

# Drug and Alcohol Awareness for School Bus Drivers

Reference Guide and Test

**Produced by Video Communications**

## **Introduction**

Any driver of a commercial vehicle, carrying passengers, is held to a different standard than the general public. Anytime a commercial driver receives a DUI even when they are off duty, their commercial drivers license will be terminated.

This is the reoccurring theme throughout the video. Bus Drivers must comply with the high standards mandated by federal and state laws, as well as the policies of their school district or organization.

The video also covers drug testing procedures and policies, and how a drug test could be the determining factor in a bus drivers line of work.

## **Opening**

In the opening of the video a female bus driver is enjoying some food and wine with a few of her co-workers and friends. She exits the restaurant, says her goodbyes and heads to her car. On her way home, she is pulled over by a Highway Patrol Officer. As the officer requests her license, registration, and insurance, he notices an odor coming from the woman's vehicle and asks her how much she has had to drink. The driver tells the officer that she had a glass of wine with dinner.

The officer instructs the driver to meet him at the rear of her vehicle where he conducts a sobriety test on the driver. The officer comes to the conclusion that he will have to administer a breathalyzer test on the driver.

The driver failed the test and is taken to the county jail for a DUI.

## **Consequences**

1) The following morning the driver is released and goes to tell her supervisor what had happened the previous day. The supervisor lets the bus driver know about the consequences of her actions:

- a) According to law, when a bus driver surrenders their drivers license, their commercial license is surrendered as well.
- b) They will no longer have a valid school bus drivers certificate.

c) In the video, the supervisor informs the driver that it is a year from the bus drivers court date before she can reapply for her commercial drivers license.

d) In the state she resides in, the law indicates that she cannot reapply for her school bus certificate for 3 years from her court date.

e) She will be placed on administrative leave through the district until her court date and she is found guilty of the DUI. It is at that time that her job as a school bus driver will be terminated.

f) The driver's supervisor also informs her that she will be paying \$5,000 to \$8,000 in court fees if she is convicted of driving under the influence.

## **Part 1: Alcohol, Legal, Illegal drugs and Their Effects**

### **1) Pre Employment Drug and Alcohol Testing**

a) Every school bus driver will be given a drug and alcohol test during their training period to become a school bus driver. The driver will be notified of the results of the pre employment test and may request a copy of the test. Strict confidentiality will be observed at all times.

### **2) Alcohol**

a) Alcohol is a drug.

b) It can stay in your system anywhere from 2 to 12 hours depending on body weight and the amount of alcohol consumed.

c) Alcohol is the reason for most cases of driving while impaired.

d) Even at low doses, alcohol can significantly impair the judgment and coordination required to drive a school bus.

e) Side effects of alcohol can include:

- Impaired motor skills
- Dizziness

- Sleep disorder
- Poor judgment
- Delayed reaction time
- Aggressiveness
- Fatigue

**3)** In the video, it shows a bus driver lounging at home late at night drinking beer and smoking marijuana. He still feels the effects the next afternoon as he heads out to work. Instead of calling in for his afternoon run, the bus driver risks driving the bus because he has already been disciplined for several no shows already.

a) Although swerving and overcorrecting his poor driving, the bus driver manages to make it to the final stop to drop off the last of the students riding the bus.

b) The students wait for the bus driver's directions to cross the street, when a motorist pulls up behind the bus and notices no amber or red flashing lights are engaged.

c) The motorist goes around the bus when she notices a girl crossing the street, the driver tries to stop the vehicle, but it is too late. The girl crossing in front of the bus is struck by the oncoming vehicle.

**What mistakes were made by the bus driver?**

a) The bus driver hits the override toggle switch turning off any warning lights on the bus.

b) He doesn't use his mirrors or actively watch the areas around the bus due to fatigue and exhaustion from the night before.

c) He does a poor job of directing the students to cross the street.

4) Anytime there is an accident involving an injury or damage to another vehicle, the district or organization will immediately dispatch a supervisor or inspector to personally escort the driver to take an immediate **post accident drug and alcohol test.**

a) Post accident testing will assure parents of students that the driver was functioning properly and that the driver was not impaired at the time of the accident.

5) In the video, the bus driver is called into his supervisors office after being placed on administrative leave. His supervisor gives the bus driver the test results, which came back positive for alcohol and marijuana. The school bus driver pleads his case to no avail. He knows he messed up. The supervisor issues an immediate termination.

a) The post accident test was the deciding factor in the termination of the school bus driver.

### **Illegal Drugs**

6) Although not as accessible as alcohol, illegal drugs can have a major impact when driving a school bus.

a) Because there are so many types of illegal drugs, they all affect the body in different ways.

### **7) Illegal drugs include but are not limited to:**

- Marijuana
- Methamphetamines
- LSD

- Heroin
- Ecstasy
- GHB

**a) Side effects associated with these drugs can include:**

- Irritability
- Hallucinations
- Chills
- Anxiety
- Paranoia
- Memory Loss
- Perception
- Judgement
- Speech Impairment

b) Drivers using these types of drugs are a menace to themselves and the students they transport.

c) If you suspect a driver is using any of these types of drugs report it immediately. You are not a snitch if you report a driver for drug or alcohol use. You are a whistle blower that truly values the safety of the kids.

**Legal Drugs**

**8)** Over the counter or prescription drugs are legal and can provide health benefits. Some common prescription drugs include:

- Vicodin
- Oxycottin
- Valium
- Xanax

- Antibiotics

a) Some, but not all prescription drugs have the same side effects that are found in alcohol or illegal drugs. These include:

- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Depressed Breathing
- Irregular Heartbeat
- Impaired Motor Skills

**9)** In the next sequence of the video we introduce a bus driver who has been dealing with a toothache for days. He borrowed some prescription pills from a friend to help with the pain. He takes the pills before heading out to work. Parents call in to voice their concern stating that the bus driver is driving erratically and a supervisor even notices the driver stumbling from his bus.

a) The supervisor that noticed the driver stumbling out of his bus consults with another supervisor about the incidents.

b) They both come to the conclusion that a **reasonable cause test** should be issued due to parent complaints and obvious signs of something being wrong with the driver.

**10)** In the video, a supervisor escorts the bus driver to a drug testing facility to submit a drug and alcohol test. A few days later he is called in and given the news that the test came back positive. He is puzzled at first and realizes that all he has taken is the pills that he got from his friend for his toothache. The supervisor makes the following valid points to the bus driver.

a) No person should take prescription pills that are prescribed to another person.

b) If a driver is taking medication, they need to be sure that the

medication is acceptable to take when driving a school bus.

**11)** There are several things to keep in mind when a **reasonable cause test** is issued.

a) Besides establishing “reasonable cause” the test must be ordered promptly.

b) Tests that are not given promptly, within 8 hours, probably would not be admissible.

c) A written record of the test must be maintained including the reasons for the test and that the test was administered promptly.

d) The reason for a **reasonable cause test** must be based on specific observations. Including:

- Appearance
- Behavior
- Speech
- Body odor
- Other relevant observations

**12)** The bottom line is that any drug, whether borrowed from a friend or prescribed by a doctor must be approved by the organization you are working for.

a) Bus drivers must reveal to their supervisor of any prescription or over the counter drugs that they are using.

b) Bus drivers must comply with the regulations and policies of their organization, and make sure that they are thoroughly understood.

## **Part 2 - Cause and Effect of Driving Impaired**

**1)** An estimated 13,000 people die in drunk driving related accidents in the u.s. each year; approximately 40% of all motor-vehicle fatalities are

alcohol-related; over 1.4 million drivers are arrested each year for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics; in the United States, drunk driving is the leading criminal cause of death.

**2)** In the video we mention how drugs and alcohol can negatively affect a drivers ability to drive a school bus.

- a) Loss of judgement or good sense affects how a person reacts to sound, what you see, and the speed of other vehicles around you.
- b) Drugs or alcohol can cause a driver to be drowsy and in some cases fall asleep at the wheel.
- c) Reaction time for any situation is drastically reduced.
- d) Vision often becomes skewed.
- e) The drivers ability to accurately judge distance is compromised.

**3)** It's safe to say that anytime a driver is driving under the influence, the risk of an accident and injury to his students is dramatically increased.

### **Part 3 - How Your Addiction Affects Students on the School Bus**

**1)** In the final dramatization of the video, we show a school bus driver loading students onto the bus after school. The small group of students riding the bus were very rowdy and out of control. An argument breaks out between two students riding the bus.

**2)** When the bus driver tries to intervene, one of the students informs her that everybody on the bus knows what is in her "special thermos" in essence blackmailing the bus driver and letting her know that they know about her addiction. Here are some key points to consider.

- a) The students on the bus have no respect for the bus driver.
- b) Students will take advantage of a situation like this.
- c) It will only be a matter of time before you are caught and will no longer drive a school bus.

d) Students are intuitive and can easily pick up on this kind of information. They have multiple ways to inform authorities about this kind of behavior.

**Additional Information and Reminders**

For drivers that have an addiction problem, there is only one course of action. Go to your supervisor and explain that you need help. Trust that your school district will be willing to work with you.

Hot lines are available. Come clean if you have a problem - don't let it ruin your life or the lives of the students you are transporting. The school bus driver has the trust of parents, students and staff. Don't abuse that trust.

Remember, you are a school bus driver. What you do in your spare time can affect not only your career as a bus driver, but ultimately affect the students you transport in one way or another.

Make sure you understand all the policies set forth by your organization. It is your responsibility to get approval for pain medications that you may be taking. Know your job requirements and follow them strictly. Drive sober and stay safe.

# Test Questions

- 1) When a bus driver surrenders their drivers license, their commercial license is surrendered as well. True\_\_\_\_\_ False\_\_\_\_\_
- 2) A pre employment drug and alcohol test will only be given if a trainee is suspected of using drugs or alcohol. True\_\_\_\_\_ False\_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Alcohol isn't considered to be a drug. True\_\_\_\_\_ False \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) You should be okay for work if you drank 4 hours before leaving, as long as you get some sleep first. True\_\_\_\_\_ False\_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What type of test would be administered if injury was to come to a person or damage to a vehicle?
  - a) pre employment
  - b) reasonable cause
  - c) return to duty
  - d) post accident
- 6) Illegal drugs all have the same effect on the human body. True\_\_\_\_\_ False\_\_\_\_\_
- 7) Prescription drugs do not affect the human body like illegal drugs and alcohol do. True\_\_\_\_\_ False\_\_\_\_\_
- 8) Circle the effects that alcohol or drugs can have on a bus drivers ability to safely drive a school bus.
  - a) Drowsiness
  - b) Dizziness
  - c) Fatigue
  - d) Vision
  - e) a through d
- 9) You shouldn't talk with your supervisor about your addiction for fear of losing your job. True\_\_\_\_\_ False\_\_\_\_\_
- 10) What bus drivers do in their spare time could affect them professionally. True\_\_\_\_\_ False\_\_\_\_\_

# Answer Key

1) True

2) False

3) False

4) False

5) d

6) False

7) False

8) e

9) False

10) True