

Transportation Safety

Training ADVISOR

August 2023

School bus safety

Defensive driving done right this school season

Beep beep: School bus alert!

The wheels on the bus go
round and round

Do you sell safety when
recruiting drivers?

Information and resources to help your drivers operate safely


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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Beep, beep: School children crossing!

Back-to-school season is right around the corner, which means more than just rock-bottom prices on notebooks. It's time to stay alert and drive defensively around school buses to keep students safe. It's important to make sure every student gets from home to school, and back again, in one piece.

Professional drivers set the standard for what safe driving should look like in any situation, so make sure it's a good one!

Keep your eye on the time

Drivers need to pay extra attention at the times when children are most likely to enter and exit a school bus, which is before and after school. The majority of fatalities happen during these times, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, so it pays to stay aware.

Between 2012 and 2021, the majority of school-age fatalities happened between 6:00 and 8:00 a.m. or 2:00 and 5:00 p.m. ♦

School-Age Fatalities by Time of Day 2012-2021		
Time of Day	School Bus Deaths	Total Deaths
Midnight – 5:59am	0	3
6:00 – 6:59am	3	31
7:00 – 7:59am	5	36
8:00 – 8:59am	1	6
9:00 – 9:59am	1	6
10:00 – 10:59am	1	4
11:00 – 11:59am	0	5
12:00 – 12:59pm	0	2
1:00 – 1:59pm	0	6
2:00 – 2:59pm	3	12
3:00 – 3:59pm	15	55
4:00 – 4:59pm	8	31
5:00 – 11:59pm	2	9
Total	39	206



Lucero Truszkowski

Lucero Truszkowski joined J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc. as an Associate Editor in 2022. Lucero edits, writes, and researches content on a variety of topics, including transportation, human resources, and driver training. She is currently earning a Master of Science (MS) in Professional Writing from New York University.



TRAINING BLUEPRINT — SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

School bus season = increased hazards

It's back to school time! Whether caring for school-aged kids at home or not, the heightened importance of school bus and school-zone safety on the road remains the same. As kids head back into the classroom, it's essential to keep an eye out for the potential hazards that come up when sharing the road with children and school buses.

Defining a school zone

A school zone is a section of roadway near a school or school crosswalk. Signs are posted in these areas to alert the public that a school is nearby and that children may be present. In a school zone, the posted speed limit is greatly reduced. This slower speed provides drivers more time to react to the unexpected actions children may make when crossing the road. When driving through a school zone and the surrounding areas, a driver's undivided attention needs to be on the road, looking out for potential hazards.

TIP: Stress the importance of defensive driving in a school zone or when approaching a school bus.

Defensive driving

The best way to prevent an accident is to stay alert, to pay extra attention, and to follow defensive driving practices when driving in a school zone or approaching a bus stop. This includes:

- Continually scanning the road,
- Taking extra caution in school zones,
- Reducing speed as needed,
- Watching for children who are gathered near the bus stop,
- Watching for children walking across the road,
- Never passing a school bus on the right side,
- Never passing a school bus when its lights are flashing and its stop arm is extended, and
- Always expecting the unexpected.



Major risks

There are several factors that put younger children at greater risk, and just being aware of these factors can make a big difference.

For example, younger children:

- Are smaller and harder to see,
- May cross a road without warning,
- Can't judge a vehicle's speed,
- Don't fully understand the dangers of moving vehicles, and
- May expect vehicles to stop for them when the school bus stops.

TIP: Make sure your drivers understand the flashing light system. Stress its importance from both a safety and legal standpoint.

The flashing light system

School bus drivers use the "flashing signal light system" to alert motorists of pending actions.

Yellow flashing lights indicate that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Drivers must slow down and prepare to stop their vehicles, as well.

Red flashing lights and an extended stop arm indicate that the bus has stopped and that children are getting on or off the bus. Drivers must stop and wait until:

1. The red lights stop flashing,
2. The stop arm is withdrawn, and
3. The bus begins to move.

Let's talk school bus laws

All states have laws in place to protect children as they board and exit school buses. Though specifics vary from state to state, there are standard rules that apply everywhere:

- Never pass a school bus when its lights are flashing and its stop arm is extended.
- Never pass a school bus on the right side. This is where children enter and exit the bus.
- In many states, school bus drivers can report illegally passing vehicles without observation by law enforcement. ♦

TIP: Review the state-specific laws that apply in the states your drivers travel through. This review should include laws on stopping, passing, and travelling through school zones.



TRAINING HANDOUT — SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Keep the kiddos safe

The best ways to prevent an accident when driving in a school zone or when approaching a bus are to **BE ALERT**, **PAY EXTRA ATTENTION**, and **FOLLOW DEFENSIVE-DRIVING PRACTICES**.

How to be a defensive driver

- Continually scan the road
- Obey the posted speed limit
- Reduce speed as necessary
- Pay extra attention in school zones and at bus stops
- Watch for children gathering at bus stops
- Watch for children crossing the road

How to safely approach a school bus

- Slow down
- Be aware of children entering and exiting the school bus
- Don't pass on the right side of the bus
- Prepare to stop when you see yellow lights and don't try to rush past the bus
- Never pass a bus when the lights are flashing red with the stop arm out ♦





TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE — SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

1. When you need drive past by a bus, it's okay to pass on the right side.
 - A. True
 - B. False

2. Some of the reasons younger children are at a higher risk during school bus season include:
 - A. They are smaller and harder to see
 - B. They assume vehicles will stop for them when the school bus stops
 - C. They can't judge how fast other vehicles are moving
 - D. All of the above

3. School buses alert other drivers of their actions by using the "flashing signal light system"
 - A. True
 - B. False

4. Which is the correct definition of a school zone?
 - A. An area where children play and spend time with friends
 - B. Any town or city with an elementary school
 - C. A section of roadway near a school or school crosswalk
 - D. All of the above

5. What should you do when you see yellow flashing lights on a school bus?
 - A. Speed past it before the lights turn red
 - B. Go around the right side to avoid children
 - C. Slow down and prepare to stop
 - D. Find another route

NAME: _____ **DATE:** _____



The wheels on the bus go round and round, but will they fall off?

OSHA requires employers to protect workers who service wheel and rim components, mount or dismount wheels, inflate or deflate tires, and inspect wheels and rims. Workers face serious hazards when servicing large vehicles such as trucks, tractors, trailers, buses, and off-road machines. But once the servicing is done, there's still risk if wheels and rims aren't carefully inspected.

Post-service wheel and rim inspections

Wheels and rims are continually subjected to heavy loads and forces that can fatigue assemblies and materials. Fatigue can lead to cracking and, if not found early, could result in a catastrophic failure with the potential for serious injury to anyone nearby.

Inspections should be performed by the original manufacturer of the wheel and rim assembly, their agent, or a competent person. Inspections should occur at regular intervals, taking into consideration environmental conditions, use, and previous maintenance or servicing.

A proper inspection requires drivers to:

1. Prepare wheel and rim surfaces by cleaning them of foreign materials that may interfere with the inspection.
2. Include all components of both wheel and rim assemblies to ensure a thorough inspection. These include:
 - **Lock rings** – Visually inspect for wear, deformation, corrosion, or insufficient overlap.

- **Flanges** – Visually inspect for wear, cracking, corrosion, deformation, or damage.

- **Bead seat bands** – Visually inspect for wear, cracking, corrosion, and sufficient contact with the lock ring, flange, etc.

- **Rim bases** – Visually inspect for wear, cracking, corrosion, or damage to the rim face, rim base, valve, and wheel assembly disc. Magnetic and ultrasonic testing should also be considered to locate potential defects.

- **Tires** – Visually inspect tread, side walls, and bead for wear, cracking, deformation, or damage.

3. Document inspection findings and implement remediations to correct issues. Defects should be clearly identified to include length and depth of irregularities, as well as noting service life. Serious or recurring defects should be investigated further to determine a root cause. ♦



Key to remember: Wheel and rim servicing is extremely dangerous. But safety doesn't stop with the service. Thorough inspections are vital for ensuring catastrophic failures are prevented. You want the wheels to go around, not fall off!

Do you sell safety when recruiting drivers?

Most drivers want to work at a carrier that pays a decent wage, provides a safe and secure environment, and is compassionate. Many carriers are good at marketing the first of these when recruiting drivers, but tend to not market the others.

Do you have good and safe equipment?

Driver frustration with vehicles and maintenance is a real concern. Ask yourself the following questions, and if the answers are yes, you are doing a good job of providing and maintaining good and safe equipment and should boast about it in your marketing!

- When purchasing equipment, do you spec for safety and driver comfort (adaptive cruise, automatic emergency braking, air ride, etc.)?

- Do you have a preventive maintenance program that is followed and set up to work with the driver's schedule?
- Do you fix a vehicle quickly when a driver reports a defect?
- Do you know the average time for a driver-requested repair of a defect (too long and drivers stop asking and just go with it)?

Driver supervisors and assignments make a difference too

Do you have an open and cooperative dispatch or assignment system? Drivers working for an uncaring or abusive supervisor will do what they are told (and complain about it in a lot of cases), right up until they

reach the point where they just can't take it anymore and quit.

Also, drivers that are constantly being pushed around, that operate in a draconian dispatch system (no choice and no opinion allowed), that are given unrealistic delivery times/schedules, and/or that are expected to violate safety regulations are not going to be secure in their jobs.

Do you provide the driver with adequate breaks and days off? Do you have and follow an on-time at home policy (if the driver says I need to be home on the 25th at noon, do you make it work)?

The key here is that the working relationship with dispatch (or whatever the driver supervisors at your company are called) is an important aspect of driver retention and safety. If you do a great job in this area, market it! If you don't, figure out what needs to change and change it.

Market good safety data

When a potential hire looks your company up in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration tracking systems (such as Compliance, Safety, Accountability), what do they see? Is your performance good enough that you would be proud to provide a driver applicant with the link to your data? If it is, market it! If not, why not? ♦



Key to remember: Drivers want to work for a carrier that values them more than the freight they are carrying. If you do this, market it. If you don't, fix your internal issues and then market it!



Expert Help: Question of the Month

Question: How should a random testing program be structured to account for the schedules of school bus or other drivers employed on a seasonal basis?

Answer: : If no school bus drivers from an employer's random testing pool are used to perform safety sensitive functions during the summer, the employer could choose to make random selections only during the school year. If the employer nevertheless chooses to make selections in the summer, tests may only be administered when the drivers return to duty.

If some drivers continue to perform safety-sensitive functions during the summer, such as driving buses for summer school, an employer could not choose to forego all random selections each summer. Such a practice would compromise the random, unannounced nature of the random testing program.

The employer would test all selected drivers actually driving in the summer. With regard to testing drivers not driving during the summer, the employer has two options.

One, names of drivers selected who are on summer vacation may be returned to the pool and another selection made.

Two, the selected names could be held by the employer and, if the drivers return to perform safety-sensitive functions before the next random selection, the test administered upon the drivers' return. ♦



Next Month's Topic: Cargo Securement

Proper cargo securement is serious business — failing to properly secure a load could result in citations and fines, damage to vehicles and cargo, and loss of life. With that in mind, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) lay out strict rules for securing cargo. ♦

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