

BUS EVACUATION FOR SPECIAL ED BUS DRIVERS

REFERENCE GUIDE

The reference guide is divided into two sections:

1. Preparation for a bus evacuation
2. Two separate examples of evacuating special ed school buses

INTRODUCTION

It is the job of school bus drivers to transport students safely each school day. However, circumstances arise where accidents or events occur that demand the evacuation of a school bus. When this occurs, no one can predict absolutely how the driver will react. But one thing is for sure: If a bus driver has been trained and prepared to know what to expect during an evacuation, the driver is likely to focus on the job of evacuation and not on fears of negative consequences.

SECTION 1. Preparation for a Bus Evacuation

We will begin by examining how a bus driver checks her bus out to make sure it's properly set up for a bus evacuation.

A. PRE TRIP INSPECTION: Follows video titles in sequence

1. Platform should be in good working condition.
2. Check all warning lights.
3. Make sure door latches are working.
4. You should be able to open and close door latches easily.
5. Belt cutter must be available.

6. All seats belts must be in good working condition.
7. Check condition of windows on the bus.
8. Windows should open and close easily.
9. Check first aid supplies.
10. Check all safety equipment as part of your pre trip inspection.

PLEASE NOTE: Always follow your organization's plan for a pre trip inspection.

B. DISABILITIES OF STUDENTS: Some students are physically disabled, other students are mentally challenged. Learn everything you can about your students so that during an evacuation you can make decisions that will minimize risks to these students.

1. Students as helpers-Some of your students can act as helpers and some of your non-ambulatory students can assist themselves during an evacuation.

2. Record information into a log book-This information can be made available to other drivers as well as driver's aides. Emergency bus evacuation training should be shared by all those who will be responsible for assisting during an evacuation.

C. LOCATION OF EXITS AND SEATS ON THE BUS: Response time is critical to the outcome of an evacuation. The driver must know the location of each exit as well as the seating locations of the students. For example, when smoke limits visibility, the driver must have these locations committed to memory.

D. ORDER OF EVACUATION: The order in which you evacuate students is an important consideration.

1. Ambulatory Students-It's quicker and easier to first evacuate ambulatory students.

2. Wheelchair students-Next evacuate your wheelchair students.

PLEASE NOTE: If your ambulatory students have behavioral disorders, *do not evacuate them first unless they are accompanied by an aide or a driver.*

SUMMARY: There is no doubt that any school bus evacuation can be traumatic. Drivers must rely on their training and knowledge of what action to take during a crisis. The key is to stay calm and focused. Don't let the fear of the evacuation distract you. Concentrate on the task at hand and not on the negative consequences of the evacuation. Be prepared. Do your pre trip inspections. Know your students' disabilities. Commit to memory the seating locations of the students as well as the location of each exit in case visibility becomes an issue during an evacuation. Know the order in which you may have to evacuate the students from your bus.

Concentrate on the task at hand and not on the negative consequences of the evacuation.

SECTION 2. Two Separate Examples of Evacuating Special Ed School Buses

Before initiating a bus evacuation ask yourself a simple question. Are the students in any danger. If the answer is no, then there is no need to initiate an evacuation. On the other hand if the answer is yes, the students are in danger, then an evacuation must be initiated immediately. Learn to recognize hazards that imperil the safety of your students.

Remember this: There are no absolute rules for every situation. You as a bus driver must assess each situation and determine the safest way to get your students off the bus.

A. EXAMPLE ONE-NON EMERGENCY EVACUATION-We will define a non emergency evacuation as one in which the speed of the evacuation is not critical to the safety of the students.

1. The need for evacuation is clear-

a. Handling the bus-Carefully pull the bus over to the side of the road.

b. Call dispatch-Tell them of the location of the bus and the condition of the students and the reason for the evacuation. Dispatch can respond by sending whatever backup help will be required.

c. Key steps before starting the evacuation-

1. Set Hazard Lights to warn motorists.
2. Secure the driver's compartment.
3. Remove the key from the ignition.
4. The bus driver is now ready to implement the evacuation plan.

d. Let your students know that they are about to be off loaded-

Special ed students become upset anytime their routine is altered. Reassure them before beginning the evacuation.

e. Order of Evacuation-An ambulatory student has a behavioral disorder. Off loading this student first would leave him with no supervision. He could run into the street and be injured. The driver quickly decides to evacuate the wheelchair students first.

f. Evaluating how to evacuate-If the speed of the evacuation is not critical, then evacuate the students in their wheelchairs using standard off loading techniques.

g. Work quickly to evacuate the students in wheelchairs-

Remove tie downs and lower students on the platform. Keep in mind that if the platform has lost power, you should be ready to lower it manually. Make sure the wheelchair students are placed in a safe location away from street and foot traffic.

h. Evacuating ambulatory students with physical disabilities-

Enlist the assistance of other students as helpers. This will speed up the evacuation. The driver arranges with two of her hearing impaired students to assist with the evacuation of the ambulatory students with physical disabilities. They assist the ambulatory students down the steps of the bus to a safe location

away from street and foot traffic.

i. Evacuating the Student with Behavioral Disabilities-The driver takes the responsibility of walking off the bus with the student who has behavioral disabilities. The driver firmly grasps the student by the hand and they carefully exit the bus together.

j. The final step of the evacuation-Make sure all of the students are in a secure area a safe distance from the bus. They can now await the arrival of a back up bus. The evacuation has been completed successfully.

B. EXAMPLE TWO-EMERGENCY EVACUATION-In this situation speed becomes the paramount issue. The video example of this type of evacuation demonstrates a bus that becomes disabled on a rail road crossing and presents an immediate threat to the students. The bus must be evacuated as quickly and safely as possible.

PLEASE NOTE: It is understandable that during any evacuation the driver will think about the negative consequences of what could happen. Mental preparedness assists you to concentrate on the positive aspect of your training, not on negative consequences.

1. The Driver is in charge-During an evacuation the driver and aide must work as a team. The driver must be in charge but at the same time, it's critical that the aide understand the driver's plan and how that plan will be implemented. The driver makes the decision to evacuate the non ambulatory students first because two of the ambulatory students have behavioral disabilities.

2. Evacuating wheelchair students-The driver will begin by evacuating a student who is light enough for the driver to lift by herself.

a. Remove the outside arm on the wheelchair.

b. Ask the student to place her hands around your neck.

c. Next, slip one hand under the student's legs and wrap the other hand around the student's back. The driver should keep the small of her back straight and her knees bent. This gives the driver proper balance.

d. The driver now picks up the student and turns toward the rear of the bus making sure not to twist her back during the turn. When she sets the student down, she continues to maintain proper body mechanics.

3. Evacuating wheelchair students (aide)-It is now the aides turn to pick up the student. Notice how he holds the student close to his body. The aide now carries the

student over to a safe area away from the bus. He squats into position allowing his hips and legs to bear the weight of the student.

TIP: If you are alone and must carry a student off a bus, don't try and exit the bus using the steps. You may trip and fall injuring both yourself and the student. Instead, put the student down at the rear of the bus getting the student to hold onto the side of the bus. Hop off the bus and proceed to pick up the student maintaining proper body mechanics through the lift.

4. Transferring a student using a two person lift onto a blanket-The aide bears the weight of the boy's head and torso, while the driver supports his legs. This distributes the weight evenly and supports the student. Once the student is resting on the blanket, the aide can pull the student down the aisle making sure that his head faces forward and his legs are extended. Also maintain a secure grip on the blanket.

a. The driver positions herself outside the bus and is ready to assist her aide in lowering the student to the ground. The aide supports the student's head and torso and the driver is able to support the students legs.

b. The aide will now pull the student to the safe area and return to the bus to continue to assist his driver.

PLEASE NOTE: Remember, many of these students have disabilities and properly supporting them during a transfer minimizes any chance of injury.

5. Transferring a wheelchair student with upper body strength-This example shows how a wheelchair student with upper body strength can accelerate the evacuation. Once the student is assisted out of the wheelchair he is able to propel himself to the rear of the bus where he can be transferred to a safe location away from the evacuation.

REMEMBER: By understanding the capabilities of your special needs students you can effectively use them to accelerate the evacuation of the bus.

6. Evacuating a wheelchair student when a blanket is not available-

After transferring the student from her wheelchair to the floor, wrap your arms around her abdomen. Make sure you are able to maintain the best possible body mechanics and pull her the the rear of the bus.

REMEMBER: When performing this single person evacuation technique, make sure you know the disability of the student. Students with brittle bones or other disabilities may not be able to tolerate this technique in which case a blanket will have to be used.

7. Evacuating ambulatory students-The driver gathers them together as a group and gets them to exit out of the rear of the bus. The driver holds onto the students maintaining control over them during the evacuation. Now all of the students are

gathered together to await the arrival of the back up bus.

8. Evacuation Report-Once the driver's duties have been completed, the driver should sit down and write out an accurate report of the evacuation. Writing out the report immediately following the incident is a distinct advantage because the relevant information will be vividly remembered.

SUMMARY: Evacuating a special ed school bus in an emergency situation is the ultimate test for a school bus driver. Remember that the success of the evacuation depends on how well you are prepared. The training that your district provides will give you the tools to be prepared.

Beyond that, you as a special ed bus driver must be committed to the safety of your students. The best way to do this is to bring passion and commitment to the training you receive. After all, the safety of your students depends on it.