



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**



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School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series

Administrator Guide

INTRODUCTION

Although school buses provide one of the safest modes of transportation, there are still school bus-related injuries (and unfortunately some fatalities) every year. Some of these are due to crashes with other vehicles; some are due to the school bus striking a pedestrian, bicyclist, or a passenger. The responsibility borne by school bus drivers is considerable. This School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series addresses issues that should be of concern to school bus drivers in their efforts to safely transport their passengers.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) coordinated and implemented the development of this series. NHTSA was aided by the expertise and involvement of the following organizations:

- Federal Highway Administration;
- Federal Railroad Administration;
- National Association for Pupil Transportation;
- National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services;
- National School Transportation Association; and
- Operation Lifesaver, Inc.

Representatives from several individual pupil transportation providers also participated:

- Fairfax, Virginia, Public Schools;
- Laidlaw Transit Inc.;
- Lincoln, Nebraska, Public Schools;
- Teton County, Wyoming, School District 1;
- Florida Department of Education;
- Prince Georges County, Maryland, Public Schools; and
- New York Department of Transportation.

NHTSA School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series Administrator Guide

These school districts hosted pilot tests of the School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series:

- New Port Richey, Florida;
- Fairfax County, Virginia;
- York, Nebraska;
- Tucson, Arizona; and
- Prince Georges County, Maryland.

The Administrator Guide is specific to this training.

- Overview of the School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series
- Description of the Material
- Presentation Methods Used During the Series
- Communication Skills

OVERVIEW

Intended Audience

The intended audience are experienced school bus drivers. This is an in-service training program, not a training program for new drivers. It is anticipated that State and local pupil transportation agencies will adapt the series to local requirements.

Series Content: The School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series has nine modules:

- Driver Attitude;
- Student Management;
- Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety;
- Vehicle Training;
- Knowing Your Route;
- Loading and Unloading;
- Driving Under Adverse Weather Conditions;
- Emergency Evacuation; and
- Transporting Students with Special Needs.

Series Length: Each module is designed to be presented alone and vary from 50 minutes to 5 hours and 20 minutes. Two modules require additional practice time; see the individual module descriptions for more information. Some modules support each other in their content and could be presented together. Here are some possible pairings:

- Driver Attitude
Student Management
- Student Management
Loading and Unloading
Transporting Students with Special Needs

- Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety
 - Knowing Your Route
 - Vehicle Training
 - Driving Under Adverse Weather Conditions
 - Emergency Evacuation
- Student Management
 - Loading and Unloading
- Knowing Your Route
 - Loading and Unloading
 - Emergency Evacuation

Module Descriptions

The modules do not include time for introductions or an ice-breaker exercise. It is assumed that the series will be offered at the local level to groups of people who know each other. If this is not the case, time will have to be added for introductions.

Driver Attitude

Length: 50 minutes

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

Student Management

Length: 1 hour

The school bus driver must recognize that control of the bus is critical. The school bus driver has two responsibilities: driving safely and not being

distracted. If the driver is distracted by 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 school bus drivers most at risk; and
4. Describe ways to maintain acceptable student behavior on the bus.

Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety

Length: 1 hour

The school bus driver must be aware of the dangers at highway-rail grade crossings. The school bus 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.

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

Vehicle Training

Length: 1 hour 30 minutes (without practice session)

Practice session: 20-30 minutes per person per vehicle

School bus 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).

Knowing Your Route

Length: 50 minutes

The school bus driver must be completely familiar with the route driven. The school bus 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.

Loading and Unloading

Length: 1 hour 15 minutes

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.

Transporting Students With Special Needs

Length: 5 hours, 20 minutes (without practice)

School districts integrate students with a variety of special needs with students on regular bus routes. Working with special needs students can be different than working with other students. The policies may be the same, but the abilities of the special needs students may be 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 being transported;
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.

Emergency Evacuation

Length: 1 hour

School bus drivers must be prepared to evacuate a school bus in the event of an emergency. The decision to evacuate 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.

Driving Under Adverse Weather Conditions

Length: 4 hours, 25 minutes

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 kind 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.

DESCRIPTION OF THE MATERIAL

Series Material

The School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series CD-ROM includes these resources:

- A booklet for supervisors, For Pupil Transportation Supervisors: A Guide to the School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series
- An instructor guide that includes:
 - Administrator Guide
 - Curriculum
 - Participant handouts
- All handouts are included on the CD-ROM

Purpose of Booklet

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

Curriculum Design

The first page presents an overview of the workshop: length, learning objectives, main topics, and material needed to facilitate the module. If there is a practice session with the module, instructions can be found right after this overview page. The design of the curriculum is a two-page, easy-to-use format. It may help to turn to one of the sections as you read this description.

Left page

The left page has two columns: Lesson Plan and Instructor Notes. In the Lesson Plan column, the content is presented in outline form. The outline is detailed and complete. Suggested questions are included in the lesson plan. Possible answers are given in italics following the question. In the Instructor Notes column, the notations indicate what action should be taken.

- Display Slide # _____

- Write on flipchart
- Distribute Handout # _____
- Show videotape

This column can be used to write down helpful words or key phrases.

Right page

The right page will be useful to you as you prepare to present the series. This page includes additional detail about the content on the left page. The right page also provides explanations and directions for practice sessions and possible answers to questions.

Notice that the right page mirrors the left page. They both have the same page number. At times, the right page is blank because no additional detail is needed.

Use the right page to add your own anecdotes and examples or details that you want to include in your presentation.

Participant Material

There is a no separate participant manual for this series. There are handouts with most of the modules. The instructor is responsible for making one copy of each handout for each participant. The handouts are included on CD-ROM in Microsoft PowerPoint.

PowerPoint Slides

PowerPoint slides are available for each module as visual aids, and included on the CD-ROM. The slides summarize the discussion. Black and white paper copies of the PowerPoint slides can be printed as additional handouts.

PRESENTATION METHODS USED DURING THE SERIES

Lecture

The School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series is intended to be interactive. While some of the material is presented in lecture form, it is expected that there will be considerable participant involvement in each module.

Guided Discussion

Suggested questions are offered to encourage participation. Instructors can use these questions as a starting place for a guided discussion. The participants have substantial expertise and prior experience. Not only will they be eager to share their knowledge with others, but you can take advantage of this wisdom to enhance the session.

Practice Sessions

Explicit directions are given for conducting the practice sessions. You should prepare for each practice session fully before presenting it. There are several techniques that will help you to conduct an effective session.

- Before your presentation, think through the practice session carefully. Visualize the purpose the session serves and how it will progress.
- Give clear instructions as to what you expect the participants to do.
- Monitor the participants closely as they work and help them when they have difficulty. Be available to answer questions.

Flipcharts

Suggestions are made for when to record group answers on the flipchart (or a blackboard or whiteboard). In the Instructor Notes column on the left page of the curriculum are notations indicating when you will want to write on the flipchart.

Here are some tips for using flipcharts effectively.

- As you write on a flipchart, talk to the class, not to the chart. Be aware of where you place the easel and how you stand. The entire group must be able to see the flipchart.
- Write large enough for people in the back to see.

- Don't write in all caps. A reader reads all caps word for word. Using upper and lower case increases comprehension.
- Use bright colors that are easier to see. Avoid using all black or soft colors.
- Ask for volunteers to write on the flipchart to increase student participation.
- Use lined or grid paper. It helps keep your writing straight.
- Use watercolor pens, not permanent ones. They won't go through the paper to the next sheet or decorate your clothes.
- Use two flipcharts side-by-side if you want to keep some information visible while you develop additional facts or tape sheets to the walls for future reference.

PowerPoint Slides

PowerPoint slides are great teaching aids. Participants can see the words as they hear them. This increases comprehension and retention. Every module has PowerPoint slides. The Instructor Notes column will demonstrate which slide to show to correspond with the course content.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

How can I make my presentation interesting?

Be conversational.

Always speak in simple, clear language appropriate to the participants. Be sure to use correct pronunciation and to enunciate clearly. Use a friendly tone of voice. Smile. Relax.

Face the participants.

Remember that you are talking to a group, not to a training aid. Practice writing on a flipchart and using overhead slides so that you can do so while still facing the group. Remember to maintain eye contact with the group.

Establish a comfort level.

Get to know your audience, even before the session starts. "Break the ice" at the beginning of the session. Express interest in participants' experiences and contributions. Connect to your audience by being authentic and accepting.

Use humor appropriately.

If the topic is serious, be very cautious in using humor. Use humor only if it is relevant and comfortable for you. It should be directed at yourself and not at others. Inappropriate humor can easily offend and you will have lost those offended for the rest of the session.

Guard against annoying mannerisms.

Repeated motions (tapping a pencil, twirling hair, stroking a beard, jingling coins, playing with jewelry, rocking back and forth) can be distracting. Participants will focus on them rather than on what you are saying.

Vary facial expressions, tone, speed of delivery, and volume.

Move around.

Change your position in front of the group but avoid pacing. Moving around forces participants to follow you and keeps them from becoming bored. Don't stand behind a podium or table.

How do I ask good questions?

Questions serve to involve students in the session by drawing on their knowledge and expertise.

Be conversational.

Questions should be relevant and intended to expand upon course material.

Ask questions in a friendly manner.

Do not ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no."

Ask open-ended questions that start with "how," or "why," or "what if."

Vary the types of questions you ask.

Repeat and acknowledge answers.

Comment and expand upon them.

How do I handle questions asked of me?

If you don't understand the question, ask the person to repeat it or rephrase it.

Be sure the group can hear a question asked of you.

If not, repeat it for the whole group.

It is okay to say you don't know the answer to a question.

Ask if anyone else in the group knows the answer. If not, make a note of the question and tell the asker you will find out the answer and get back to him or her.

Sometimes you will be asked a diversionary or inflammatory question.

There is no formula for handling this situation. Acknowledge the asker and get back on track as quickly as you can.

Feedback: How should I provide feedback? How should I look for feedback?

Encourage participation by taking responses from everyone and by acknowledging every statement made.

Reinforce positive contributions but respond to everyone, even if you think the comment is "off the wall."

If you need more information than the comment contains, ask for more.

If you cannot agree with the content of the comment, focus on the feeling being expressed and say something understanding or reassuring. ("I can see that you feel strongly about that.")

The point is to keep the group participating.

Watch for signs of misunderstanding, confusion, or boredom.

Actively seek feedback, acknowledge it, and modify your presentation accordingly.

How do I handle a problem participant?

Expect that some members of the group may not cooperate or may not participate.

Be prepared to handle people who fit one of these categories ("know-it-all," too talkative or silent, complainer, wanders off the subject).

Respond to these participants by being respectful, assertive, and directive.

If the problem persists, speak to the person outside of the session.

Remember that you are in charge but don't insult the individual.

Don't correct him/her in front of others.

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