location.
- G. If there is fire or danger of fire, quickly evacuate the passengers. Keep them in a group. If there is no fire danger, student passengers are usually safer if they remain on the bus. The operator must evaluate each factor of a situation at the time of the incident to determine the safest response for the students.
- H. Determine if anyone is injured. Attend to severe injuries quickly; but remember, do not move injured persons unless it is necessary to prevent further injury.
- I. Whenever a bus is disabled upon the highway or shoulder of the highway, activate hazard lights and display emergency triangular reflectors. Reflectors should be displayed as follows:
 1. On a two lane highway, one approximately 100 feet in advance, one 100 feet to the rear in the center of the traffic lane occupied by the bus, one at the traffic side approximately 10 feet to the rear of the vehicle.

2. Upon a divided highway, one approximately 200 feet to the rear in the center of the lane occupied by the bus, one in the center of the lane 100 feet to the rear, and one to the rear at the traffic side approximately 10 feet from the bus.

J. Move the vehicle off the roadway if possible.

Additional Information

In all cases where there are injuries and/or property damage, a traffic enforcement agency must be notified. Do not leave the scene until released by the investigating officer. In addition, school officials must be notified.

A. Be careful what you say:

1. Be calm, cooperative and courteous.
2. Do not admit fault on your part.
3. Do not accuse the other driver.
4. Be accurate and factual when talking with the law enforcement agent.

B. It is important that the bus operator obtain certain information at the scene:

1. Names, addresses and operator's license numbers of other operators involved.
2. Name, address, birth date and seat location of students on board. (Required seating charts will have all this information)
3. Name and address of owners of damaged property.
4. License number of vehicles involved.
5. Make and model of vehicles involved.
6. Name and address of witnesses.
7. Location and time of crash.
8. Weather conditions.
9. Type and condition of road surface.
10. Visibility.
11. Position of vehicles or damaged property in relationship to the bus.

C. Give the operator of the other vehicle, or the damaged property owner, complete information concerning your name, address, operator's license number, your school district address, make and model of the bus and general information needed to file a crash report. Write a crash report immediately after every crash involving damage of the bus or school bus passengers. All crashes must be reported regardless of severity.

Crashes Involving Animals

A school bus operator should never swerve or make a hard panic stop to avoid hitting a small animal. The safety and well-being of your passengers and fellow motorists must come first.

Should you make an emergency stop or swerve for such a reason, an on-bus injury or crash may occur and human suffering could result.

Because the safety of the students is top priority for the bus operator, if while transporting students a small animal is injured or killed, the operator must not stop. Report the incident to the Transportation Department at the first opportunity.

If while driving the bus without students present, the operator injures or kills a small animal, he or she may stop if the route permits and a safe location is available. Additional information on how to handle this type of situation is the responsibility of the local district. Some districts are adopting policies related to procedures to follow if the bus strikes a large animal. In such cases, the bus may incur damage that makes it unsafe to operate.

DRIVING EMERGENCIES



A. Brakes Fail

1. Take foot off the accelerator pedal.
2. Shift to lower gear.
3. Pump the brake pedal repeatedly if bus has hydraulic brakes.
4. With air brakes, if the low pressure warning comes on, stop and safely park your vehicle as soon as possible.
5. Once the bus is secured, turn off the ignition.
6. Engage the parking brake.

B. Running Off Pavement

1. Take foot off the accelerator pedal.
2. Grip the steering wheel firmly with both hands.
3. Resist urge to return to the road immediately.
4. Continue slowing down until stopped or it is safe to return to the road.
5. When safe, re-enter traffic.

C. Tire Blows Out

1. Keep a firm grip on the steering wheel.
2. Keep wheels as straight as possible.
3. Gradually release the accelerator pedal.
4. Reduce speed to 20 MPH or less before pulling off onto the shoulder.
5. Drive the vehicle completely off the road if safe to do so.

D. Accelerator Pedal Sticks

1. Shift to neutral.
2. Pump the accelerator pedal with several sharp jabs to release.
3. Pull off the highway at the closest, safest location.
4. Turn off the ignition.

E. Recovering from a Skid

1. Avoid braking.
2. Steer in the direction in which the rear end of the vehicle is skidding.

F. Driving on Ice

1. Drive at reduced speed.
2. Make no sudden changes in speed or direction.
3. In starting, for optimum traction, accelerate gradually.

G. Blinding Lights

1. Dim lights, even if the other operator does not dim his or her lights.
2. Look at the right edge of road.
3. Slow down.
4. Pull to the right in order to give the other operator more room.

H. Lights Fail

1. Try other lights, high or low beam, turn signals, parking lights or brake lights.
2. Slow down.
3. Look for something to orient you.
4. Pull off the road and stop.

I. Stalling on Railway Tracks

1. Direct students to evacuate the vehicle immediately.
2. If there is not an approaching train, walk away from bus at a 90 degree angle to the track.
3. If there is a train approaching the crossing, walk away from the bus at a 45 degree angle away from the track toward the train.

J. Animal on Road

1. Avoid hitting animal only if you can safely do so by careful braking and steering but do not swerve so drastically as to lose control.
2. If the animal is hit, notify dispatch immediately. Follow district policy.

K. Submerged Vehicle

1. Escape through an open window, before water reaches window level if possible.
2. If the vehicle sinks rapidly, move to the rear of the passenger compartment to breathe trapped air while planning escape.
3. Open the side window or knock out the windshield or back windows which are encased in black rubber. Operators should make students aware of these features when training them for evacuation drills.
4. Open door when water pressure is equalized.

L. Deep Ruts and/or Holes in Road

1. Reduce speed.
2. Try to avoid deep ruts or holes if possible.
3. Before the wheel drops in a rut or hole, let up on the brakes so wheels will turn.
4. Maintain a firm grip on steering wheel.

M. Steering Failure

1. Hard steering; pull off the road and check for flat or low tire, or broken power steering belt.
2. Complete failure; apply brakes moderately to prevent skidding.

N. Vehicle Catches on Fire

1. Stop immediately
2. Evacuate the bus
3. Utilize the fire extinguisher, if it is safe to do so.

O. When An Crash is Imminent

1. Steer away until crash is unavoidable.

P. Physical Emergencies Affecting the Operator

1. Dirt in eye, violent coughing or sneezing attack--signal, slow down and stop until condition is corrected.
2. Do not try to retrieve a dropped item from the floor of the bus while it is moving. Stop, then pick up and take care of the dropped items.

If you experience a physical emergency such as a foreign object in the eye or a violent coughing or sneezing attack, you stop until condition is corrected.

Q. If a stranger or unknown child boards your bus

Stranger

1. Call dispatch for help.
2. If possible, ask the person to leave.
3. Protect students and yourself (if applicable).

Unknown child

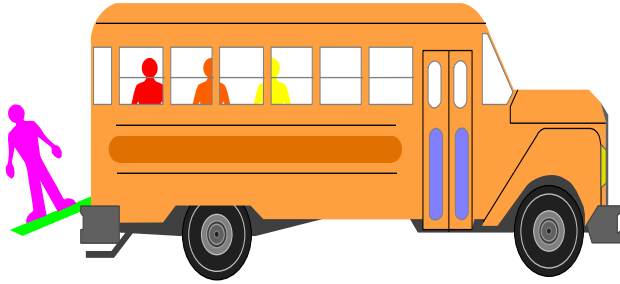
1. Call Dispatch.
2. Take the child to the nearest police or fire station.
3. Do not leave the child beside the road or alone.

R. If at the end of your route a student is still aboard

1. Call Dispatch to see if they are missing any off of other routes.
2. Do not allow the student to disembark.
3. Return the student from the school you just served.
4. Work with supervisor or dispatch to determine options for this child.

Do not under any circumstances allow a student to disembark at a stop that they do not recognize as their own or that they haven't been assigned.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES



A. Purpose

With the necessity to transport students, there is a pressing need to instruct pupils in how to evacuate a school bus. In the event of an emergency, it is important that students be familiar with the procedure for safely leaving the school bus. Rule 6A-3.0171, FAC, requires that the school principal, in cooperation with the bus driver and transportation department, conduct a minimum of two emergency evacuation drills, each school year, for all students riding school buses. These procedures shall include a requirement that all operators of school buses transporting students, teachers, or chaperones on field and activity trips instruct all passengers in the locations and proper use of school bus emergency exits prior to each such trip. Documentation of evacuation drills must be maintained by the school.

B. Procedure

School bus evacuation drills are required by law as part of the school program. All school bus evacuation drills should be held on school grounds under the supervision of the school principal or his or her designee.

When discussing evacuation drills with pupils, the importance of an orderly evacuation should be emphasized. The main objective of an evacuation drill is to acquaint riders with the use of the rear exit door and other available emergency exits, such as side emergency door, push-out windows, or roof hatches (as equipped).

1. Rule 6A-3.0171, FAC, requires the director or supervisor of transportation to confer with each school principal regarding scheduling, conducting, and documenting school bus evacuation drills. Rule 6A-3.0171(1)(d)2.d., FAC, requires the principals or other designated school staff to direct school bus emergency evacuation drills on each bus serving the school during the first six weeks of each semester of the school year, and to maintain documentation for all students. Rule 6A-3.017(1)(d)3.n., FAC, requires school bus operators to participate in emergency evacuation drills at least once each school semester under the direction of the school principal or the principal's designee.
2. Upon arrival at school, the operator should proceed to the evacuation area, turn off the engine and remain in the bus. The bus operator and the principal or the principal's designee should discuss school bus evacuations with all riders.
 - a. Emphasize the importance of drills.
 - b. Discuss the fact that drills will be held in a safe and orderly manner.
 - c. Explain the local district school evacuation program.
 - d. Inform the students to leave personal belongings on the bus.

3. There are three (3) standard methods of emergency evacuation.

EVACUATION BY:

- a. Front service door only;
- b. Rear emergency door only;
- c. Both front and rear doors.

You can also use the side doors in a bus so equipped.

4. Students should be informed that some models of school bus windshields and rear windows are mounted in rubber and can usually be kicked out to provide an additional emergency escape exit. Some school buses are equipped with emergency push-out windows, emergency roof hatches, and side emergency doors. The students should be instructed as to the proper use of these exits.

- a. During the drill, the operator will remain on the bus and direct an orderly evacuation.
- b. Instruct pupils to quickly walk 100 feet to the rear of the bus and away from traffic after they exit.
- c. Caution all pupils to avoid striking the door header when exiting.

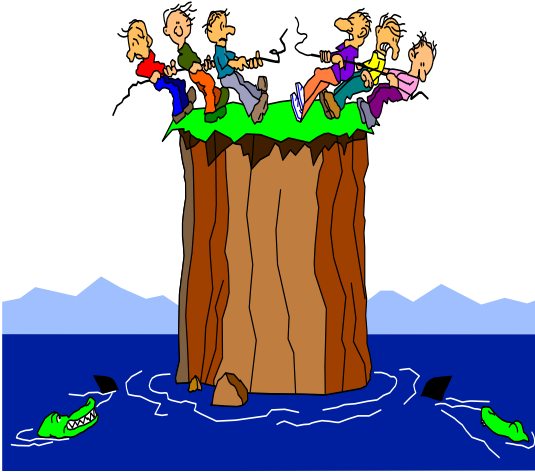
5. The principal or designee should stand near the rear of the bus to supervise. When the operator has checked to see that all pupils have exited, the operator will close and secure the rear door along with other emergency exits. After the bus has been evacuated, pupils will reenter the vehicle to collect books and personal belongings.

C. The bus should be immediately evacuated if the following occurs:

1. Fire or danger of fire.
2. Unsafe position - if the bus is stopped due to an crash or mechanical failure, the operator must determine immediately whether passengers should remain in the bus or evacuate. The operator must instruct students to evacuate if:
 - a. The final stopping point of the bus is in the path of a train or on any railway tracks.
 - b. The final stopping place of the bus is near a body of water, a river or canal where the bus might move and go into water.
 - c. The bus is stopped on a hill or a curve where there is less than 200 feet of visibility. Stop in area away from traffic is available for the students to wait for a replacement bus or for repairs to be performed.
 - d. The bus is stopped in an area where heavy traffic may jeopardize the safety of the students and an area away from traffic is available for the students to wait for a replacement bus or for repairs to be performed.

The school bus operator is responsible for the safety of the riders. However, in an emergency, the operator might be incapacitated. Several reliable riders on each bus route should be instructed as to what procedures to follow in the event the operator is unable to respond.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR



Student misbehavior on buses is one of the major problems confronting school bus operators. Understanding the basic principles of child psychology will help operators avoid trouble before it begins. If an operator overlooks the misbehavior of students, he or she loses the respect of the well behaved pupils. He or she must be careful to strike a happy medium by not being too lenient or too harsh. Both extremes are bad for the morale of the students.

The bus operator should be aware of the fact that he or she is working for an educational institution whose job is training the minds of students. Too frequently the operator expects his passengers to be finished products with adult attitudes. In having a sympathetic understanding of pupils' problems, moods and individual differences, operators should remember:

1. The average student wants to be older than he or she is and free of adult control.
2. The average student likes to be treated as an equal by an adult.
3. Most students want adults to recognize their good traits or abilities.
4. Some students will cause problems in order to get attention.

If student behavior becomes unacceptable, the operator should stop the bus in a safe location. He or she should never attempt to discipline a student while the bus is in motion. The very act of stopping the bus lends emphasis to what the operator is about to say. When speaking to the offender, he or she should speak in a courteous manner and with a firm voice. An operator should not let his or her emotions show while dealing with passengers. If discipline is necessary, the child should be moved to a seat near the operator. Never put a student off the bus except at his regular bus stop. Rules and policies for student conduct are posted in most buses for the safety of the riders. Bus operators must know these rules as well as how to enforce them. Operators should not hesitate to refer discipline problems to the principal of the school in which the child is enrolled, and/or to transportation personnel.

Most districts use a Bus Conduct Referral Form to inform the principal of unsafe student behavior. Give the Conduct Referral Form to the principal, or his or her designee, in person. Do not send a report by a student. In addition, operators may reassign seats if such action is necessary to maintain order on the bus. In serious cases, a meeting of the parent, operator, principal, and pupil might be appropriate.

Ways to Maintain Student Discipline

1. Never give an order you do not mean to enforce.

2. Give your command to stimulate action, not to check it. Say, "do this," rather than "don't do that." Suggest an action which can be successfully obeyed.
3. Give a child time for reaction.
4. Have a reason for what you ask a child to do, and when possible, take time to explain the reason.
5. Be honest in what you say and do. A child's faith in you is a great help.
6. Be fair; it isn't punishment but injustice that makes a child rebel against you.
7. Be friendly and always show an interest in what they are doing.
8. Commend good qualities and action.
9. Try to be constructive, not repressive, in all dealings with children.
10. Remember that a sense of humor is extremely valuable.
11. Never strike a child.
12. Do not judge misconduct on by how it annoys you.
13. Do not take your personal feelings and prejudices out on the children. Make the incident the student's problem, not yours.
14. Maintain poise at all times; do not lose your temper.
15. Remember, the tongue is the only keen-edged tool which grows sharper with constant use. Do not nag, bluff, or be overbearing.
16. Look for good qualities, all children have them.
17. Do not pick on every little thing a child does. Sometimes it is wiser to overlook some things.
18. Bear in mind that misbehavior is seldom unprompted. There usually is a cause and it may sometimes be you.
19. Listen for suggestions and complaints from the children.
20. Follow-up all cases which have resulted in disciplinary action. Be certain that you still have the respect and confidence of the child.
21. Be sincere in your work.
22. Set a good example yourself.
23. Defiance to established procedure comes from failure in some adults to keep the situation in hand. If there is danger of a direct break, the child should not be forced. An adult's will should never be pitted against that of a child. It is far wiser to give some simple directions that will be mechanically obeyed and pick up the reins of control in a quiet way.

24. Never hold a child up to public ridicule. It is the surest way of creating a discipline problem.

Tips and Techniques for Bus Operators

1. Smile as students enter and exit the bus each day. (Good Morning, Have a great day!)
2. Greet the students by their name.
3. Make the behavior and bus rules expectations clear the first day and week. Do this in a positive manner. Your voice tone and body language are very important. Mention that your first concern is their safety.
4. Your bus rules should be few and specific (remain seated, keep your hands and feet to your self, quiet at railways).
5. Expect respect and responsible behavior and cooperation (you must explain what these words mean). Set a good example.
6. Avoid yelling, screaming, or making threats.
7. If middle school and high school students are in a fight situation, use verbal intervention rather than physical intervention (follow the procedures of your school district).
8. Avoid embarrassing students or “backing them into a corner” in front of their peers.
9. If a student is being disruptive or violating bus rules use the student’s name, remind them of the rules that him or her is violating and explain the possible consequences. (Depending upon the situation, give no more than one warning.)
10. Look for the good qualities in the children. Avoid being critical of a behavior that is bothering you but is not violating any rules and isn’t causing an unsafe bus environment.

ACTIVITY AND FIELD TRIPS



Local school boards have developed policies, rules and procedures to govern safety and conduct for activity trips.

The school bus operator must recognize the importance of field trips and be aware of problems that can happen.

A. Field Trips - Different from Regular Trips and Routes

1. The route is unfamiliar to the operator.
2. If there are chaperones-what are their responsibilities on the bus?
3. Some students maybe unfamiliar with riding a school bus.
4. There may be excesses in behavior due to nature of the trip.
5. There may be extra equipment to be stored.
6. There maybe night-time travel that result in long hours and increased potential in fatigue.

B. Responsibility of Operators Participating in Activity Trips

1. **Preparation** - Prepare for each trip by checking the bus thoroughly. Be certain it is in good condition for the trip and all necessary equipment is in order.
2. **Bus Rules** - Insure that all students and chaperones observe all regular bus rules.
3. **Destination and Route Traveled** - Study map and plan the route in advance. Ask about possible problems and parking facilities beforehand.

4. **Chaperones** - Explain bus regulations to chaperones and assign chaperones to seats where they can be of most help. Clarify rules regarding no smoking, eating, etc., on the bus, and set a scheduled time for returning to the bus for the trip back. Field trips must not make operators late for their regular routes. Most districts have written policies on chaperone's responsibilities in your district. Operators should always give instructions for emergency evacuations on trips. Your school district should have a procedure for this process.
5. **Students** - Explain bus rules to all students who don't usually ride a bus. **Ensure that the bus riders know the evacuation procedures and where all emergency exits are located in the bus.** Let the group know that behavior and noise cannot be excessive. There can be some relaxation as to singing and talking. Bus operators, chaperones and students should know that if the group gets too loud and the operator fails to hear or see a hazard, a happy outing could result in a tragedy.
6. **Extra or oversized equipment** - If band instruments or sports equipment is transported on the bus, it must not obstruct free passage through the aisle nor obstruct vision of the operator. It is recommended that students hold equipment on their lap or between their knees resting on the floor. Large band instruments should not be carried in the passenger compartment. Coolers should never be unsecured or placed in the aisle where they could impede or slow exiting in an emergency. Loose items can become dangerous missiles if a sudden stop becomes necessary. State Board Rules prohibit transporting unsecured items on the bus.
7. **Crashes or Mechanical Breakdown** - If a trip is out of town or at night, the operator should have emergency phone numbers of local school personnel and emergency phone numbers for each county the bus travels through.
8. **Security** - The operator is responsible for making a reasonable effort to protect the bus from vandalism, damage, and theft.
9. **Punctuality** - Be punctual and arrive at the school at the scheduled time. All required information must be filled in on your field trip form.
10. **Record of Trips Made** - Carefully note all times and odometer readings, entering these in appropriate spaces on the trip form.
11. **Capacity of bus** - Student capacity is determined by how many students can safely sit within the seat design. Elementary groups can typically sit three students on a seat on trips in or out of the county. Secondary schools may take three to a seat within the county, but if going out of the county, two to a seat. (This is only a suggestion, be sure you follow your local district policy.) Before the trip begins, make sure that every child has a seat.
12. **Tolls** - The sponsoring group usually is responsible for all tolls and/or expenses for admission. Be sure to agree on this before the trip begins.
13. **As the operator** you are responsible for the safety of all passengers. Do not permit anyone to persuade you to drive in an unsafe manner.
14. **Keep a list** of any problems you encountered on the trip and report them to your supervisor.
15. **Return the bus clean** and report any mechanical problems or bus damage.

TRANSPORTATION OF EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS



A. Rules for Driving

Bus operators who transport exceptional education students must comply with all rules for regular operators described earlier. In addition, there are special rules that will aid in the transportation of exceptional students:

1. Where possible, park on the side of the street on which the student lives. Avoid having students cross the road.
2. Turn engine off when loading and unloading students **at school**. An exception may be made when using a side-lift bus. Be certain to set the parking brake.

3. Allow no unauthorized persons on the bus.
4. Have in the bus at all times a complete first aid kit and as well as paper towels and tissues. Many buses should also be equipped with body fluid clean-up kits. Be sure all contents are intact.
5. Keep current emergency telephone numbers available.

B. Rules for Side-lift Bus Operators

1. The bus operator and attendant should **ALWAYS** work as a team when securing wheelchairs on a school bus. Each team member should check the other's work to ensure the safest possible ride for the student with disabilities.
2. Be sure all occupant securement and wheelchair securement devices are properly attached.
3. Students not in wheelchairs should be properly secured in seats if securements are provided.
4. State Board Rules require the district to provide belt cutters on any school bus equipped with passenger securements or restraint straps.
5. To avoid serious damage to the lift, always release the switch as soon as it touches the ground.
6. When loading wheelchair students on the bus, carefully pull them onto the lift. Prior to activating the lift, operators and attendants must be sure there is adequate clearance on all sides of the chair.
7. Never leave a student in a wheelchair unattended on the bus or in a loading zone.

8. It is recommended that side-lift bus operators and attendants wear rubber soled shoes. This will help prevent slipping on the metal lift platform when loading or unloading students.
9. In cases where it is absolutely necessary to lift a student with a physical disability, operators are advised to bend their knees and keep their backs perpendicular to the ground. Refer to the student's IEP for specific emergency evacuation procedures.
10. If there are any questions about handling a student with a physical disability, ask for help at the school or the Transportation Office.

C. Bus Attendants

1. Bus attendants should become familiar with the responsibilities of exceptional education bus operators.
2. Attendants must work closely with operators and school staff in tending to the needs of exceptional education students on the bus. The attendant also assists the operator in case of emergencies, and retains familiarity with the route.
3. The bus attendant may be required to operate the sidelifit when loading or unloading students in wheelchairs and secures wheelchairs in place on the bus. The bus attendant must be thoroughly instructed in these procedures. Never allow unauthorized persons to operate lift.
4. The bus operator and attendant should **ALWAYS** work as a team when securing wheelchairs on a school bus. Each team member should check the other's work to ensure the safest possible ride for the student with disabilities.

D. Exceptional Education Students

1. Some Characteristics of the Students and Suggestions for Assisting Them:
 - a. Some students have physical disabilities which add to their need for assistance while on the bus. They may have poor physical coordination. Speech and language abilities may be limited.
 - b. Exceptional education students may have various degrees of difficulty in one or more of the following: physical movement; sight; hearing; self control; and ability to learn.
 - c. The hearing impaired student may have difficulty understanding normal speech even though he or she wears a hearing aid. He or she may turn his hearing aid off if conditions become loud or uncomfortable in the bus. When speaking with the hard-of-hearing student, speak naturally; look directly at the student while speaking. Do not exaggerate or overemphasize. Keep your hands down from your face while speaking. If the student misunderstands, restate the question or statement. Some words are difficult to see since they require no lip movement. Keep words to a minimum. When possible learn basic sign language to better communicate with the student.
 - d. Visually impaired and hearing impaired students should always load and exit the bus as close to their home as possible. Because the school bus operator is the person who has the best opportunity to recognize hazards at a bus stop, they have a responsibility to report any problems present to their supervisors. Operator should **never** make changes in bus stops without the proper district authorization. The visually impaired student may have difficulty seeing traffic signals and oncoming traffic, and the

hearing impaired student may have difficulty hearing emergency sirens; therefore, they should not be permitted to cross streets without reliable assistance.

- e. Emotionally disturbed students have difficulty in maintaining relationships with others and are sometimes unable to express their feelings or needs without creating serious difficulty for themselves and others. They may be very aggressive and/or withdrawn. They are often anxious and sometimes fearful and have low self-confidence and can be easily frustrated. Efforts should be made to allow students to socialize and express themselves.
 - f. The actions of emotionally disturbed students are often extreme. They may become emotional suddenly with action out of proportion to the situation. You should become familiar with each individual student's behavior as each student displays "warning signals" prior to a crisis situation. (e.g. Changes in body language, facial expressions, or tone of voice).
 - g. Hyperactivity is common among emotionally disturbed students. They have difficulty sticking to a task. They act impulsively. Their behavior is often abrupt and uncontrolled, with no thought for their own safety or the safety of others.
 - h. One of the tendencies of emotionally disabled students is to repeat the same action over and over again. This is a characteristic of the disability and should not be viewed as stubbornness. Those assisting the student should attempt to help the student in the development of inner controls so that he or she may regulate his own conduct.
 - i. Some students have had brain damage before, during or after birth which hinders normal development. This hurts the student's opportunities for educational success and often gives him or her feelings of inadequacy. They may have an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write and spell. They may display a disorganized approach to tasks. They may show poor planning and changes in ability from day to day.
2. Suggestions for Working with Exceptional Students
- a. The beginning of an exceptional child's school day begins with the bus operator. The way in which they are received sets the mood of their entire day. When they are greeted as if they are someone that you are glad to see rather than someone you are paid to serve, they have a much better day. Greet them with a big HELLO and leave them with a cheerful GOOD-BYE. Be positive in working with them. Each student should have the opportunity for a fresh start each day. Do not hold grudges from the previous day's bus ride.
 - b. Students should be encouraged to accept as much responsibility as possible.
 - c. Encourage independence in the child. As much as the schedule permits, allow them to do as much for themselves as possible. However, remember not to allow actions that could result in injury to students. (e.g., allowing students to operate their own electric wheelchairs onto lifts has resulted in injuries. Always monitor students' actions).

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- d. It is helpful to make a short list of rules for bus behavior. Confine the rules to the major issues. Allow the students to help make the rules. Make the students aware of the consequences if they break a rule. These rules will not supersede your district's policy.
 - e. Do not rule the students by using fear, threats or by making unreasonable demands. Never punish the entire group for the inappropriate behavior of a few.
 - f. Aggressive behavior may be an expression of wanting attention. Give these students attention anytime they are displaying positive/appropriate behavior.
 - g. If the child explodes, wait until they have control of themselves before trying to talk with them and then only if they want to talk. Try to keep in mind that an average person's adrenaline level decreases to normal in approximately 15 to 20 minutes following a crisis situation. This means you as well as the student.
 - h. Do not try to talk above confusion. Always speak in a normal tone of voice.
 - i. Be consistent. Follow through with things you say you will do.
 - j. Report unusual behavior to school officials.
 - k. Be firm but fair. When correcting the student, be brief and to the point.
 - l. If a child's behavior is distracting you from driving, the student is endangering the lives of others. This type of situation must be corrected and requires the cooperative effort of the bus operator, attendant, parents and school officials to resolve.
 - m. All students cannot be grouped or handled in the same way. A method used to control one student may not work with another one. Be resourceful.
 - n. Encourage students to help maintain cleanliness in and around their assigned seat.
 - o. Report any crash or injury of a student to the appropriate school officials in accordance with district policy.
 - p. Always request assistance from transportation supervisors, as well as other operator and attendants. They are often some of your best resources.



9

FLORIDA EDUCATION FINANCE PROGRAM TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

The FEFP report is a periodic survey which determines each school district's allocation of state money for pupil transportation.

Surveys are taken in October and February during the regular school year. Also, if a school district transports students during the summer term, surveys are required during June and July.

All students transported are counted.

Each school district receives a partial reimbursement of their transportation expenditures from the State. By accurately reporting students transported, districts will receive their fair allocation of state money for pupil transportation.

The bus operator plays an important part in the data collection process. During each survey week, your supervisor will require that you mark on your bus membership list the name of all students who ride at least one time during the survey week and/or possibly the preceding six days. Transported students that are considered in a hazardous walking zone must be identified correctly to ensure that they are counted and monies are received

BUS SAFETY RULES FOR STUDENTS

The following bus safety rules can be used in the classroom to instruct students in proper bus riding habits. Also, the bus operator should periodically review the rules with the passengers.

A. **Be on Time:**

1. Plan to leave home each day so that you will be at your bus stop five minutes before the bus.
2. Remember, the operator will not wait for stragglers.
3. If you have to walk where there are no sidewalks, face the traffic and walk on the shoulder of the road. Use the left-hand side of the road so the operator can see you and you can see the operator.
4. Walk in a single file.

B. **At the bus stop:**

1. Students and parents are responsible for safety and proper student behavior going to and from the stop and while waiting for the bus.
2. At the school bus stop, stand away from the highway at least ten feet from roadside.
3. Student's must respect other people's property.
4. Parents should supervise children at the stop if possible.
5. Student's must not push, shove, or engage in horseplay or boisterous activity.
6. Students must wait for and get off the bus only at approved stop locations.
7. Wait until the bus comes to a full stop and the door is opened before moving toward the bus. When crossing the road, wait for the signal from the operator. Operators are to use the universal signal for crossing school bus passengers.
8. Use the handrail when boarding the bus.

C. **Bus Behavior:**

1. Normal classroom behavior is expected while riding the bus.
2. Students are expected to go directly to their assigned seat, sit quietly, and fasten their lap belts (if equipped).
3. Eating, drinking, or chewing gum are not permitted on the bus.

4. Hold books and other belongings firmly.
5. Keep the aisle clear at all times.
6. Large or heavy articles should be transported to school by your parents.
7. There must be complete silence at all railway crossings.
8. Nothing should go out of the windows.
9. Report any damage in the bus to the driver as you leave the bus.

D. When you get there:

1. Remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop.
2. Follow the directions given by the operator for unloading.
3. Use the handrail when leaving the bus. Be careful that loose straps or drawstring on articles of clothing and backpacks **do not** get snagged on the handrail.
4. Be careful - watch your step.
5. Move away from the bus as quickly as possible.

E. Crossing the Road Safely:

Crossing the road is the most dangerous part of a bus trip.

Follow these steps:

1. Walk 10 large steps ahead of the bus at the edge of the road.
2. Before starting to cross – **STOP** - Look at the operator and wait until signaled to cross. Operators are to use the adopted universal signal. Always cross in front of bus with the operator's assistance.
3. Walk quickly across, stop at the left edge of the bus before crossing the unprotected traffic lane and check both directions to be sure the roadway is clear.
4. Walk directly to the other side of the road. Do not stop to retrieve dropped items.

F. Special Trips:

1. Follow all school bus safety rules.
2. Stay with your assigned group and chaperone at all times.

G. Emergencies:

1. Remain seated until bus operator gives instructions.
2. Follow emergency evacuation procedures.

Local District Transportation Procedures



**INSERT
LOCAL
INFORMATION
HERE**

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