

UNIT NINE - TRANSPORTING STUDENTS

Awareness reminds you that children are apt to do the craziest things at the worst possible times.

LOADING/UNLOADING PROCEDURES

One of the most important maneuvers drivers make is the loading and unloading of students. This is the point where students and drivers are exposed to many hazards. The driver must learn proper procedures for controlling traffic, crossing students, loading and unloading students, and proper seating of passengers. The following procedure will help prevent crashes or injury.

When loading and unloading:

- Never take your eyes off what is happening outside the bus.
- Count children as they exit.
- Make sure they are a safe distance from the bus before pulling away.
- If you can't locate a child, check your mirrors.
- If you still can't find the child, secure the bus.
- Check around and under your vehicle.

1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-224.04. Rules for the Operation of School Transportation Vehicles

School bus alternately flashing warning signal lamps are placed on school buses for the purpose of warning traffic that the school bus is about to stop (amber lamps) or is stopped (red lamps) to load or unload students. The following procedure shall be observed when controlling traffic with a school bus during the process of loading or unloading students on any highway, road or street.

Statute regarding loading/unloading procedures for lift equipped buses.

42-4-1903, (2)(b)(II), C.R.S.

A school bus shall be exempt from the provisions of subparagraph (I) of this paragraph (b) when stopped for the purpose of discharging or loading passengers who require the assistance of a lift device only when no passenger is required to cross the roadway. Such buses shall stop as far to the right off the roadway as possible to reduce obstruction to traffic

(the bus would be completely out of the lane of traffic).

School buses create passing situations when loading or unloading. Be aware of motorists attempting to pass just because it is a school bus.

Loading and unloading in hazardous conditions should be reported immediately.

42-4-1903, (2) (b) (I) C.R.S. School buses – stops – signs - passing

The red visual signal lights shall be actuated by the driver of the school bus whenever the school bus is stopped for the purpose of receiving or discharging schoolchildren, is stopped because it is behind another school bus that is receiving or discharging passengers, or, except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, is stopped because it has met a school bus traveling in a different direction that is receiving or discharging passengers and at no other time; but such lights need not be actuated when a school bus is stopped at locations where the local traffic regulatory authority has by prior written designation declared such actuation unnecessary.

42-4-1903 (5) C.R.S. School buses – stops – signs - passing

Every school bus shall stop as far to the right of the roadway as possible before discharging or loading passengers; except that the school bus may block the lane of traffic when a passenger being received or discharged is required to cross the roadway. When possible, a school bus shall not stop where the visibility is obscured for a distance of two hundred feet either way from the bus. The driver of a school bus that has stopped shall allow time for any vehicles that have stopped behind the school bus to pass the school bus, if such passing is legally permissible where the school bus is stopped, after the visual signal lights, if any, are no longer being displayed or actuated and after all children who have embarked or disembarked from the bus are safe from traffic.

Loading Procedures

1. Stopping and loading procedures:

- When approaching the designated stop, begin slowing down in preparation for the stop.
- Check traffic in all directions using right and left mirrors, to see that it is safe to pull to the right of the traveled portion of the roadway to stop. Do not leave the roadway. Activate amber warning lights 200 feet in the city and 500 feet in rural areas. Do not activate red flashers until stopped with park brake set.
- Apply brakes to activate brake lights so that motorists following will know you are about to stop. Use retarder (if equipped) to slow the bus.
- Approach students with extreme caution, giving due consideration to the surface on which you are stopping: dry, slippery, dips sharply to the right, rough ground, etc.
- Allow sufficient area to the right and front of the bus for the students to clear the bus safely while in sight of the operator.
- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-224.04 (h) – Students shall be instructed to stand away from the curb or roadway so, when the bus stops to load, they are not next to the bus.
- If a backing turnaround is required on the route, load students onto the bus before backing into turnaround. Unload students after

making the turnaround. When making a backing turnaround, students should remain seated at all times. Use extra caution.

- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-224.04 (f) - When stopped, the parking/emergency brake (air or hydraulic brake system) shall be set prior to loading and unloading. Transmission shall be placed in neutral or in park, (if vehicle is so equipped).
- Opening the service door automatically deactivates the amber flashing lights and activates the red flashing warning lights and extends the stop arm.
- Open service door when you are ready to board students. They should be trained not to move toward the vehicle until the door opens or when directed by the driver with a predetermined signal.
- Instruct students to go directly to their seats as prescribed by district procedures.
- Deactivate red flashing warning lights and stop arm by closing door allowing stopped motorists to pass.
- Make sure students are all properly seated.
- Place the transmission in gear.
- Release park brake.
- Check traffic using right and left mirrors. Activate signal. When safe, pull gradually back into the lane of traffic. Check traffic again, deactivate signal, regain road speed, and proceed to next stop.

The order the brake is set, transmission is shifted, and door is opened must be followed in the order indicated prior to a student stop and before departing the student stop. "The brake is the first thing on and the last thing off."

2. Don't impede the regular flow of traffic. If a build-up occurs behind you, display professional courtesy.
 - If possible, activate right turn signal, pull to side of road only if entire vehicle can get off the road and stop.
 - Allow vehicles to pass.
 - Check traffic using all outside mirrors.
 - Activate left turn signal.
 - Resume position on road.
3. Procedure for students:
 - Use handrails when boarding vehicle.
 - Students should go directly to their seats as prescribed by the district.
 - Remain seated when the bus is moving.

Unloading Procedures

1. Unloading students poses additional problems. Follow loading procedures with these additions:
 - You are responsible for the safety of all students crossing the roadway regardless of grade level.
 - When stopped, not rolling, give the vehicles behind you a chance to react by activating the flashing red warning lights before you open the door all the way (if the bus is equipped with a manual door). Students should stay seated until the door opens fully. Do not allow students to get off the school bus until all traffic has stopped.
 - A backing turnaround must be completed before students are unloaded.
 - 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-224.04 (g) – Students shall be instructed to walk a distance of approximately ten (10) feet in front of the school bus and wait for operator's signal before crossing the roadway.
 - When it is safe to cross, establish eye contact with the student/s, and give the pre-arranged signal for crossing. The signal should be clear enough that motorists will not mistake it as a signal to proceed.

Suggestion: Point with the entire hand to the student, then point hand in direction of crossing. Use outside P.A. system, if available. Follow district procedures.

- Instruct students to pause and look both ways before continuing beyond the bus.
- Check traffic in both directions before allowing students to cross a roadway.
- While performing this operation, remember you are not a traffic officer and have no rights other than those of a regular motorist. Do not signal any motorist to do anything.
- When students have safely crossed the road, and/or cleared the unloading zone, count students, cancel the flashing red warning lights by closing the door.
- If a driver of a motor vehicle violates the stop arm law, follow district procedure for reporting.
- Use safe procedures to allow stopped traffic to move on.
- Place transmission in gear.
- Release park brake.
- If the students are crossing, the bus should be toward the center of the lane – no need for turn signal. **Do not allow enough room on the right for a motorist to squeeze between the bus and the curb or edge of the pavement.**

- Check traffic using all outside mirrors.
- When safe, gradually resume correct position on roadway and continue.

2. When unloading students on school grounds, stops should be planned so that students get off on the curbside, without having to cross in front of traffic. School bus loading zones should be located in a separate area from parent drop off areas when possible.

Ref 42-4-1904(1) C.R.S. ...Such regulations shall prohibit the driver of any school bus used for the transportation of schoolchildren from discharging any passenger from the school bus which will result in the passenger's immediately crossing a major thoroughfare, except for two-lane highways when such crossing can be done in a safe manner, as determined by the local school board in consultation with the local traffic regulatory authority, and shall prohibit the discharging or loading of passengers from the school bus onto the side of any major thoroughfare whenever access to the destination of the passenger is possible by the use of a road or street which is adjacent to the major thoroughfare. For the purposes of this section, a "major thoroughfare" means a freeway, any U.S. highway outside any incorporated limit, interstate highway, or highway with four or more lanes, or a highway or road with a median separating multiple lanes of traffic. Every person operating a school bus or responsible for or in control of the operation of school buses shall be subject to said regulations.

1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-224.01 (b) – Prohibit the unloading from the school transportation vehicle of any students who must immediately cross a major thoroughfare, except for two-lane highways when such crossing can be done in a safe manner, as determined by the local board of education in consultation with the local traffic regulatory authority.

1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-224.01 (c) - Prohibit the loading/unloading of students from school transportation vehicles onto the side of any major thoroughfare when an adjacent road or street would provide access to the students' destination. 42-4-1904(1) C.R.S.

1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-224.02 For the purpose of this section:

224.02 (a) Major thoroughfare - a freeway, U.S. highway outside any incorporated limit, interstate highway, highway with four or more lanes, or a highway or road with a median separating multiple lanes of traffic. 42-4-1904(1) C.R.S.

(1) Freeway - a controlled access highway.

(2) U.S. highway - a highway with a U.S. designation in front of the highway number (for example, U.S. 50) or posted with the U.S. highway sign.

(3) Highway with four or more lanes - a highway with two or more through lanes in the same direction. Turn, acceleration, and deceleration lanes are not considered through lanes.

- (4) A highway or road with a median - a highway or road with a raised, lowered, or striped area between opposing lanes of traffic. A median using a striped area is normally two to four feet wide between the solid lines.
- (5) Adjacent - a road or street running parallel to the major thoroughfare, e.g., a service or frontage road.

224.02 (b) The district shall obtain clarification from the local traffic regulatory authority when needed.

42-4-1903 – Requires drivers to report stop arm violators to the district. In addition, it addresses the specific requirements a driver must observe when approaching a school bus in the active process of loading/unloading students.

School bus drivers are professionals Drivers should never “trap” a motorist. If stopping at an intersection, allow traffic to clear the intersection prior to activating the stop arm and red lights. A school bus operator should always perform the requirements of the position in a professional manner.

REPORT ROUTE HAZARDS

1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-224.03 - It shall be the responsibility of each school transportation vehicle operator to report any condition on a route which may be construed as a safety hazard.

These hazards and the corrective action may need to be listed on the route description for the substitute driver.

Review the district procedure on reporting route hazards and how to determine when a change is warranted. The driver shall never change a stop without following district procedures.

FIELD / ACTIVITY TRIPS

Making a trip into a congested city or area that a driver is unfamiliar with can be a frightening experience for the small city or rural school bus driver. It does not have to be. Rural districts can help their employees overcome this apprehension with three easy procedures.

1. The first helpful activity is to have a driver lesson plan in place that addresses the topic of a trip to an unfamiliar, busy city.
2. The second is to have resources available for the actual trip.
3. Have a process set up to gather feedback from drivers who make these trips, building resources and helpful hints for future reference.

NEW TRIP DRIVER TRAINING

1. Build a training session that compares the hazards in the local area to what a driver might expect in an urban area. Driving on a trip is different from driving a regular route. The hazards may be different, yet the driver's awareness, needs, and defensive driving techniques will be quite similar.
 - Establish a skills course of maneuvers the driver might encounter in the city. For example, parallel parking and tight right turns.
 - Implement basic map reading skills, stress relieving techniques, and a good mastery of emergency procedures.
 - Include information regarding procedures for on-ramps with traffic lights, multi-lane highway usage, Denver Light Rail, and turning on a red light after stopping.
 - Review the hours of service rules.
 - Have a good procedure in place to develop itineraries to be utilized by the department and the schools transportation serves.
 - Develop a short pre-trip program, including minor maintenance, specialized training, and basic vehicle troubleshooting techniques to be used before leaving from the destination.
2. There are important differences to be aware of.
 - An unfamiliar route.
 - Trip sponsors and their responsibilities.
 - Sponsors are generally responsible for maintaining order on the bus and accounting for students. The driver will find students who are not familiar with ridership rules and there may be excited behavior due to the nature of the trip. Review district procedures regarding student management during special trips. A student roster is highly suggested. Sponsors should keep the bus clean.
 - When the destination has been reached, make certain all passengers know which school bus, and at what time they are to board for the return trip.
 - Check that no passenger(s) board the bus at any time unless authorized by you or by a sponsor. Only authorized passengers are allowed to ride the bus.

3. Storage of large and oversized equipment.

- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-223.01 - School transportation vehicles shall not transport any items, materials, or equipment which in any way would endanger the lives, health, or safety of the students and school transportation vehicle operator. In addition, any item or items, which could break or produce injury if tossed about inside of the school transportation vehicle shall be properly stored or secured to reduce the danger to a minimum. In addition, the school transportation vehicle operator shall make a reasonable and prudent determination that all carry on items are properly handled in order to minimize the danger to all others.
 - The equipment must be stored or secured to reduce the danger to a minimum, in case of an emergency stop or an accident. The driver must make a reasonable and prudent determination that all carry-on items are properly handled in order to minimize the danger to all others.
 - Store band instruments and other large items in the storage compartment under the bus, if so equipped.
- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-223.02 - All aisles and exits shall be clear of luggage and/or equipment when transporting students.
 - If there is no under storage area, make sure the items are stored and secured away from the front and rear doors, are not stacked above seat back height and are out of the aisle.
 - Other options may include: equipment truck, cargo van, or a second bus as an equipment bus.

DO NOT EVER BLOCK THE EMERGENCY DOOR(S) OR WINDOWS.

- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-216.02 - Students on activity trips shall receive emergency evacuation instruction prior to departure.
 - Emergency evacuation instruction shall be given prior to departure. Instruction should include use of roof hatches, emergency doors, and emergency windows.

4. The school district documentation should provide the following information:

- Destination and date.
- Nature and purpose of trip.
- Departure and expected return times.
- Number of passengers to be transported.
- Equipment to be transported.
- Rest stops and overnight arrangements (if applicable).
- Authorized signature and school contact.

When the trip is completed, fill out a district activity/field trip report or the documentation required by district procedure. Items may include: mileage, student list, actual number of passengers, time departed/returned, and problems that were encountered, if any can be on the form.

- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-216.03 - Records shall be maintained documenting that the required evacuation drills were conducted or evacuation instruction was given.
- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-229.04 - All school transportation vehicle operators shall document that they are in compliance with this section, hours of service.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS DURING FIELD/ACTIVITY TRIPS

All regulations governing the operation of school transportation vehicles (1 CCR 301-26) are applicable on trips. The driver must follow (this section may repeat prior information):

- Vehicle failure and accident procedures for activity/field trips as they apply to the local district.
- Convoy Distance, 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-212.01 - ...shall not follow another convoy vehicle within 300 feet, when traveling outside the corporate limits of a town or city.
- Emergency Evacuation Drill, 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-216.02 - Passengers on activity or field trips shall receive emergency evacuation instruction prior to departure.
- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-216.03 - Records shall be maintained showing that the required evacuation instruction was given.
- Tobacco Products, Controlled Substances, or Alcohol, 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-218.01 - Use of tobacco products, controlled substances, or alcohol aboard any school transportation vehicle shall be prohibited at all times.
- Food and Drink, 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-219.01 - The school transportation vehicle operator shall not consume food or drink unless the vehicle is stopped at a safe location with the park/emergency brake set.
- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-232.01 – School districts/service providers shall have a procedure to govern the use of cell phones and two-way radios by school transportation vehicle operators. This procedure shall include limiting the use of these devices while the vehicle is in motion and restricting the use of personal cell phones.
- 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-233.01 – The school/multifunction bus shall not be placed in motion on roadways with the service door open.

RESOURCES FOR THE TRIP

- Call ahead to the destination. Prepare a small notebook with phone numbers and the name of the person to contact upon arrival. Don't stop with just one phone number. Obtain the department's dispatcher number, the mechanic's number, and the number of the school that will be your destination.
- Request area maps and a suggested route to the destination from the sponsoring district. Plan more than one route in case of unexpected detours. Most major urban districts have computerized scheduling systems in place which might help generate a detailed map of the destination area.
- Obtain information regarding road closures.
- Create an "Over-the-Road" packet. Include the Emergency Service List from CDE.
- During winter months, carry a bag of salt, sand, or kitty litter to help provide traction in an emergency situation.
- Per school district procedures, consider having extra tools, hoses, belts, bolts, flashlights, etc. which could be used in case of a minor breakdown.
- Review school district procedures regarding securing the school transportation vehicle when unattended.
- Use stress-relieving techniques and take unscheduled rest breaks if needed. For instance, stop and secure the bus, get out and walk around outside. The back is particularly vulnerable to injury when driving or working around school buses. A number of factors include sitting for long periods of time, vibration of the vehicle, having to lean over seats to put up windows, and lifting and pushing heavy objects such as wheelchairs. All of these contribute to the driver's susceptibility to back injuries. A little care can go a long way towards keeping drivers on the job and out of pain.
- While driving, sit up straight in the seat with back and legs making a 90 degree angle. There should be a slight gap between the top, front portion of the seat bottom and the back of the leg. Change position or shift weight every 15 to 20 minutes. Lean forward to operate the door mechanism. Practicing these posture habits will help keep the back healthy and happy.

Build a Library of Resources

- Document knowledge and experience gained from each trip.
- Assemble maps, resources and a list of contacts.
- Create a checklist of helpful techniques used and things that were overlooked that should be included on the next trip.
- Document feedback regarding the vehicle driven, itinerary used, and passengers serviced.