

# Safe School Bus Crossing Procedures

Reference Guide  
and Test

## **INTRODUCTION**

**I** Safely loading and unloading the school bus plays an integral part in transporting students. School bus drivers not only have to be aware of students safety, but also of their own safety. Drivers need to be well trained to understand the procedures to safely cross students. They must also know how to approach a bus stop, load and offload students and depart the bus stop safely. In the video, we cover proper procedures for loading and unloading students and escorting student across the roadway. We stress the importance of repeating the necessary steps to perform safe crossing procedures at EVERY bus stop location.

**II** Our guide throughout the video is Martin Ward, CEO at Mid Placer Transportation Agency. He instructs Nichole Morgan, a school bus driver on the procedural steps that must be implemented to cross students safely in the state of California.

**III** It is important to know that students are about 70 times more likely to get to school safely when taking a bus, instead of traveling by car. That's because school buses are the most regulated vehicles on the roadway; they're designed to be safer than passenger vehicles in preventing crashes and injuries. Your understanding of procedures and district policies are critical to safely transport students on a daily basis.

### **Part 1: Training Exercises**

- 1) Anytime school bus drivers are preparing to pick up, drop off and/or cross students, there are a series of procedures that they must adhere to. There is a reason these procedures are in place. Everything from approaching a bus stop to controlling traffic and departing the bus stop plays a pivotal role during the crossing process.
- 2) In the video, Martin gives Nichole a brief breakdown on the importance of how to approach a bus stop and how on the approach the bus needs to be stopped at a minimum of 12 feet from the waiting students.
- 3) Drivers must be aware of several issues when they are approaching a bus stop. This includes, where to place the bus. The bus driver must be aware that there is a series of steps that must be taken before arriving at the stop. The use of the amber warning lights, turn indicator and the red flashing lights are essential for a safe approach to the bus stop.
- 4) During the video, Martin instructs Nichole to walk to the rear of the rear of the bus. this allows Nicole to get a visual reference of when to engage the amber warning lights

and turn signal indicator. By getting a visual reference for activating lights, it will help drivers determine when to activate them. Martin then demonstrates to Nichole what it would look like on approach to the bus stop.

5) The procedures to use on approach to the bus stop are as follows:

- a) Activate amber warning lights 200 feet before the stop.
- b) Activate the turn signal 100 feet before the stop.
- c) Stop the bus at least 12 feet from students (if loading)

6) Once at the bus stop, follow these procedures:

- a) Disengage turn signal indicator
- b) Disengage amber warning lights and engage red stop lights.
- c) Instruct students to load or unload the bus.

7) When preparing to depart, you should:

- a) Choose a gear
- b) Release the parking brake
- c) Engage left turn signal
- d) Do a mirror check (left, right, cross-view, pupil mirror, left again)
- e) Once clear, disengage red lights and safely merge back into traffic

8) Understanding distances and when to engage the ambers and turn signals are critical to performing safe stops at bus stop locations. Attention to detail and awareness, while looking into mirrors and around the bus, will better ensure safety for everyone.

9) Here's a small but important safety tip, when approaching a bus stop. The students will be waiting to load the bus. You must be able to see ALL the students feet, when the bus comes to a complete stop. This will ensure that you haven't pulled too close to the students and this will allow the students to walk to the bus. By doing this you will keep the students clear of the danger zone.

10) In the video, Martin explains to Nichole another critical point. When the bus has come to a complete stop, do not hesitate to engage the red stop lights immediately after disengaging the amber lights. By properly engaging the red lights, motorists in close proximity to the bus will not be confused.

11) Small things can have a big affect when loading and unloading students. No bus driver will get it perfect the first time around, that comes with plenty of practice and incorporating the small but important safety tips learned along the way.

12) After a few go arounds, Nichole is ready for the next part of training. But first, Martin explains the importance of being meticulous with every aspect of the loading and unloading process. He explains that speed comes second to safety. Making sure to follow and apply every part of the loading/unloading process is necessary for students and driver safety.

## **Part 2: Safe Crossing Procedures**

13) So far in the video, we have gone over the importance of the approach, stop and departure when loading and unloading students. Next, the video goes over the correct procedures for escorting students across the roadway.

14) California law requires that bus drivers escort students that are pre-k through 8th grade across the roadway. Some schools will cross ALL students, so it is up to you to understand and abide by district policies when it comes to following your school or organizations crossing procedures.

15) When crossing students, you should follow the same approach procedures. and do the following once you have made it to the stop:

- a) Make sure red stop lights are engaged.
- b) Secure the bus (turn off ignition and take the key with you)
- c) Instruct students to come to the front of the bus and follow you out.
- d) Look out service door before stepping out (for vehicles, bikes, etc.)
- e) Instruct students to wait by bumper, check to make sure red lights are engaged.
- f) Walk out of the danger zone and in a 45 degree angle towards the middle of road.
- g) STOP at edge of bus to look down roadway for personal safety.
- h) Continue to the middle of the roadway and verbally instruct students to cross.
- i) Watch all students cross. Once they made it across the road, return to the bus.

16) Martin explains to Nichole that when crossing students, the same loading and unloading techniques should apply. The only difference is that once you direct students across the roadway, you should follow students across the roadway, just like the crossing guard does. Then follow your students onto the bus.

17) There are several steps to consider when crossing students. After practicing and training with these procedures the procedures will become second nature. Follow them and do not become complacent during any part of the crossing process. The approach, procedures at the stop and preparing to depart the bus stop all are essential to load and cross students safely.

### **Part 3: Additional Safety Situations**

18) As a school bus driver, it is your job to transport students safely. Teaching them how to load and offload the bus is critical for their safety. You should make sure to take the time to talk to students, not only about loading and unloading procedures, but also about safe crossing procedures.

19) It is going to be your job to stay vigilant....we all know how quickly kids can forget rules. Remember, the safety of the students you are transporting rests squarely on the shoulders of their bus driver.

20) Here is something else to keep in mind. There are exceptions to the use of the red stop lights. There may be reasons that they would not be turned on.

#### **Here are several exceptions:**

- a) School bus loading zones on or adjacent to school grounds or during an activity trip, if the school bus is lawfully stopped or parked.
- b) Where the school bus is disabled due to mechanical breakdown. The driver of a relief bus that arrives at the scene to transport pupils from the disabled school bus shall not activate the amber warning light system, the flashing red light system, and stop signal arm.
- c) Where a pupil requires physical assistance from the driver or authorized attendant to board or leave the school bus and providing the assistance extends the length of time the school bus is stopped beyond the time required to load or unload a pupil that does not require physical assistance.
- d) Where the roadway surface on which the bus is stopped is partially or completely covered by snow or ice and requiring traffic to stop would pose a safety hazard as determined by the school bus motor carrier.

e) On a state highway with a posted speed limit of 55 miles per hour or higher where the school bus is completely off the main traveled portion of the highway.

f) Any location determined by a school district or a private school, with the approval of the Department of the California Highway Patrol, to present a traffic or safety hazard.

21) Throughout the video we have gone over many rules and regulations for safely crossing students in the state of California. We have gone over training exercises that can give drivers a visual reference for understanding when to activate warning and stop lights. We have given in depth procedures for loading and unloading students as well as a step by step guide to safely cross students. Remember, being methodical with the crossing procedure is far more important than speed. Take the time to make sure you don't overlook ANY part of the crossing process. And, Please stay safe.

## TEST QUESTIONS

1) School buses are the most regulated vehicles on the roadway.

**TRUE or FALSE**

2) There is no need to train students on crossing since driver training is so thorough.

**TRUE or FALSE**

3) You should activate amber warning lights 200 feet before reaching the bus stop.

**TRUE or FALSE**

4) You should only stop at left edge of the bus only if you know there is traffic present.

**TRUE or FALSE**

5) You should verbally instruct students when to cross.

**TRUE or FALSE**

6) When entering the roadway to cross students, you should walk in a \_\_\_\_ degree angle.

a) 45

b) 90

c) 120

d) None of the above

7) When crossing students in the morning, you would wait until they are on the bus to board the bus yourself.

**TRUE or FALSE**

8) You only need to do a mirror check when about to exit the bus and cross students.

**TRUE or FALSE**

9) When exiting the bus to cross students, you should ensure the bus is secured by taking the keys out of the ignition and keeping them in your possession.

**TRUE or FALSE**

10) Being methodical with the crossing procedure is far more important than speed.

**TRUE or FALSE**

**ANSWER KEY**

**1) TRUE**

**2) FALSE**

**3) TRUE**

**4) FALSE**

**5) TRUE**

**6) a**

**7) FALSE**

**8) FALSE**

**9) TRUE**

**10) TRUE**