

REFERENCE GUIDE

Introduction to Special Ed Bus Driving Safety

INTRODUCTION

More and more special Ed students are riding school buses. This means more school bus drivers must be trained to transport these students. As a result bus drivers will have to be trained to acquire the skills needed to handle and work with special Ed students. The video's mission is to assist bus driver instructors to teach these skills to their bus drivers.

The format for the video follows a bus driver instructor as he teaches a new hire the skills he will need in order to be certified as a special Ed bus driver.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING TECHNIQUES

1. Bus Driver Instructor explains to his trainee what to be aware of when driving special Ed students.
2. Bus Driver Instructor explains that special Ed students lack muscle tone and their bodies are easily thrust out of position. This means that a bus driver must drive with "tender, loving, care."
3. Bus Driver Instructor demonstrates the importance of braking gently so students will not be thrust forward.
4. Bus Driver Instructor demonstrates importance of turning the bus smoothly through a turn.
5. Bus Driver Instructor demonstrates importance of coming to a gentle stop, making sure the bus doesn't stop too quickly.
6. Bus Driver Instructor next explains to the trainee an exercise that will make him feel what a disabled student feels while riding a bus.
7. Bus Driver Instructor has the trainee place his feet on a coffee can. Bus Driver Instructor then drives the bus and stops the bus quickly. The trainee can't maintain his feet on the coffee can. This teaches the trainee to feel what the disabled student is feeling.

LOADING AND UNLOADING SPECIAL ED STUDENTS

1. What to look for when the bus arrives at the pickup point.
 - a. Look around to see what type of activities are going on.
 - b. When the lift gate is being lowered, watch out for kids playing too close to the lift gate.

c. Serious injuries have occurred when kids riding bikes collided with the lift gate because they did not notice it being lowered.

2. Before loading the wheelchair onto the bus examine the wheelchair to make sure it is in good working condition.

a. Test the brakes

b. Make sure the seat belt is working properly.

c. Check frame for loose bolts.

d. If there are any serious flaws in the wheelchair, it can not be loaded onto the bus.

3. Preparation for loading the wheelchair onto the bus.

a. Check out the surrounding area to make sure there are no kids around who could run into the bus.

b. Make sure the wheelchair you are loading is clear of the area where the ramp will be lowered.

c. If the lift gate will not operate check the following:

(1) The seat belt on the lift gate must be securely fastened or the gate will not operate.

(2) Some buses have an on and off switch in the bus compartment. Make sure the switch is properly engaged.

d. Turn on the flashing red lights before placing the student and the wheelchair on the ramp.

(PLEASE NOTE THAT THERE IS NO CONFORMITY ABOUT THIS ISSUE. EACH STATE HAS ITS OWN SET OF GUIDELINES AND YOU MUST FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES OF YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT)

e. Loading the wheelchair onto the ramp:

(1) Line the wheelchair up in front of the ramp.

(2) Push the wheelchair onto the ramp. Never pull it.

(3) When pushing the wheelchair onto the ramp keep your back straight and your knees bent. Maintaining back safety is vitally important to your personal safety.

(4) Set the brakes on the wheelchair once it's on the ramp.

(5) Attach the lift gate's safety belt making sure it latches into place.

(6) Pick up the keypad and raise the lift gate

- (7) Hold onto the wheelchair during the lifting process.
- (8) Once the lift gate has been raised replace the keypad and enter the bus.
- (9) Pull the wheelchair into the bus. Make sure your head clears the interior wall of the bus when you are pulling the wheelchair into the bus.

How to use Tie Downs

1. Bus Driver Instructor explains to trainee the importance of tie downs. He also explains to trainee that the bus used in this example is a new bus that meets the new federal standards. There are three important features to consider:

- a. All wheelchairs must be forward facing.
- b. Each wheelchair must have at least 4 tie downs.
- c. A safety strap must also be used when tying down wheelchairs.

2. Bus Driver Instructor explains that not all buses meet these new federal safety standards.

a. For districts that don't have buses that follow the new federal safety standards, refer to the bus manufacturer's guidelines. These guidelines will explain what procedures you should follow.

3. Installation of front tie downs

- a. Remove tie downs from side pouches and lay them on the floor next to the wheelchair.
- b. Insert the tie down into the floor railing. Pull on it to make sure it's properly installed.
- c. Next wrap the tie down around the strongest part of the wheelchair's frame. This is usually a welded joint or a bolt.
- d. The final step is tightening the strap. This is done by pulling on it until you get proper tension.

(1) When adjusting tension on tie down your back is under stress. Avoid back injury by keeping your back straight.

4. Installation of rear tie downs

- a. Insert rear tie down into the floor railing.
- b. When wrapping the tie down around the frame be careful not to snag it on the wheels.
- c. Set the tension on the straps by ratcheting them into place.

d. Observe proper body mechanics when ratcheting tie downs. Often you are required to get into awkward body positions so it's important to always be aware that proper body mechanics should be used.

5. The final check

- a. Check to make sure that the wheelchair is secure and can't move.
 - b. Adjust tension on both front and rear tie downs if necessary.
 - c. Don't adjust the tie downs too tightly or you could damage chair
6. Attaching the safety strap.

a. There are two safety straps that must be attached.

(1) Attach the first strap into the floor railing.

(2) Next attach the second strap to the locking device on the first strap.

b. The safety straps provide protection for students should it be necessary for the bus to make sharp turns or quick stops.

7. This concludes the introduction of special Ed bus driving safety.

TEST QUESTIONS

Name of Employee _____

Date _____

1. Driving a special Ed bus carefully is necessary because special Ed students have trouble controlling the movements of their bodies.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

2. Special Ed bus drivers should brake and stop their buses in exactly the same way as regular Ed bus drivers.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

3. The first thing a bus driver should do when they arrive at a pickup point is to immediately lower the lift gate.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

4. A bus driver must allow a wheelchair onto the bus even if the brakes aren't in good working condition.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

5. When a bus driver arrives at a pickup point, one of the first things she should do is check out the surrounding area

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

6. If the lift gate is not working the bus driver should immediately call dispatch and ask for help.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

7. If a wheelchair is heavy and difficult to move you can get more leverage by standing behind it and pulling it onto the lift gate.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

8. When the wheelchair is being raised by the lift gate it's a good policy for the bus driver to maintain contact with the chair by holding onto the chair while it's being lifted.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

9. If your school bus doesn't meet the new federal standards your guidelines for tying down the wheelchair should be left up to your own judgment.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

10. When wrapping the tie downs around the wheelchair, it's a good idea to use the spokes of the wheel because it provides easy access.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

11. If you cinch down the tie downs to much you can damage the wheelchair.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

12. If you get into an awkward body position when tying down a chair its O.K. because your back is strong enough to endure the stress.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

13. After front and rear tie downs have been secured there is no need to make any further adjustments.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

14. The main reason for safety straps is to protect students in case the bus must make a sudden stop or sharp turn.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

15. When lowering the lift gate, place the wheelchair as close as possible to the point where the lift gate will be lowered.

TRUE _____

FALSE _____

ANSWERS

1. True
2. False
3. False
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. False
8. True
9. False
10. False
11. True
12. False
13. False
14. True
15. False