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School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series

Pupil Transportation Supervisors Guide

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The School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series

School buses are the safest mode of ground transportation, yet every year there are school bus-related injuries and even fatalities. School bus drivers want to safely transport their passengers. And you, their supervisor, want to ensure that school bus drivers have all the information and skills they need to do the job correctly. The School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series gives you tools to make sure that your school bus drivers are as competent as possible. Though this training program is produced by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, when and how it is used will be determined solely by pupil transportation providers.

The series provides refresher training on nine important topics frequently requested by school bus drivers and pupil transportation supervisors. This is not intended to be training for new school bus drivers. Rather the series provides a review of some of the most important aspects of driving a school bus.

The topics are designed to be presented independently, although some may work well if offered together. For each topic, there is a detailed instructor guide, PowerPoint slides and, when appropriate, handouts. Some topics have practice sessions. Suggested presentation times range from 50 minutes to more than 5 hours, depending on current issues and local needs. Practice sessions may extend the presentation time.

The nine topics:

1. Driver Attitude (50 minutes)
2. Student Management (1 hour)
3. Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety (1 hour)
4. Vehicle Training (1 hour, 30 minutes; plus 20-30 minutes practice per vehicle per participant)
5. Knowing Your Route (50 minutes)
6. Loading and Unloading (1 hour, 15 minutes)
7. Emergency Evacuation (1 hour)
8. Transporting Students with Special Needs (5 hours, 20 minutes)
9. Driving Under Adverse Weather Conditions (4 hours, 25 minutes)

In addition to the instructor guides for each of the topics, the School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series includes a specific Administrator Guide that provides an overview of the content and structure of each of the modules, details about the layout of the

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material and the presentation methods used, and a review of classroom presentation skills.

However, this booklet is just for you, the pupil transportation supervisor. It will help you to make the best use of the series. For each topic, the booklet describes what you can do to enhance the topic presented and provides additional resources about the topic. Your support of the series is critical if your school bus drivers are to have the best skills possible. This booklet gives you the means to provide that support.

NOTE: School bus drivers will hereafter be referred to only as drivers.

DRIVER ATTITUDE

Overview

Time: 50 minutes

Description: The driver sets the stage for how things will go on the school bus and throughout the students' day. Safety starts with the driver and a driver's attitude predicts how the students will behave; a driver's "baggage" shouldn't get carried on to the school bus. Drivers also need to pay attention to other drivers and their attitude changes and know what to do to get help.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. State the impact the drivers' attitude has on the way they drive and handle the bus, how the students behave, and how the drivers feel about the job; and
2. Describe what they need to do to reduce stress on the job.

Handout:

#1 Tips for Maintaining a Good Driver Attitude

Could be presented with:

Student Management

What the Pupil Transportation Supervisor Can Do:

- Spend time with your drivers so you can recognize changes in attitude, health, etc.
- Hold short (5-10 minute) "roll call" trainings or pep talks.
- Ask veteran drivers to mentor new drivers.
- Hold a safety meeting once a month. (For large districts, break into small groups.) Encourage drivers to talk about concerns. Listen carefully to what they say. This lets drivers feel that they are getting some individual attention. Meetings in small districts are especially important, since drivers often take their buses home and don't get together on a daily basis.
- Let drivers know when you (or another supervisor) are available for one-on-one conversations. Some concerns may not be appropriate to discuss in a group.
- Distribute the Personal Pre-Trip Inspection (see Handout #1) on a wallet-size card to all drivers.

Additional Resources:

1. *If Buses Could Talk*, (18 minutes). This video explores scenarios involving drivers relating to each other in the break room, and will get your drivers

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laughing, talking, and thinking about the relationship between morale, professionalism and safety. Includes written discussion questions. Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, www.pts.org

STUDENT MANAGEMENT

Overview

Time: 1 hour

Description: The driver must recognize that control of the bus is critical. The driver has two responsibilities: driving safely and not being distracted. If the driver is distracted by and/or loses control of the students, it is a safety problem.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of keeping control of student behavior on the bus;
2. State the standards for behavior in his/her school district;
3. Describe the situations that put drivers most at risk; and
4. Describe ways to maintain acceptable student behavior on the bus.

Handouts:

- #1 Managing the Students on My Bus Worksheet
- #2 Tips and Techniques for Managing Your Students

Could be presented with:

- Driver Attitude
- Loading and Unloading
- Transporting Students With Special Needs

What the Pupil Transportation Supervisor Can Do:

- Have principals tell drivers what their expectations for student behavior are at the beginning of the school year.
- Invite drivers to take the behavior management classes offered to teachers.
- Make seasoned and effective drivers available as mentors.
- Use a team approach to address student management: parent, teacher, principal, school board, driver, student.
- Encourage parents to be present at bus stops to help with loading and unloading.
- Review your school discipline policy to make sure that it supports the school bus driver.
- Let drivers know the disposition of discipline reports.
- Notify parents at the start of the school year that proper behavior is expected on buses and that the driver's authority must be respected. Have parents sign off on the school bus rules.

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- If not already done, develop a policy on whether video cameras will be used on school buses and, if so, how they will be used.

Additional Resources

1. Dealing with Young Riders (video, handbook, overhead slides, 1993). Starring Bob McAllister. Videotapes cover: Rules, Rapport, Reason (31 mins.); Communication (37 mins.); Giving Directions (36 mins.); Stopping Destructive Behavior (21 mins.); Dealing with Groups (31 mins.). Strategies Training Systems. www.strategiestraining.com.
2. Creating a Safe and Respectful Environment on Our Nation's School Buses (2 modules, 2 hours each). These free downloadable training modules are designed to equip school bus drivers to recognize bullying behaviors among students on their buses and deal with bullying effectively as part of ensuring a safe and respectful bus environment. <http://safesupportiveschools.ed.gov/index.php?id=9&eid=436>
3. Assertive Discipline for School Bus Drivers (30 minutes). A step-by-step approach for managing student behavior on the school bus. The bus driver learns how to achieve an orderly bus and manage student behavior effectively and positively. Solution Tree. www.solution-tree.com .
4. Student Management: Creating A School Bus Safety Culture (20 minutes). This DVD shows drivers and attendants there is no "magic potion" for student management – it takes hard work to get the job done. Six suggestions are explored, which, when put in place, reinforced and enforced, can change a chaotic bus environment into a safety culture! Pupil Transportation Safety Institute www.ptsi.org
5. Check with teachers' associations to see what student management material they recommend.

HIGHWAY-RAIL GRADE CROSSING SAFETY

NOTE: This module can be substituted for an Operation Lifesaver class, if you are unable to arrange one.

Overview

Time: 1 hour

Description: The driver must be aware of the potential dangers at highway-rail grade crossings. The driver must know how to cross a highway-rail intersection safely.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the potential dangers at highway-rail grade crossings; and
2. Explain the appropriate procedures to make such a crossing safely.

Handouts:

#1 How to Cross a Highway-Rail Intersection Safely

#2 Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Warning Devices

Could be presented with:

Knowing Your Route

Vehicle Training

Emergency Evacuation

What the Pupil Transportation Supervisor Can Do:

- Make sure you know your local laws regarding when and how to cross highway-rail grade crossings.
- Know how to report problems and handle emergencies. Become acquainted with (and get the telephone numbers for) your local railroad superintendent(s), your local law enforcement agencies, and your state and local road authorities.
- Whenever possible, design routes to avoid highway-rail grade crossings. When this is not possible, list the grade crossing numbers on each route sheet. You can get the grade crossing numbers from the Highway Department.
- Learn how to contact your Operation Lifesaver State Coordinator. This person can be your connection to the railroads.

Additional Resources

1. Operation Lifesaver. A nationwide, nonprofit public information organization dedicated to reducing collisions, injuries, and fatalities at highway-rail grade crossings as well as discouraging trespassing on tracks and trestles. There are Operation Lifesaver programs in almost every State. Operation Lifesaver makes educational presentations upon request and produces educational kits, brochures, and DVDs. Operation Lifesaver, Inc. www.oli.org/
2. Decide Smart, Arrive Safe (video, 18 minutes). Produced in cooperation with the pupil transportation industry and U.S. DOT by Operation Lifesaver, Inc., the purpose of this video is to make school bus drivers aware of the potential dangers that exist at highway-rail grade crossings, and the steps to ensure their own safety as well as the safety of students in their school bus.

VEHICLE TRAINING

Overview

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes presentation; 20-30 minutes practice per person per vehicle

Description: Drivers must be familiar with all models and variations of the buses they drive.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Describe what handling characteristics they must learn about each bus;
2. Recognize when the mirrors on the bus are correctly adjusted;
3. Use the mirrors to gauge the space around the bus and to back up the bus; and
4. Pass the wheelbase test (know how much room they need to turn).

Handouts:

#1 Correct Mirror Adjustment

#2 Backing the Bus

#3 Making Turns

#4 Practice Session - Station #1, Mirror Adjustment

#5 Practice Session - Station #2, Backing the Bus

#6 Practice Session - Station #3, Making a Right Turn

Could be presented with:

Knowing Your Route

Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety

What the Pupil Transportation Supervisor Can Do:

- Require school bus drivers to practice on their own.
- If at all possible, pay school bus drivers for their practice time. NOTE: If your state requires that any time spent practicing is compensable, you may need to clearly define and monitor what is approved practice time.
- Make sure that someone is always available to help a driver with mirror adjustment.
- Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 111 sets out a 16-cone field-of-view test for school buses. This test is used in the practice session of this topic. Although FMVSS 111 states that it is effective for school buses manufactured after December 1993, drivers on older buses should also be able to see the cones. In order for the drivers to see the cones, you may have to change brackets or add mirrors to the bus.

Additional Resources

1. The School Bus Driver International Safety Competition sponsored by the National School Transportation Association. www.yellowbuses.org/safetycompetition/

KNOWING YOUR ROUTE

Overview

Time: 50 minutes

Description: The driver must be completely familiar with the route driven. The driver must know what to do with hazards on that route.

Hazards are defined as those things that pose a threat to school bus safety. For example, not all route intersections are hazards but intersections that have limited sight or high crash occurrence are route hazards.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the potential driving hazards on their own regular routes;
2. Describe what they can do to eliminate, avoid, or deal with those hazards; and
3. Explain what to do for field or activity trips when the route is not familiar.

Handout:

#1 Field/Activity Trip Checklist

Could be presented with:

Vehicle Training
Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety
Loading and Unloading

What the Pupil Transportation Supervisor Can Do:

- For regular routes:
 - Have written routes for all drivers that mark hazards and explain how to deal with them.
 - Drivers need to know the traffic patterns to expect during their route. These patterns can be thrown off by street/road closings. Get that information from city or county traffic engineers and tell affected drivers about scheduled closings. Make the phone number or website available to drivers so they can call or check on road closings.
 - Have trained substitute drivers for regular routes.
- For field/activity trips:
 - Take videos of frequent field trips to the same location for drivers to borrow and review.
 - Have written directions on file for most field trips.
 - If at all possible, pay drivers to practice driving the route in a car prior to having to drive it in the bus.

NOTE: If your state requires that any time spent practicing is compensable, you may need to clearly define and monitor what is approved practice time.

- Require drivers to report hazards on their routes. Make it easy for them by using a route hazard report form (see sample).

What to Include on a Route Sheet:

1. The bus number
2. The driver's name
3. The name of the school
4. Where the bus is parked (if appropriate)
5. The route number
6. The time the route begins and the time the route ends
7. The total number of students riding the bus
8. For each pick-up/drop-off:
 - The time it should occur
 - The specific location
 - The number of students expected
9. For the period between pick-ups/drop-offs:
 - The length in miles and minutes
 - Possible hazards and how to deal with them
10. For a highway-rail grade crossing:
 - When it will occur on the route
 - The specific location
 - The DOT number assigned to the grade crossing (some won't have one)

Additional Resources

Many larger school districts have written procedures for establishing routes and route sheets, both regular runs and activity/field trips. Contact your state agency responsible for pupil transportation, state pupil transportation associations, or a national pupil transportation association listed under General Resources for samples.

SAMPLE HAZARD REPORT FORM

Directions: Report all route hazards. Describe the route hazard as completely as you can. Be specific about the location of the route hazard.

Example: a low hanging branch on Jackson St. headed west 1/10 of a mile after the intersection of Route 124 and Jackson St.

Return this completed report to your route supervisor.

Person Reporting:

Route Number:

Bus Number:

Location of Hazard:

Description of Hazard:

LOADING AND UNLOADING

Overview

Time: 1 hour 15 minutes

Description: In every crash involving a child being struck by a school bus, driver error was indicated: the driver “lost” the child during loading or unloading. If the driver had done the job correctly, the student wouldn’t have been struck.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. State what the danger zones are;
2. Explain the importance of the danger zones;
3. Teach students about the danger zones; and
4. Describe ways to keep track of students in the danger zones.

Handouts:

- #1 The Danger Zones
- #2 Getting On and Off the Bus Safely
- #3 Proper Loading and Unloading Procedures

Could be presented with:

Student Management
Knowing Your Route

What the Pupil Transportation Supervisor Can Do

- Have people available at each school to help with loading and unloading.
- Work with preschool programs and elementary schools to teach children about the danger zones.
- Encourage parents to be present at bus stops to help with loading and unloading.
- Establish a policy that preschool and kindergarten children should be dropped off only when an authorized adult is present.
- Make sure that your policies on loading and unloading are up-to-date and are distributed regularly to all drivers.
- Require your drivers to conduct a post-trip inspection. Make the Post-Trip Inspection checklist on Handout #3 into a card mounted in each bus.
- Establish bus routes that minimize the number of students who must cross the street.
- Establish a school protocol for how a school bus driver should handle suspicious people or gangs at a bus stop. For example, you might require the school bus driver

to call in for advice on how to proceed. You might decide that the child should not get off the bus until he or she and the driver feel it is safe.

Additional Resources

1. Transportation Safety Tips for Children (fliers). Tip #10 (School Bus Stops) and Tip #11 (Handrails & Drawstrings: School Bus Hazard) provide guidance for keeping children safe in school bus loading and unloading situations. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/childps/newtips/index.htm
2. THE MOMENT OF TRUTH: School Bus Loading and Unloading Safety (1997). These resources include booklets, a video, and brochure offering procedures, tips, and cautions for and from school bus drivers. Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, www.ptsi.org
3. National School Bus Loading and Unloading Survey. Compiled annually. Kansas State Board of Education. www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=346.
4. THIS COULD SAVE YOUR CHILD'S LIFE: A School Bus Handrail Handbook (1996). Describes how children exiting a school bus may be harmed if their clothing or accessories (backpack straps, dangling key chains, etc.) get caught in the handrail or door. Describes how to test school bus handrails and eliminate the potential for snagging. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Report No. DOT HS 808 451. www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/buses/handrail/handrail.html.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

Overview

Time: 1 hour

Description: School bus drivers must be prepared to evacuate a school bus in the event of an emergency. The decision is based on the driver's evaluation of where the riders would be safest – on the bus or off the bus.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Decide when to evacuate;
2. Describe how to evacuate; and
3. Provide a just-in-time training of evacuation practices for non-regular riders.

Handouts:

#1 Emergency Evacuation Activity Work Sheet

Could be presented with:

Knowing Your Route
Loading and Unloading
Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety
Driving Under Adverse Weather Conditions

What the Pupil Transportation Supervisor Can Do:

- Require your school bus drivers to conduct emergency evacuation drills at the beginning of each school year, and a refresher drill mid-year.
- Have school bus drivers identify a student helper who can be called upon to assist other students in an emergency evacuation situation. School bus drivers will need to explain some basic steps to the selected student. A conversation with the selected student's parent may be helpful.
- Make sure that your policy on emergency evacuation is up-to-date and are distributed to all drivers.
- Establish bus routes that have safe locations where students can be evacuated to.

Additional Resources

1. School Bus Safety Drills/Student Evacuation Readiness Curriculum This curriculum provides valuable information to equip drivers and attendants with the information they need to conduct effective student safety training. Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, www.ptsi.org.

2. The Safest Way Out: Emergency School Bus Evacuation (DVD).
The three versions of this video show how to use all types of exits currently outfitted on modern school buses and discuss different evacuation patterns. Lively presentation and state-of-the-art production. AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, www.aaafoundation.org/products/index.cfm?category=schoolbus.

TRANSPORTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Overview

Time: 5 hours, 20 minutes (without practice)

Description: School districts integrate students with a variety of special needs with students on regular bus routes. Working with special needs students is different than working with other students. The policies may be the same, but the abilities of the special needs students may be very different.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. State what the school bus driver/attendant of students with special needs should know about each student he/she transports;
2. State the kinds of disabilities a student with special needs might have, and the types of behavior these students might display;
3. List the types of equipment a student with special needs might require during transport; and
4. Describe the proper loading and unloading process of students with special needs.

Handouts:

- #1 The School Bus Driver/Attendant of the Student With Special Needs
- #2 Disabilities, Behaviors, and the School Bus Driver
- #3 Team Communications
- #4 Wheelchair Standard
- #5 Equipment and Assistive Devices in a School Bus
- #6 Loading and Unloading
- #7 The Wheelchair Lift
- #8 Emergency Situations

Could be presented with:

- Student Management
- Loading and Unloading

What the Pupil Transportation Supervisor Can Do:

- Identify hands-on training opportunities for school bus drivers that transport students with special needs.
- Attend IEP meetings with the school bus driver who will transport the students with special needs.

Additional Resources

1. **Transporting Students with Disabilities Curriculum**
A comprehensive training curriculum for drivers and attendants who transport students with disabilities. This Special Needs training curriculum is designed as a 20-hour training program in its entirety, but is divided into stand-alone units. Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, www.ptsi.org.
2. **Transporting Students with Disabilities and Preschoolers National Conference**
This annual conference offers more than 40 presentations and is an opportunity to get workable solutions and practical information about transporting kids with special needs - from preschool to transition services. Edupro Group, www.eduprogroup.com.

DRIVING UNDER ADVERSE WEATHER CONDITIONS

Overview

Time: 4 hours, 25 minutes

Description: School bus drivers should always do whatever is necessary to avoid adverse weather situations. However, it is not always possible to avoid these conditions.

At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. List what kinds of weather causes various road conditions;
2. State when to anticipate each particular kind of weather; and
3. Describe how to drive in each type of adverse weather condition.

Handouts:

- #1 Weather Terms
- #2 Slippery Roads
- #3 Slippery Roads – Mud
- #4 Slippery Roads – Rain
- #5 Slippery Roads – Ice
- #6 Slippery Roads – Snow
- #7 Limited Visibility
- #8 Vehicle Control Problems
- #9 Extreme Temperatures
- #10 Catastrophic Conditions

Could be presented with:

- Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety
- Knowing Your Route
- Vehicle Training
- Emergency Evacuation

What the Pupil Transportation Supervisor Can Do:

- Provide print-outs of daily weather forecasts.
- Keep drivers updated on any weather changes via radio dispatch.

Additional Resources

1. Transporting Students with Disabilities Curriculum
A comprehensive training curriculum for drivers and attendants who transport students with disabilities. This Special Needs training curriculum is designed as a

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20-hour training program in its entirety, but is divided into stand-alone units. Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, www.ptsi.org.

2. Transporting Students with Disabilities and Preschoolers National Conference
This annual conference offers more than 40 presentations and is an opportunity to get workable solutions and practical information about transporting kids with special needs - from preschool to transition services. Edupro Group, www.eduprogroup.com.

GENERAL RESOURCES

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

Phone: 202-638-5944

Web: www.aaafoundation.org

American School Bus Council

Phone: 866-955-ASBC (2722)

Web: www.americanschoolbuscouncil.org

EduPro Group

Web: www.eduprogroup.com

National Association for Pupil Transportation

Phone: 800-989-NAPT

Web: www.napt.org

National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services

Web: www.nasdpts.org

National Safety Council

Phone: 800-621-7615

Web: www.nsc.org

National School Transportation Association

Phone: 800-222-NSTA

Web: www.yellowbuses.org

Operation Lifesaver, Inc.

Phone: 800-537-6224

Web: www.oli.org

Pupil Transportation Safety Institute

Phone: 800-836-2210

Web: www.ptsi.org

Safe Ride News

Phone: 800-403-1424

Web: www.saferidenews.com

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School Bus Fleet (magazine)

Phone: 310-533-2400

Web: www.schoolbusfleet.com

School Transportation News (magazine)

Phone: 310-792-2226

Web: www.stnonline.com

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Phone: 202-366-4000

Web: www.nhtsa.gov

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