



A Video Guide for Emergency Evacuations of the School Bus

Reference Guide and Test

INTRODUCTION

I) In the life of every school bus driver there may be a time when you are required to exhibit the skills that are necessary for evacuating a school bus. If you are ever faced with doing this, you must be prepared. Not only physically prepared, but mentally prepared. The best way to perform a safe and efficient evacuation is by thoroughly training students. The goal for the video is to show the skills that drivers need to successfully evacuate a school bus. The hosts for the video are Paula Davison, a safety training supervisor and Luke Parks, a school bus driver at Mid Placer Transportation Agency.

II) Let's begin by understanding that school bus drivers have an enviable record. Approximately 480,000 school buses in the United States transport students each school day. We are sure that you have heard before, that a school bus is one of the safest forms of transportation in the US. However, when accidents do occur, they can be very serious. The weight and size of the bus alone means that any collision may result in serious injury to any vehicle that collides with the bus. For this reason, bus drivers must be well trained to know how to respond to these situations. They must know: what to do, how to do it and they must not hesitate. Uncertainty is not an option.

Introductory Safety Issues

1) Bus drivers have the responsibility under the law to make sure that students follow the rules that are mandated by their district. Students are expected to use proper conduct while riding the bus. This is essential for their safety and the safety for EVERY student that's being transported. Student conduct on the school bus has an immediate relationship to evacuation procedures.

2) An example of this is that students must keep noise levels at low levels, so they can clearly hear their bus driver's instructions. By hearing ALL instructions clearly, students can make it off of the bus in a safe efficient manner. As a school bus driver, you need to clearly convey the importance of proper student conduct. Students that are talking loudly and goofing off may not be able to understand the seriousness of the situation if an emergency were to take place. For example, an out of place backpack can lead to a trip or fall during the evacuation process. It's often the little things that are overlooked that need to be addressed.

3) Another important introductory safety issue is knowing the condition and location of safety equipment on the bus. This includes:

- a) the fire extinguisher
- b) the first aid kit
- c) warning devices

- d) the seat belt cutter
- e) the on board radio

4) The nice thing about today's technology is that you can also have a cell phone ready in case the on board radio is out of range. A cell phone is also useful in being able to relay vital information to emergency personnel once the bus has been evacuated.

5) Make sure to take the time to check all of the doors and door latches to make sure they are working properly.

6) One of the most important determinations a bus driver can make is deciding when it's necessary to evacuate a school bus. Examples of when it is absolutely necessary to perform an emergency evacuation include:

a) **ANYTIME the bus is in danger of being struck by a train, the driver must immediately evacuate the bus.** All other issues are secondary to getting the students off the bus and making sure they are a safe distance from the bus and the railroad tracks.

b) When a bus driver is confronted by an on board fire, this too calls for an immediate evacuation. The driver should try to get the bus to the safest area possible, as quickly as possible and then evacuate the students.

7) In each one of the cases mentioned, the lives of students would be in immediate danger if they **aren't** evacuated. Remember this critically important safety principle. **Anytime a bus driver recognizes that their students lives are in danger by staying on the bus, do not hesitate to issue an immediate evacuation order.**

8) ***So, when is it necessary to keep students ON the bus?***

a) If the bus breaks down, and the bus is NOT in danger of being hit by other vehicles, it's safer to keep students on the bus, rather than evacuating them.

9) To evacuate or not to evacuate is a judgment call. Base it on what action will best protect the students on board and then act decisively.

10) When you panic during an emergency situation, you undercut your ability to think and act rationally. **One technique that may prove useful to any bus driver is mental conditioning.** By always thinking how you would react should a serious event occur, you will

be mentally conditioning yourself to deal with an emergency situation.

11) Students leaving the bus must walk a safe distance from the bus and traffic, **NO MATTER WHAT TYPE OF EVACUATION IS BEING PERFORMED**. Make sure students have a landmark designated so they know exactly where to go and wait. When students are evacuated, do not let them return to the bus even after the problem appears to be corrected. You never know if the same problem will reoccur. Also, **tell students that during an emergency evacuation, they must leave all personal items on the bus**. Total focus must be on getting off the bus safely and quickly.

12) It is important to understand that an incapacitated school bus can attract attention from bystanders. Make sure to tell your students not to discuss the incident with any bystanders. They should refer any questions to the bus driver or school authorities.

Emergency Evacuation Drills

13) It is important to understand that one of the most critical issues to keep in mind for a safe evacuation is the driver's ability to thoroughly train students. When students are well trained and have practiced evacuation drills, they will feel more confident when a real life evacuation takes place.

14) Before demonstrating the evacuation drills, you should show students the location of all of the emergency equipment. You should also take the time to give a brief demonstration of the equipment.

15) **2 way radios** are a direct link to the transportation office. You should demonstrate how they work and even give students a hands on demonstration. Also, make sure students know where the first aid kit and the fire extinguisher are located. You should also give basic instructions on how to use the fire extinguisher.

16) Show students where ALL the emergency exits are located. And students should know how to operate the emergency door latches. In addition, you should demonstrate to students how to manually operate the front service door release. And finally, show students how they can stop the bus if the driver becomes incapacitated.

17) When the bus needs to be evacuated, the first decision to make is what type of evacuation to proceed with. To do this, you must first try to determine where the problem is located. For example, if smoke or fire is coming from the rear of the bus, then students at the rear of the bus need to be evacuated first since they are the ones closest to the danger. You would then instruct

students to do a front and/or side door evacuation.

18) If the danger on the bus is reversed - with the fire at the front of the bus, then the students at the front of the bus will need to be evacuated first, using the side or rear door. The evacuation process is not the same across the board. Here are several factors to consider.

- a) Determining whether an evacuation is a necessity.
- b) The order in which students should be evacuated.
- c) Which students are in the most immediate danger.
- d) The different styles of buses, as well as the location of their emergency doors.

19) This is where decision making on the bus driver's part becomes so essential. The driver doesn't have the luxury of time. It's necessary to make the evacuation call quickly. However, the driver needs to determine the best course of action and then act immediately.

20) When having students practice the evacuation drills, they should know the order in which they are to stand and start evacuating. In addition, students should be trained on how to be aides or helpers during the evacuation process. You should have designated aides assigned on your bus. However, it is important to realize that if an evacuation is issued - ALL students should be trained to be aides, if it is called for.

21) When practicing the evacuation drills with students, there are some key points that you need to point out. One key point that students should apply, is that when they are exiting through any emergency exit, they must be cautious not to injure themselves. Paula makes an example of this in the video.

22) As previously mentioned, when students exit the bus, you should have your designated aides exit first. They are going to be the ones assisting the other students off of the bus. The other students will follow in a zipper like fashion.

23) When teaching students to evacuate the bus, they will need to know how to exit it safely without injuring themselves during the evacuation process. Here is a proven technique that will minimize the chance of injury when evacuating out of an emergency exit.

- a) The bus monitors would exit by sitting on the floor and sliding out of the bus.
- b) The monitors assist following students by closing their fists so students can grab on to each fist and leverage themselves while being assisted out of the bus.
- c) The monitors are also trained to set a flat hand out for additional support to the

evacuees elbows.

d) When evacuating, students can use the seat backs to help them sit safely.

e) Students should watch their head to make sure they don't hit it while evacuating.

f) Students should sit down and allow the monitors support to help them slide safely out of the bus.

24) There is more than one technique for assisting students during an evacuation. Make sure to follow your district's policies and if you have any questions, bring them up with your supervisor.

25) There is one thing that is a major NO NO...and that is **making sure that students never lock fingers to exit the bus, this has the potential to lead to broken fingers.**

26) Once students are out of the bus, you should have a specific area for them to meet until you can catch up with them. Teach them to go to a specific area such as a tree or other type of landmark. Make sure the area you choose for them is well away from the bus and any traffic that may be present.

27) Once you have called in the evacuation, you can place the radio outside the driver's window just in case there is no cell phone access. This will allow you to remain in contact with dispatch.

28) No matter what type of evacuation is being performed, you will need to make sure you keep an eye on exiting students. When the final students exit, it will be up to you to check the entire bus for students. Make sure to stay calm and do a thorough job checking the ENTIRE bus. Although time is of the essence in an emergency evacuation, the last thing you would want is to accidentally leave a student on the bus.

29) Once the walkthrough has been completed, you should then exit the bus and join the evacuated students. **Do an immediate head count to make sure that all students have made it off safely.**

30) A split door evacuation is another option. It allows the driver to speed up the process when a full load of students are on the bus. Keep in mind, the split door evacuation will require multiple students to act as aides, during the evacuation process.

31) Decision making for the driver should consider these principles during the evacuation process. The driver will need to:

a) Assess the situation. b) give direct orders. c) Act decisively.

32) These principles apply to all forms of evacuation - rear door, front door, side or split door. Follow these principles to ensure the safe evacuation of the school bus.

33) If a bus driver becomes incapacitated, it can be a traumatic situation for everyone on board. But well trained students will know what to do if the situation were to arise. Make sure to thoroughly train students how to:

- a) **ONE**, stop the bus if the driver is unconscious for any reason.
- b) **TWO**, call in to dispatch using the 2 way radio.

34) Although a frightening thought, it can happen and how well YOU train the students will reflect on how THEY react if it were to ever take place.

35) Teaching students how to safely evacuate a school bus in an emergency situation is key to getting them off of the bus safely. By practicing drills with students, you as a school bus driver, will be well prepared to perform an emergency evacuation if faced with one.

Emergency Evacuation Drills

36) Since we are creatures of habit we tend to accept things as they are. Bus drivers do not have this luxury when faced when an emergency situation takes place on the bus. So, drivers have to learn how to adapt and adjust. They have to make instantaneous decisions that very well could mean the difference between life and death. As a bus driver, you must rely on your training and the drills that have been practiced and applied with students.

37) In the video, we show a reenactment of an emergency evacuation. There is smoke on the bus and it is coming from the front of the bus. Here are the appropriate evacuation procedures:

- a) **ACT DECISIVELY** by call into dispatch and explain the situation to them. and let them know what your intentions are.
- b) **COMMUNICATE WITH STUDENTS** by talking them through the emergency and keeping them calm.
- c) **PULL OVER** as soon as you can to a safe location.
- d) **PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION** to the dispatcher. (Situation, Location)
- e) **GIVE CLEAR AND DIRECT ORDERS** to students on the type of evacuation.
- f) **KEEP AN EYE ON EXITING STUDENTS**
- g) **CHECK THE BUS** to make sure there are no more students on board.

h) **MEET UP WITH EVACUATED STUDENTS** and do a head count.

CLOSING

Bus evacuations occur very rarely. But if they do, you must be prepared. You should take the time to talk with students. Many times students can pose a legitimate question that will even let you form additional evacuation ideas. Many times students are wondering out of irrational fear. Students look to their driver for guidance in an emergency situation. It is going to be your job to keep calm throughout and not overlook any part of the evacuation process. Remember, practice makes perfect. All bus drivers are an invaluable asset to your district or organization. Keep up the good work.

TEST QUESTIONS

1) Student conduct has no bearing on anything to do with an evacuation.

TRUE or FALSE

2) One of the most important decisions a bus driver can make is deciding when it's necessary to evacuate a school bus.

TRUE or FALSE

3) It is safer to keep students on the bus if the bus is experiencing mechanical issues, but it's in no immediate danger of being struck by other vehicles.

TRUE or FALSE

4) If students evacuate because of a fire, they should return to the bus once the fire is put out.

TRUE or FALSE

5) It is important to teach students how to use the on board radio.

TRUE or FALSE

6) As long as you have two monitors trained, there is no reason to train other students to be monitors.

TRUE or FALSE

7) The best method for evacuating is for students to lock fingers with the monitors to make it out of the bus safely.

TRUE or FALSE

8) There is no need to count students once exiting the bus if you already did the walk through.

TRUE or FALSE

9) Teaching students how to evacuate a school bus is key to getting them off of the bus safely.

TRUE or FALSE

10) If there is a fire at the rear of the bus, students at the rear of the bus should evacuate first.

TRUE or FALSE

ANSWER KEY

- 1) FALSE**
- 2) TRUE**
- 3) TRUE**
- 4) FALSE**
- 5) TRUE**
- 6) FALSE**
- 7) FALSE**
- 8) FALSE**
- 9) TRUE**
- 10) TRUE**