

Exceptions for the Use of School Bus Warning and Stop Lights

Reference Guide and Test

Introduction

School bus drivers have a number of rules and regulations to remember and understand whenever they are transporting students. A key consideration to these rules are the use of warning and stop lights on the school bus.

However, there are several exceptions for the use of the school bus's warning and stop lights. In the video, we cover these exceptions and explain in detail why these exceptions exist.

It is extremely important to make sure you understand these exceptions. Please remember that these exceptions may be interpreted differently from district to district, so it's important that you take the time to understand the policies of your school district. If you have any questions, contact your supervisor and get a heads up on the policies set forth by your school district.

EXCEPTION #1 - Pupils who require physical assistance from the driver which exceeds the time it would usually take to unload pupils without physical disabilities.

1) In the video, we introduce this exception by showing a bus driver pulling up to a typical bus stop location to unload students. The amber warning lights are engaged on approach and the driver then activates the red flashing signs and stop lights once the bus has stopped. The first student unloads the bus. Then the driver disengages the red stop lights and signs to unload the other student. With this exception, the lights are disengaged due to the student having an injured leg and needing to be assisted in unloading the bus.

2) A physically disabled or handicapped student will need to be assisted in loading or unloading the bus. If this action takes longer than the length of time that is typically used to load students without physical disabilities, you should not engage your alternating red flashing lights. This exception is due to the amount of time it takes to load or unload the injured student.

3) Keep in mind, if the bus is going to be an obstruction, you should activate your hazard warning lights to let motorists know to approach and pass with caution.

EXCEPTION #2 - Where roadway surfaces are partially covered by snow or ice and requiring traffic to stop would pose a safety hazard.

1) Anytime a school bus driver is driving on roadways that are covered with ice or snow the bus driver must be aware that stopping a bus and engaging their red lights, may cause motorists to hit their brakes. This could result in a severe traffic hazard. Always keep this in mind when driving on icy roads. Also, remember to follow the rules and regulations of your district, when encountering these types of hazards.

EXCEPTION #3 - On a state highway with a posted speed limit of 55 M.P.H. or higher where the school bus is completely off the main traveled portion of the roadway.

- 1) In the video, we show students waiting to be picked up at a rural bus stop location. On approach, the bus driver does not engage the amber warning lights. And once stopped, the driver does not engage the red flashing lights or hazard warning lights.
- 2) With this exception, the driver does not have to engage the warning or stop lights because they are on a state highway with a posted speed limit of 55 M.P.H. and are well off the traveled portion of the highway.
- 3) Also, the driver does not engage the hazard warning lights because the bus is not an obstruction to passing motorists.
- 4) It is important to remember to activate your turn signal early to warn following motorists that the bus will be pulling over.

EXCEPTION #4 - Where the school bus is broken down from mechanical failure. The relief bus shall not activate amber warning and stop light systems.

- 1) In the video, we introduce this exception by showing a bus that is experiencing mechanical issues and pulls to the side of the road.
- 2) The driver of the broken down bus engages her hazard warning lights to warn passing motorists that the bus is an obstruction.
- 3) When the driver of the relief bus arrives, the driver pulls in front of the broken down bus and engages their hazard warning lights as well. With this exception, the students exit the broken down bus and enter the relief bus with only the hazard warning lights engaged to warn motorists.

EXCEPTION #5 - School bus loading zones on, or adjacent to school grounds, or during an activity trip where the school bus is lawfully parked or stopped.

- 1) The video shows a busy school bus loading zone with cars and buses coming and going. Students are amongst the chaos and narration states "imagine if the stop lights were engaged in this area".
- 2) School bus loading zones are an exception. Even if the loading zone is a part of roadway as we show in the video.

3) Another part to this exception is when a bus is used for an activity or sports trip. If the school bus is lawfully stopped or parked during such trips, it would not warrant the use of lights when loading and unloading.

In the video, we demonstrated several exceptions for the use of the amber and stop light systems of a school bus. We have also given the reasoning for many of these exceptions. There are situations that arise that may not necessarily be covered by the exceptions that we just went over. Remember the golden rule that is implied for all school bus drivers: Never let the school bus become a safety hazard. Use common sense as a guideline whenever you find yourself in a situation where the school bus may be impeding the flow of traffic.

Test Questions

1) It is an exception for the use of warning and stop lights if:

- a) An injured students needs to be assisted in loading the bus.
- b) A relief driver comes to transfer students from a broken down bus.
- c) The bus is in a school loading zone.
- d) All of the above.

2) Exceptions can vary from district to district, and state to state.

TRUE or FALSE

3) You should never activate you hazard warning lights when applying exceptions.

TRUE or FALSE

4) There is such a thing as conditional exceptions.

TRUE or FALSE

5) On rural pickups it is important to remember to activate your turn signal early to warn following motorists that the bus will be pulling over.

TRUE or FALSE

ANSWER KEY

1) d

2) TRUE

3) FALSE

4) TRUE

5) TRUE