

Active Shooter Training for School Bus Drivers

Reference Guide and Test

OPENING

I) A school bus is equivalent to a mobile classroom. Having a concentrated amount of students in a moving vehicle makes it a potential target for unbalanced or dangerous individuals. The daily reminders from the media makes it all to real. Unfortunately, active shooter incidents at educational locations are amongst the highest in the US. This is the reality we live with today. School bus drivers are tasked with transporting students safely to school and home. However, it will be necessary for drivers to learn how to prepare for the unthinkable: an attack on their school bus.

II) The video covers several scenarios to help bus drivers feel empowered when faced with such heinous incidents. These scenarios will give the most realistic examples possible, so drivers can determine what to do if faced with such a crisis. Keep in mind, that it is not our intention to frighten you, rather it's to provide the viewer with tools that can be applied during an active shooter situation. It will be our goal to provide multiple options that bus drivers can utilize when faced with an active shooter. It's our hope that by applying these preventable measures, bus drivers will be in a better position to protect the lives of the students they are transporting.

III) There is no single definitive answer when placed in an active shooter event. Remember to always follow your district's procedures and policies as well as the laws that govern your state.

MENTAL PREPAREDNESS

1) The bottom line for ALL school bus drivers is to safely get students to their destination safely. Safe operation of the bus ensures that students will arrive at school and home without incident. However, there is always the "unpredictable" and the "what if's" and this is where school bus drivers need to be mentally prepared for something other than safe driving practices.

2) School bus drivers do not have the skills or training of law enforcement. Drivers are trained to inspect, drive the bus and handle student behavior. Therefore, we are suggesting that you apply the skills that you, as a bus driver, already possess. This starts with the mental approach for dealing with a crisis situation. Law enforcement is trained to take down violent people. School bus drivers do not fit into this category. However, that is not to say that bus drivers should not employ preventative techniques when they are available and within the capabilities of the driver.

3) A good school bus driver cherishes the relationship with the students they transport. In the event that a shooter incident occurs, you as a school bus driver must feel empowered to act and protect those students. The school bus driver is the only adult on the bus and therefore it becomes YOUR responsibility to take charge when a dangerous situation arises. Remember,

students will look to the school bus driver for guidance.

4) In an emergency situation, the greatest enemy to a bus driver is panic. This is an understandable feeling. However, for you to react to a crisis you have to take charge and keep as calm as possible when faced with an emergency.

5) Let us paint this picture for you....You are driving the bus and it is packed with students. Suddenly a student jumps up with a gun and says 'keep moving the bus and I won't put a bullet in you' and starts toward the front of the bus with the gun pointed in your direction. Do you know how you would react? Do you know what you would do? Not many people would know how to react in this type of situation.

6) As a school bus driver, you are not trained to deal with emotionally volatile situations. However, if it ever happens to you, will you have the mindset to protect as many students on your bus as possible? We can bet that the majority of bus drivers would say yes. We are also sure you have heard stories about parents doing anything to protect their children. A good school bus driver instinctually has the same mindset. A bus driver should have the mentality that 'this is my bus, and I am going to do whatever it takes to protect the young lives on it'.

7) Preventative measures and observance can aid when faced with an active shooter crisis. Every school district in today's climate should have a crisis emergency plan in place. The driver is a part of the school team and must know and understand this plan. The implementation of the plan may differ from district to district. However, a plan should be in place that is universal within the district. The plan should maintain conformity and it must be understood by ALL school employees. Also, and this is an important distinction, the plan should emphasize that the bus driver CANNOT ALWAYS prevent an unstable individual from doing something catastrophic. However, preventable measures can always be taken to help reduce the chances of it happening.

8) So, what if preventative measures are already in place, and the unforeseen happens. What can a driver do within their own limitations to protect their bus? In the video, we place one driver and a group of students through 5 scenarios. The same bus driver will face each one of these scenarios.

Scenario #1

9) In the video, we show the driver driving a typical bus route early in the morning. The bus has made its final stop to pick up students and transport them to school. However, something disturbing is being communicated through the 2 way radio. It is the dispatcher relaying a

message to all drivers on route. The dispatcher lists off what seems to be a typical commonly used code. However, what may seem like a series of meaningless numbers, is actually a lifesaving code for ALL bus drivers on route. What the dispatcher is telling the drivers, is that there is an active shooter on campus and that all incoming school buses must be rerouted to the 'safe place'.

10) Many school districts have already implemented this strategy. If there is a shooter on campus, the last thing you want to do is bring a bus full of students there. That is why a code should be set in place. The code should be a universal one that is understood district wide. A 'safe place' should already be established for rerouted buses.

11) And once you have made it to the 'safe place', you then would need to talk with the students and let them know that an emergency has taken place on the campus. You do not need to give students the details of the emergency. But you do need to establish that you are in charge, and it will be YOUR job to keep the students as calm as possible while waiting on word for the following appropriate steps to take.

Scenario #2

12) This scenario shows how a school bus driver has already entered and stopped at a school bus loading zone to offload students. As the students begin to gather their backpacks and personal items, the driver notices students are racing out from the school campus and suddenly everyone on the bus is alerted to the sound of gunfire.

13) The driver cannot move the bus because they are blocked in by other vehicles. Students are standing and about to offload the bus. So what can the driver do? It seems like his options are limited. Or maybe not.

14) In the video and in this particular scenario, the active shooter has not made it to the loading zone yet. So, what if it appears to the shooter that there are no students on the bus? If an unstable person that is looking to terrorize and take young lives sees an empty school bus, what would be his reason for attacking it? The driver acts quickly. He informs students to get down as quickly as possible and to remain quiet. He also has enough wits about him to close and secure the service door to detour anyone from entering the bus.

15) By the time the shooter makes it to the loading area, he sees nothing but an empty bus. This again begs the question, why would he choose to attack an empty bus? The chances are that he wouldn't. The reason this scenario also played out so smoothly, is because the students were well trained by their driver. Students should be trained in situations like this. Prevention is

ultimately the best method.

Scenario #3

16) Just like the last scenario, the school bus is blocked in by other buses and vehicles dropping off students. But UNLIKE the last scenario, IN THIS ONE, the shooter knows that there are students on board and begins to fire his weapon. So, what can a driver do if they are put in this position?

17) If you look at the structure of a school bus as a whole, the chassis is the strongest part of the bus. This means that getting low in the aisle, to the bus's floor, will be the safest place to have students lie. In addition, if students lay down and get low, the seats and seat legs can possibly obstruct the path of a bullet coming through the body of the bus. The structure of the bus in this case would act as a shield and form a layer of protection. We are not insinuating that injuries will not still take place. We are simply saying that this is the best chance to minimize injuries or casualties to students on the bus.

18) In the video, you can see that the shooter has now made it to the loading zone and is taking aim at the bus. Bullets begin to blast through the side of the bus, and windows are being blown to pieces. Scared students are yelling and are verbally acting out their fear. And although it will be outside your norm, you must have the mindset that 'This is a war zone. And you must tell yourself that I am going to do everything that I can to protect as many students as possible.'

19) HERE IS SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND. You must do ALL YOU CAN to protect YOURSELF as well. First of all, we wouldn't want you to get hurt or injured. Secondly, you cannot help students if you ARE injured. This is important for you to understand. **Student safety is reliant on keeping YOURSELF safe.**

20) In the video, we show the driver calling for the unloading students to quickly get back into the bus. Simultaneously, the driver closes the service door in an attempt to at least slow the shooter down. The driver then instructs the students to get as low to the floor as possible, and to cover up with their backpacks. By covering up with their backpacks, this can add an additional layer of protection. He then gets down as quickly as possible in an attempt to escape the gunfire.

21) The ending to this scenario can be played out in a variety of different ways. In this scenario, the driver did all he could to minimize casualties to his students.

Scenario #4

22) It is the end of the school day. The school bus is packed with students and the driver is on approach to the first stop to unload his students. The driver checks his mirrors on approach to the stop and then passes it, leaving students confused. So, why did he keep driving? Why didn't the driver stop the bus?

23) The driver did not stop because he knows something that the students don't. The driver has been observing a vehicle that has been following them since they left the school bus loading zone. The vehicle appears to be tailing the school bus. The driver has made the decision not to stop the bus because of the suspicious manner in which the vehicle is following it.

24) The driver calls into dispatch to let them know that he is going off route due to the suspicious vehicle following them. He is going primarily on instinct. Something does not seem right to the driver. Is the driver simply paranoid or overreacting? It may just be a parent meeting their child to pick them up from the bus stop. You may never know. However, the adage of 'it is always better off being safe than sorry' rings true in this situation.

25) The driver's observance led him to make the decision to pass up the bus stop. And in this scenario, it appears he made the right one due to him noticing a gun lying across the seat of the suspicious vehicle.

26) This also clearly illustrates the importance of observance and awareness on the driver's part. As we have said, this could have turned out to be nothing but coincidence. However, by being aware of your surroundings and listening to your gut feeling, you may be able to detour this type of scenario.

27) Here are the actions you can implement if you think you are being followed:

- a) Call into dispatch, alert them of the vehicle.
- b) Continue monitoring the situation.
- c) Try to get to a main roadway as quickly as possible.
- d) Keep dispatch alert and be prepared to give a description of the vehicle.

Scenario #5

28) For the last scenario of the video, the driver is faced with a student yielding a weapon on the school bus. So what steps did he take in this situation?

29) First, the driver may have been scared and shocked to see this, however, he did not panic. He kept his cool, even with having to deal with a gun pointed in his direction. He continually tried to verbally intervene with the manic student. He also used several methods to try and engage the student in conversation. And although he took the right steps, it was to no avail.

30) The student with the gun is all over the bus. He is pacing back and forth down the aisle with the gun being pointed in all directions. The driver takes advantage of this by doing 2 things while the student's back is turned:

a) He quickly grabs the 2 way radio and carefully places it under his leg. He did this hoping that while compressing the talk button, dispatch would be able to hear that there is a life threatening emergency taking place on the bus. While still attempting to intervene with the student, he is able to relay his location and even the student's name.

b) He also flips on the red stop lights while still trying to engage with the student. The reason he does this is to try to catch the attention of anyone that may pass by the bus. If someone sees a bus driving down the roadway with the red lights flashing, more than likely, they will know something is up.

31) When the student fires a shot towards the drivers direction, the driver knows he has to take IMMEDIATE and DRASTIC actions. So, the driver does the only thing he thinks he has the option to do when faced with such a dangerous situation. He knows that a student standing in the aisle with the bus in motion will not have the best balance. He slams on the brakes hurling the student forward. In the process, the student loses the gun. The driver quickly slides the gun from the students reach, secures the bus and restrains the student. The school bus driver used his quick thinking. In addition, he used the school bus as a defensive weapon to disarm the student.

32) We are not implying that all scenarios are going to end like this. This, in essence, is a Hollywood ending. We are simply saying that the driver, when faced with a life threatening situation, chooses to do whatever he can to protect the lives of the students on his bus.

33) It is important to understand that MOST people really don't know how they would behave in an active shooter situation. But ask yourself this...After seeing the scenarios in the video, don't you think you would do the same for your students?

34) Bus drivers need to factor in that there is no one to help them if an active shooter situation suddenly occurs. Every student on the bus is looking to their driver for guidance in these

situations. However, active shooter events usually do NOT last long. In 80% of these events, the shooter is at large for less than 15 minutes and the average police response to these events is 3 minutes. This means that you must do everything you can within a small window of time. Remember, every second counts, and by keeping your students safe for a short time frame, you may be saving their lives.

35) It is also important to talk with students and train them on the importance of understanding what to do if any of the scenarios we have demonstrated takes place. Encourage them to ask questions. Take the time to answer those questions to the best of your ability. The goal is not to frighten them, it is to prepare them in the event that a situation like this were to take place.

CLOSING

36) Throughout the video, we have covered several issues and scenarios that portray emergency crises on or around the school bus. We have given you examples of what observation and your own gut instinct is capable of recognizing. We have given procedures that can be applied district wide to warn of an attack on campus or on the school bus. We have even shown how driving maneuvers can be used to throw off an assailant. It is important to have an emergency plan in place on your bus. These plans should be practiced just like evacuation drills.

37) Not every situation is going to take place as we have shown you in the video. However, by having a plan in place, you will be one step ahead of the game. We encourage you to be pro active. Talk with your fellow drivers and supervisors. Most of the techniques and strategies used in this video came from experienced bus drivers just like yourself. So, now we leave it in your hands. We tip our hats to you. The safe drivers, the protectors of our precious cargo.

TEST QUESTIONS

1) Active shooter incidents at educational locations are amongst the highest in the US.

TRUE or FALSE

2) School bus drivers have the same abilities as law enforcement when dealing with dangerous individuals.

TRUE or FALSE

3) Preventative measures and observance can aid when faced with an active shooter crisis.

TRUE or FALSE

4) There is no use in training students on active shooter drills since every incident differs.

TRUE or FALSE

5) The bus itself can be used to help shield students from bullets entering the bus.

TRUE or FALSE

6) It is okay if you get injured as long as you think the students will be safe.

TRUE or FALSE

7) If you see a vehicle following you, you shouldn't worry because you don't want to be late to drop off students.

TRUE or FALSE

8) You can use the instruments on the bus to try and get critical information to dispatch.

TRUE or FALSE

9) The average police response to active shooter events is 3 minutes.

TRUE or FALSE

10) Districts should have a universal code to warn of potential or ongoing threats on campus.

TRUE or FALSE

ANSWER KEY

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