GUIDELINES FOR THE SAFE (EMERGENCY) EVACUATION FROM A SCHOOL BUS

The awesome primary responsibility of the school bus driver is to provide safe transportation for students. The idea of being involved in a traffic accident is always difficult. None of us awake in the morning and expect a traffic problem. There is no such thing as “on-purpose”; almost any traffic collision is an accident. All school bus drivers are instructed in the safe operation of the school bus, and part of this operation is the safe evacuation of the bus in the event of an accident or emergency.

Texas HB 3190, effective September 1, 2007, requires that all bus-riding students must experience a practical school bus evacuation drill as part of a twice-yearly lesson on school bus safety. This means ALL students and teaching staff that will ride a school bus during the school year, for ANY reason must take part in this drill.

1. Such drills are to be scheduled and personally supervised by the school administrator or his/her designee.

2. School bus drivers should never attempt to schedule or conduct a school bus evacuation drill on their own.

3. All drills are to be conducted at school or on school property.

4. All bus riding students, including those transported only on extracurricular trips, must participate.

5. Some students with disabilities, because of their condition, may not be required to physically leave or be taken from the bus during a bus evacuation drill. School staff should determine a suitable alternative preparation for the driver and/or school bus aide, and students in these situations.

6. The most important part of any safe bus evacuation or evacuation drill is developing and following a plan of action.

7. Make sure that everyone on the bus is aware of what must be done in the event of a real emergency.

8. Always use extreme care during an evacuation or evacuation drill. Never allow students to push or run, or force students to jump from the bus during an evacuation drill. A bus evacuation drill should be a learning experience for everyone. Remember, the planning and actions taken during a bus evacuation drill may some day save lives.

There are three methods of evacuating a school bus under “normal” emergency situations. These are:

(1) front door evacuation, (2) rear door evacuation, and (3) front and rear door evacuation.
During a bus evacuation **DRILL**, for reasons of safety, only the front door evacuation procedure is use. The following procedures should be followed during a front door bus evacuation drill:

1. The driver should set the parking brake and the key is not in the ignition.

2. The driver would then open the front door; stand and face the students and give the following command: “Remain seated. This is an emergency, front door evacuation drill.”

3. The driver should then explain the alternate seat method of leaving the bus. In this method, students will leave the bus in an orderly manner from the front of the bus by alternating left-right seats on the bus.

4. The driver will dismiss students starting with the right-hand front seat; tap the shoulder of the pupil nearest the aisle. Direct the students to walk carefully off the bus, using the handrail as they exit the bus.

5. Where possible, the driver, with assistance from the bus attendant or school staff, should assign and train a student assistant to stand just outside the front of the service entrance to count and assist students as they leave the school bus.

6. The driver should move down the aisle, dismissing rows of students alternatively until the bus is empty.

7. As students leave the bus, they should proceed in an orderly manner behind the bus attendant or a designated student assistant to a distance of at least 100 feet from the side of the school bus. Whenever possible, remain on the same side of the roadway as the bus.

8. Students should remain quietly in a group until further directions. Never allow students to play around during a drill - this is an exercise that must be taken seriously.

**WHEELCHAIR EVACUATION PROCEDURE**

Students who ride to and from school in a wheelchair other mobile seating device must be given special consideration when it is necessary to evacuate them from a school bus either in a drill or in a real emergency.

1. **Lift Assisted**—If the lift on the bus is operational the driver should lower it about half way. This will allow for a “two-step” descend with each wheelchair. The school bus aide and driver should decide who will be the one to lower each chair and who will be stationed on the ground to assist in keeping the lift guard in a closed position and assist in a smooth landing of the chairs to the ground.

2. **Non-Lift Assisted**—In an emergency, if the lift is not operational, the driver and student’s bus attendant must remove the students from their chairs as quickly and safely as possible. The students must then be removed from the bus by the most convenient and
safest exit. A blanket or coat can be used to assist the driver and/or aide in moving these students to safety. Students may be lifted from their wheelchair, placed on the blanket and dragged down the aisle to the front or rear exit and then safely removed from the bus. Since this procedure may cause injuries to very fragile students, this type of procedure should only be used in real emergencies when there is no other alternative method of evacuation.

**Directions to Bus Drivers for Emergency Evacuation Drills**

As much as we try to avoid them, a traffic accident can happen to anyone at any time. Should a driver be involved in an accident, his/her first and primary responsibility is for the safety and well being of the students on the bus. It’s almost impossible to predict the exact sequence of events immediately following a traffic accident; therefore, it would be almost impossible to predict the exact sequence of procedures to follow at every accident. Each driver is instructed to develop a priority list of actions that must be taken after an accident. Included in this list are the following:

- Remain calm and secure the bus
- Check for any indication of fire or smoke
- Decide as quickly as possible if it is necessary to evacuate the bus
- Check for injuries and monitor the student’s physical and emotional condition
- Cooperation fully with police and/or fire department paramedics
- When required, try to find out what hospital students are taken to for assistance

Pupils should usually be kept on the bus during an emergency. However, there are some situations when it would be safer to evacuate the bus.

The driver will evacuate the bus if:

1. There is any indication that the bus is on fire or in danger of catching fire
2. The bus cannot be moved to a safe place, out of the way of traffic
3. A natural emergency requires evacuation.

Should evacuation be necessary, the driver will instruct the students and attendant to move at least 100 feet away from the side of the school bus; however, the students should not cross the roadway unless absolutely necessary. In most cases the driver will be able to determine the safest location for shelter from the emergency situation.

**REMEMBER** - The most important part of a safe school bus evacuation is developing, and practicing a safe before an emergency actually occurs.

**SAFE TRANSPORTATION FOR ALL STUDENTS**

It has been pointed out several times already that SAFETY is the primary responsibility of any adult (driver, bus aide/attendant, nurse, etc.) that rides the school bus. Making sure that students are picked up and dropped off safely, and providing them with a safe environment while riding
the bus to and from school must be everyone’s primary concern. Each adult must judge for him/herself if a situation is safe, and must act in the best interest of the students. You must always rely on your own good judgment in determining whether or not to leave the bus in assist a child. Each situation is unique and needs to be evaluated separately depending on the circumstances and location at that particular time.
If in doubt about a situation, notify the bus company, school staff, or the Bureau of Student Transportation.

QUESTIONs REGARDING STUDENT TRANSPORTATION

An effort to resolve questions regarding student transportation services should first be made at the local school level through the principal or program director. However, questions that cannot be resolved at the local should be referred to the appropriate staff at the [insert Transportation, risk Management or other responsible party].

SCHOOL BUS EVACUATION

Pre-emergency Evacuation Plan

The most important part of evacuation is developing and following a plan. Having a pre-emergency plan for each school bus and its route that includes all population of students transported will save precious time. In many emergencies only 2 to 5 minutes is available to complete an evacuation before possible serious injury to students might occur. Local policies will determine when and how students are to be evacuated from a bus. School bus evacuations must be practiced with the students. Emergency response personnel must also be familiar with these policies, procedures and techniques.

School buses carry a variety of students varying in size, age and special needs. Make sure everyone is aware.

1. Obtain a copy of a step-by-step procedure which includes alternatives and special needs populations prepared by the proper school authority.
2. Make sure that students have been instructed about what to do and how to proceed.
3. Identify three assistants have been instructed about what to do and how to proceed.
4. Contact administration and request parental permission.

When to Evacuate

Evacuation is a very difficult situation. The driver must consider the fact that the safest place for the students may be on the bus. In an actual emergency, the decision to evacuate the school bus is the initial step and one of the most important that the driver will have to make. That decision will initiate a chain of events to result in the safest possible situation for the passengers under the
existing circumstances. The decision must be made as quickly as possible based on all the facts at hand.

A. Evacuate if there is any of the following indications that the bus is on fire of in danger of catching fire:

1. An open flame, smoke, hot tires or any other indication of possible fire on or under the bus.
2. An object in flames, or in danger of catching fire, that is close enough to an immobile school bus to cause concern; or
3. A combustible material or fuel susceptible to fire that is leaking from an immobile school bus or close enough to cause concern.

B. Evacuate the bus if it cannot be moved to a safe position and it is in

1. The path of other motor vehicles.
2. The path of a train or adjacent to any railroad tracks.
3. A position of inadequate visibility and in danger of being hit (in normal traffic conditions, the bus should be visible for a distance of 300 feet or more. A position over a hill or around a curve where such visibility does not exist should be considered reason for evacuation):
4. A dangerous position related to water or sudden, extreme drop:
5. The area of a hazardous spill for which there is need to quickly evacuate to an area upwind at least 300 feet from the incident; or
6. Any position that you feel puts the students in danger because of their presence on the school bus.

C. Natural emergencies may require evacuation.

1. Try to pull the bus off the roadway away from large trees, electrical lines, telephone and utility poles, and buildings.
2. Should evacuation be necessary, move at least 100 feet away from the side of the school bus, but do not cross the roadway unless absolutely necessary.
3. Determine the safest position for shelter from the emergency situation.
   (a) Remain in the bus during a blizzard if conditions allow.
   (b) Find a depression in the ground or an embankment away from the
Evacuation Drills

Due to the increased number of students being transported and the ever-increasing number of accidents on the highways, there is an urgent need to instruct students on how to properly vacate a school bus in an emergency. It is possible for students to block the emergency door if they are all trying to get out at the same time. There is also a possibility of danger when students jump from the rear emergency door exit. To avoid these situations, Illinois law requires that all bus-riding students must experience a practical school bus evacuation drill at least twice each year.

A. Such drills are to be scheduled and personally supervised by the proper school official or designated school administrator. Police, rescue and fire personnel should be invited to participate in this training event so as to be prepared for a school bus emergency.

1. Never attempt to schedule or conduct a drill on your own.

2. The administrator will monitor. You must take charge of procedures and lead the students through the evacuation.

3. Types of drills should be varied.

B. All drills are to be conducted on school property.

C. All bus-riding students including those transported an extracurricular trips must participate.

D. You may be advised that, due to student’s condition, a student with a disability may not be required to leave or be taken from the bus.

1. Proper school officials may determine that some alternative preparations will be adequate.

2. You may want to check with your supervisor if you have questions about moving any students.

E. Make sure some has obtained parental/guardian consent before any student is assigned to assist with the evacuation.

F. Students should be instructed in how and where to obtain assistance in emergencies. This may be done by flagging down a passing motorist to call for help, using the two-way radio (if power exists), or sending an authorized student to a nearby house or office to make a call. The key issue is who to call. A possible
solution would be for every driver to carry a couple of 3’ x 5’ cards with the following information:

1. Bus route and bus number;
2. Telephone number for transportation office;
3. Telephone number for fire, police, ambulance, and
4. Bus driver’s name.

G. Students should be instructed with demonstrations of the following:

1. Location and operation of all emergency exits;
2. Location, operation, and how to remove the fire extinguisher;
3. Location of the first kit;
4. Location and operation of the warning reflectors;
5. How to shut off the engine and set the parking brake; and
6. How to open the front door using safety releases on manual, air, or vacuum doors if so equipped.

H. Never allow students to play around during a drill. If they won’t take the situation seriously, refer them to the proper authority for disciplinary action.

Driver Responsibility

Primarily, the school bus driver must know the subject and be able to get the message and the commands across to the passengers. This will come with some practice. Each driver should have a chance to conduct a simulated drill. It will be much easier when working with the passengers.

Second, a driver must know the equipment and make sure if is in good working order. For example, don’t wait until the passengers are on board to find out the emergency door latch is inoperative. Make sure the fire extinguisher is properly charged and sealed and the first aid kit has the proper units.

All school buses must provide at least two methods or routes of escape. With proper training, each passenger will know each available route of escape and how to operate each emergency exit.

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As a driver, be a leader by being positive and sure of yourself. Appoint the ride-evacuation helpers with an eye forward responsibility and good character.

Safe Practices Relating to Evacuation Drills

A program of instruction on safe riding practices for students is necessary because of accidents caused by those students who do not understand their responsibilities as bus passengers. The following rules for safe school bus riding and general behavior for bus passengers apply also to emergency bus evacuation and must be thoroughly explained to every student.

1. Remain seated and quiet until the bus is completely stopped. Do not change seats unless instructed to do so by the bus driver, a paraprofessional or a teacher.

2. Always face forward in the seat.

3. Keep hands, feet and head inside the bus at all times. (If windows are allowed only halfway open, this will help discourage the problem).

4. Be courteous to others and pay attention to the bus driver, teacher, paraprofessional and evacuation helpers.

5. While moving to the appropriate exit, do not push or shove.

6. While leaving the bus, use the handrails or the evacuation helpers’ hands. Be alert for traffic and/or pedestrians. Sit and scoot out the back exit.

7. Move to a safe place away from the school bus and remain there with the group. Regrouping should be approximately 100 feet (40 or 50 paces) from the bus.

8. Be aware of the “danger zones,” the areas around the bus that are blind spots to the driver.

9. Observe safely procedures while crossing the street or proceeding to the regrouping area.

10. Do not talk to or accept rides from anyone.

During assembles, elementary grade levels should be instructed in the most thorough manner concerning safe-riding practices. After all, these children will be riding the school bus for many years, and all aspects of the subject must be stressed.

To the upper grade levels, stress the responsibilities of school bus riders with regard to student behavior. The objective is student cooperation. This cooperation will alleviate distractions and subsequently reduce the number of school bus accidents.

The “Danger Zones” are the areas to the front, sides and rear of the school bus that are not in
direct eye contact of the bus driver.

Children who, for whatever reason, come into these danger areas place themselves in jeopardy of serious injury or death. It is essential that the four “Danger Zones,” front, sides and rear, be fully explained. If necessary, demonstrate by having one of the students go outside to the front of the bus. Have the student stoop to pick up a paper or book. Then have him/her stand. The students will get the picture very clearly. This can be demonstrated also by having a student drop a paper out of a side window. The person picking up the paper could very easily be placed in front of the rear duals.

See to it that all of the students, teachers, and paraprofessionals are completely familiar with the “Danger Zones” before continuing.

Front-Door Evacuation Drill

1. Stop the bus and shut off the engine in a pre-selected location on the school grounds.

2. Make sure the parking brake is set and the key is not in the ignition and then open the service entrance.

3. Stand and face the students. Give the following command. “Remain seated. This is an emergency drill—front—door evacuation.

4. Dismiss students starting with the right-hand front seat; lap the shoulder of the student nearest the aisle. Direct the student to walk; don’t run, and use the handrail.

5. Hold up your left hand to restrain seat occupants to the left side until it is their turn.

6. Move down the aisle, dismissing seats of students alternatively until the bus is empty.

7. As students leave the bus, they should proceed in an orderly pattern behind the line-leader student assistant to a distance of at least 100 feet (about 50 paces) from the side of the school bus. Designation of a reference point is sometimes helpful.

8. Students should remain quietly in a grouping defined by the line-leader assistant until you are able to give them further directions.
Rear-Door Evacuation Drill

1. Stop the bus and shut-off the engine in a pre-selected location on the school grounds.
2. Make sure the parking brake is set and the key is not in the ignition and then open the service entrance.

3. Stand and face the students. Give the following command. “Remain seated. This is an emergency drill—rear door evacuation.
   a. Train a student to carefully and properly open the rear emergency exit.
   b. The student must understand not to open the door until you give the command.

4. Explain and demonstrate the method to be used for exiting the school bus.
   a. Shoulder-Guide Method
      (1) Two student assistants stand outside with their backs to the rear of the bus, one on each side of the door opening.
      (2) Students should sit down and scoot out the rear door while guiding themselves by placing their hands on the shoulders of the student assistants.
      (3) A third student assistant be used as a line-leader to move the students quickly away from the bus in an orderly fashion.
   b. Helping-Hand Method (Caution should be used whenever this method is enforced due to the danger of injury involved.
      (1) Two student assistants stand outside facing the bus, one on each side of the open door.
      (2) The assistants extend helping hands to guide the students as they exit.
      (3) Let each student decide how much help he or she wants avoid grasping a hand or arm.
      (4) Explain how to exit from the rear door by sitting down and sliding out.

Rear-Door Evacuation
Front-and Rear-Door Evacuation Drill

1. Stop the bus and shut off the engine in a pre-selected location on the school grounds.
2. Make sure the parking brake is set and the key is not in the ignition and then open the service entrance.
3. Stand and face the students. Give the following command. “Remain seated. This is an emergency drill, front-and rear door evacuation.”

4. Walk to the center of the bus between students sitting in seat row 6 (or to a point where there are an equal number of seats in front and back of your position) and face the rear of the bus.

5. All students to the front and those sitting in row 6 to your left will leave by the front service entrance upon command.

6. All students to the rear and those sitting in row 6 to your right will leave by the rear emergency door upon command.

7. Use the same procedures outline for front-door evacuation and rear-door evacuation, except they will have to move out by themselves upon command.

Side — Door Evacuation Drill

A side-door evacuation is not recommended because students will be getting out on the traffic side of the bus. However, perform the emergency evacuation drill on school property and explain to the students how the side doors are to be used as emergency exits.

Road-Hatch Evacuation Drill

Explain to the children that the roof hatches are emergency exits also and not just air vents. Give examples of when the use of roof hatches would be used, i.e., rollover, etc.

Suggested Evacuation of Special Needs Students

Transportation staff should have an emergency evacuation plan which considers the individual capabilities and needs of each student, the type of behavior which might be exhibited during an emergency evacuation, and the type of wheelchair or support equipment being used for students.

Issues to Consider in Establishing an Evacuation Plan

1. Which students could help and to what extent.

2. How to deal with individual emergencies such as seizures during the evacuation process.

3. Whether students should be evacuated in their wheelchairs or removed from their wheelchairs before evacuation. Exercise caution. Some students have catheters or are tub fed. The hoses or tubes have to be anchored somewhere and are sometimes anchored to the wheelchair. To evacuate them bodily might rip hookups to the student which could cause severe internal problems.
4. How to disconnect or cut wheelchair securement and occupant protection equipment including belts, trays, and other support equipment.

5. Which students might run after evacuation so they can be evacuated last.

6. The length of time a student requiring life-support equipment or medical care procedures can survive if such service is interrupted or delayed during the evacuation process.

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<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>EVACUATION PROCEDURE</th>
<th>COMMENTS</th>
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<td>Hearing Impairments</td>
<td>1. Have student evacuate by walking or crawling to nearest</td>
<td>1. Mild communication look and speak directly Student.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Have helper assist driver using</td>
<td>2. No noted mobility problems</td>
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<td>3. Have helper control other students at control area.</td>
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