

Transportation Safety

Training ADVISOR

August 2025

School bus safety

Defend children with defensive driving

DOT issues roadside English
language test

Guidance to ensure drivers
know enough English

Does my driver need ELDT?

Information and resources to help your drivers operate safely


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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

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

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.

During any maintenance or repairs, a full inspection should be performed by the original manufacturer of the wheel and rim assembly, their agent, or a competent person. But drivers can also play a role in inspecting their buses and keeping the wheels turning!

Post-service wheel and rim inspections

A driver must inspect the wheel assemblies during their pretrip and post-trip inspections and should also inspect them each time the vehicle is parked during the workday.

A proper inspection requires drivers to examine:

- **Rims:** Look to make sure that:
 - There are no bends or cracks that affect the bead area;
 - There are no cracks (between handholes, between the center hole and handholes, or between lug holes);
 - There are no non-factory welds; and
 - The lugs are in place and tight (no shiny metal or new rust indicating the lug is loose).
- **Rim components (in the case of multipiece rims):** Check that locking ring(s) are secure in their grooves, not damaged, and not excessively corroded.
- **Tires:** Ensure tires:
 - Have adequate tread (4/32" for steering tires, 2/32" for all other tires);
 - Are in good condition (don't have cracks, cuts, gouges, or missing pieces of tread exposing any belting or ply material in the tread or sidewall; no bulging in the sidewall); and
 - Are adequately inflated (based on company specifications).

Wheel and rim servicing is extremely dangerous, but safety doesn't stop with the service. Thorough inspections are vital for preventing catastrophic failures. You want the wheels to go around, not fall off! ♦



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 holds a Master of Science (MS) in Professional Writing from New York University.



TRAINING BLUEPRINT — SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Hazard alert — it's school bus season!

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 with sharing the road with children and school buses.

Defend children with defensive driving

The best way to prevent a fatal accident is to stay alert, pay extra attention, and 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.

What counts as 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 with 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.

The dos and don'ts of the law

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 traveling through school zones.

Remember the 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.

You can read a sign, but can you read the lights?

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.

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:

- The red lights stop flashing,
- The stop arm is withdrawn, and
- The bus begins to move. ♦

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





TRAINING HANDOUT — SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

How to share the road with school buses

Yellow flashing lights indicate that the bus is preparing to stop to load or unload children. Slow down and prepare to stop your vehicle.

When approaching a stopped school bus with its red signal lights flashing and its stop arm extended:

- You **MUST STOP**.
- You **MUST WAIT** until the red lights have stopped flashing and the stop arm has been withdrawn before moving.
- You **MUST NOT MOVE** until the bus begins to move.

Remember to always watch for the presence of children along the road. Drive slowly until you are out of the area where there might be children present and continue to keep an eye out.

Remember that most school bus-related deaths and injuries occur while children cross the street after leaving the bus, not in collisions, so do your part and be extra careful. ♦



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TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE — SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

1. You should always pay special attention when an approaching bus stops or when you're in a school zone.
 - A. True
 - B. False

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

3. School bus drivers alert other drivers of their actions by waving their arms out the window.
 - A. True
 - B. False

4. 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 naturally enjoy playing in the road
 - C. They can't judge how fast other vehicles are moving
 - D. Both A and C

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:** _____

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DOT issues roadside English language test

The DOT has issued a new enforcement policy aimed at ensuring commercial truck and bus drivers are able to read and speak English. The internal policy, issued May 20, 2025, is now in effect.



The new policy includes guidance for how roadside enforcement personnel should enforce the English

language proficiency requirements in 49 CFR 391.11(b)(2). If an officer begins a roadside inspection in English and it appears the driver may not understand, the officer should conduct a two-part assessment:

1. A driver interview.
2. An evaluation on whether the driver can recognize common traffic signs.

Drivers who fail the test may be cited for a violation and, as of June 25, placed out of service. Drivers placed out of service cannot drive until they meet the language requirements. ♦

New guidance aims to ensure drivers know enough English

The recent push to enforce the English-language standard among truck and bus drivers has led to confusion about the steps motor carriers are expected to take. New Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) guidance can help.

The guidance comes in the wake of a new enforcement policy that went into effect June 25, whereby drivers are being placed out of service if they cannot pass a two-part roadside test. The test includes an interview conducted in English, followed (if necessary) by a quiz about the meaning of common traffic signs. (Details of the test were not made public.)

Drivers who are cited for a violation of 49 CFR 391.11(b)(2) and placed out of service for failing the test must not drive again until they can meet the standard, a potentially lengthy process.

What can you do?

The new guidance aims to head off roadside violations by helping motor carriers ensure their drivers can meet the English standard at the time of hire. It can also be used to gauge existing drivers.

The guidance recommends performing an assessment during the driver qualification process, in English, to evaluate whether the driver is able to:

- Sufficiently communicate with law enforcement officers during a roadside inspection, and
- Understand highway traffic signs that they may encounter while driving.

Questions that the hiring manager should ask include the same ones an officer typically would, related to:

- The origin and destination of a recent or planned trip.
- The amount of time spent on duty, including driving time and the record of duty status.
- The information contained on the driver's license.
- Information contained in shipping papers (actual or sample shipping papers, including hazardous materials shipping papers if applicable).
- Vehicle equipment subject to inspection.

Drivers should answer in English without the use of communication tools like smartphone applications or interpreters.

The guidance recommends quizzing drivers about the meaning of common U.S. highway signs, as well as dynamic message signs. Images may be drawn from states' driving manuals or the DOT's *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*. The driver's explanation can be in any language, the FMCSA says, as long as the manager can understand the explanation.

To comply with anti-discrimination laws, the assessment should be applied uniformly and consistently.

Dealing with OOS orders

When drivers are placed out of service (OOS) for failing to meet the English-language standard, motor carriers have little choice but to send a replacement driver to retrieve the vehicle and/or continue the trip. There's no "quick fix" for a language deficiency. The driver must be taken off the road until:

- The driver can meet the standard, or
- The violation is successfully challenged.

Meet the standard — If a driver who was cited learns enough English to meet the standard (based on a company assessment), the driver may return to driving. There's no need to let the DOT know that this has happened (although if it's done within 15 days, it may be noted on the roadside inspection report before returning it to the state). It's a good idea to document the process the driver used (e.g., classes, training, etc.) to get into compliance.

If the driver is inspected, quizzed, and placed out of service again, however, the consequences will be higher because the driver would then be charged with violating an OOS order.



Fight it —

If a driver or company decides to fight the initial violation by filing a DataQs challenge, they will need to somehow prove that the driver was in compliance at the time of the inspection (not that it was improved later on). When it comes to language ability, this can be difficult at best. The challenge should be filed as quickly as possible and include video evidence that verifies the driver's identity and shows the driver's language and sign-recognition abilities. ♦



Key to remember: The FMCSA has issued new guidance to help motor carriers ensure their drivers are compliant with the English-language standard and avoid the OOS orders that can result from roadside violations.



Next Month's Topic: **Fuel mileage improvement**

The cost of fuel used to keep a truck running is one of a motor carrier's biggest operational expenses. Your drivers' everyday driving practices have a real impact on fuel conservation, and in turn, your company's bottom line. ♦

Expert Help: Question of the Month

Question: We have a driver who would like to drive school buses for our company. Is the driver required to complete entry-level driver training (ELDT)?

Answer: Much will depend on the class of license and (if applicable) endorsement(s) the individual possesses.

If the driver has a non-CDL class of license and wants to operate a school bus with a GVWR of 26,001 pounds or more, the driver will need to complete Class B CDL, passenger endorsement, and school bus endorsement ELDT.



If the driver possesses a Class B CDL and wants to operate a school bus with a GVWR of 26,001 pounds or more, the driver will need to complete passenger endorsement and school bus endorsement ELDT.

If the driver possesses a Class B CDL that includes a passenger endorsement and wants to operate a school bus with a GVWR of 26,001 pounds or more, the driver will need to complete school bus endorsement ELDT. ♦

Expert Help

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