

THE DRIVER'S SEAT

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

410-751-3229

Winter

2014

EDITION



Wednesday, January 15, 2014

Director:

Michael Hardesty

Supervisor:

Keith Shorter:

Out-of-County Special
Needs & South Carroll
Area

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As I sit here at my desk reflecting following this morning's surprise freezing fog event, I again have to take my hat off to all of the school bus drivers, bus assistants, mechanics, and other employees that made their way into work before receiving the call that school opening would be delayed by two hours. Road conditions this morning between 5:30 a.m. and 6:00 a.m. deteriorated rapidly as Carroll County was caught in a cold bank of air causing the temperature to drop from above freezing to 28 degrees as the fog continued to thicken. A "flash freeze" occurred throughout the entire county resulting in numerous vehicle accidents as motorists made their way to work without knowing the severity of the unpredicted road conditions.

As we have seen, winter weather events do not always occur at a time when making the recommendation to delay or close school can be announced in time to catch everyone before leaving their homes to travel to work. In my nearly 15 years of experience observing early morning winter weather here in Carroll County, it is uncanny how many times the onset of wintry conditions does not present itself in time to make an informed school closing/delay recommendation prior to 5:00 a.m.

Carroll County Public Schools' inclement weather policy allows the Superintendent of Schools to make a closing or delayed opening decision as late as 6:00 a.m. Carroll County is somewhat unique in this regard as many other school systems have earlier deadlines, many as early as 5:00 a.m. While we would like to be able to make our recommendation to delay the opening or closing of schools by 5:00 a.m., this morning's weather event was evidence that the later 6:00 a.m. deadline is needed. We will continue to strive to make our school closing/delay recommendations as early as possible, recognizing the personal inconveniences and hazardous

travel that individuals may experience when the announcement to delay school is made as late as it was today. Our first priority will always be centered on the over 25,000 students that ride our buses to and from school each day. Today, the correct call was to delay schools by two hours.

You
Rock!

What to KNOW About Driving in the SNOW

Organize before you drive: The night before a forecasted weather event, make sure you park your bus in an uncompromised position. Your long driveway may not be salted before the roads you will be traveling. Make sure you can get out if school is on time. In the morning, check the weather report and the road surface yourself. During your pre-trip, make sure your wipers are working properly and that you have plenty of washer fluid. While warming up your vehicle make sure the window defrosters are also working properly.

On your route: Start your trip earlier than usual in order to be at the first pupil pick-up point on time. Slow down gradually and avoid aggressive braking or steering. Signal upcoming stops by tapping the brake pedal to make the brake lights blink. Head lights should always be on regardless of weather conditions. Turn on the strobe lights when weather conditions warrant. If unsure of road conditions (i.e. snow drifts, ice, etc.) during your route, stop, secure your bus and call TSD. Practice defensive driving techniques by increasing your following distance and giving way to others. Turns may be more difficult when snow banks limit visibility and turning radius. Warn students to stay off of snow banks while waiting for and exiting the bus. Remember that slick surfaces exaggerate any movement. If you brake too hard, turn too hard or drive too fast, you can go into a skid.

If you start to skid:

- Take your foot off the brake and begin turning in the direction of the skid.
- If you turn too far, the school bus may skid in the opposite direction.
- Turn gently the other way, again in the direction of the skid.

Remember to clean up any water in your bus at the end of your evening run; this will make your life a lot easier the next morning. It's easier to clean up water than to deal with ice in the morning.

During limited visibility: When driving during limited visibility keep your lights on low beam. Turn on your strobe light and/or your 4-way yellow hazard lights. Always establish and maintain a safe following distance. Instead of the usual distance of 2 seconds from another vehicle, keep your distance at 4 seconds or more. Follow the center painted line and the painted lines on the side of the road. You may want to sound your horn periodically to warn other motorists. Always call TSD when you are in a situation that has slowed your progress and may be making you run late. Always drive defensively with the attitude that other drivers on the road may not be as well trained and as professional as you!



March Manifest and Stop Sheet Information

The bus route manifest, which is completed by the driver and signed by the contractor, is a snapshot of a daily run completed by each bus. The information contained therein is reviewed by the administrator for the area of the first school. Please make sure the information on the manifest is complete and clearly readable. The stop sheet, which is completed at the same time, is also one of the most important pieces of information that The Transportation Services Department has about a bus. The times provided need to be accurate. The March stop sheets are used to prepare for summer routing. The March stop sheet provides a place to record **5th graders who will be moving to middle school, 8th graders moving to high school and 12th graders who will no longer be riding the bus.** Please take the time in the next month or so to make sure the 5th, 8th, and 12th grade student information is accurate. This information makes it much easier for student's bus stops to move with them to the next school level. If you know the bus number of the next school to which your students are moving, you could also make a note in the margin to which bus your 5th and 8th grade students will be moving in the fall.

Steer Clear of Bad Driving

It is estimated that every two minutes a typical driver makes 400 observations, 40 decisions, and one mistake while driving. That is why it is important to never assume that other drivers will make the right decision. In fact, it is a good rule of thumb to expect the worst-case scenario and plan your movements knowing that the other driver will not slow down, yield, move out of your way, or let you merge. Another important way you can steer clear of bad drivers is to constantly observe and scan your surroundings. By using your peripheral vision and your mirrors, you can pick up on signals that a driver might make a dangerous decision. Some indicators to be aware of are the speed of the vehicle and the angle of its wheels as they might suggest the driver's intentions. Also be aware of distracted drivers or drivers who are, eating or drinking, using cell phones, grooming, reading, or are otherwise not focused on their driving. The earlier you notice roadway hazards and the bad driving of others around you, the more time you allow yourself to react and reposition in your vehicle safely. While you can't control the driving of others, you can control your own. Drivers who learn to expect bad decisions from other drivers and steer clear of trouble can often avoid dangerous last minute maneuvers. Always be prepared for the unexpected. Never hurry through your routine. Slowly navigate through traffic lights, stop signs, loading zones and schools. Ask yourself, how safe is my driving? Hopefully the answer is SAFE.

*What happened when a **red** ship crashed into a **blue** ship?*

****See Page eight for the answer****



Driver Training Reinforcement

REAR DOOR - Please make sure that there are no book bags in the aisle blocking the rear emergency door at any time. Trash cans may not block the rear emergency door. Please keep the aisles clear at all times.

LOADING/UNLOADING STUDENTS - When activating red school lights, the bus must be at a **COMPLETE STOP**. When deactivating the red school lights, check the lights, stop signs and crossing arm to make sure they are completely deactivated before moving the bus, especially if the bus is equipped with an air door. Some buses may take a few seconds for the red school lights, stop signs and crossing arm to deactivate, even though the door has closed. The bus should **NOT MOVE**.

TRAVEL IN THE SLOW LANE - unless you are making a left turn ahead.

MIRRORS - need to be adjusted **PRIOR** to taking the bus on the road. Mirror grids are at all high school parking lots if you need assistance adjusting them. Improper mirror adjustments are a contributing factor in many bus accidents.



DOT CARDS/PHYSICALS- MVA should have been notified of your self-certification/physical expiration date. Remember to carry your DOT card along with your CDL license at **ALL** times. You may e-mail any questions to Dena Hozik at: dmhozik@carrollk12.org.

Boys Misses the School Bus

Boy walks in to class room:

Teacher: Why are you late?

Boy: I saw a sign on the way to school.

Teacher: What did the sign say?

Boy: School ahead slow down.



WAVING ON BUS DRIVERS – COURTESY OR HAZARD?

During the past several months, The Transportation Services Department has become aware of an extremely unsafe practice in which a small number of our drivers have been participating. During pre-service and in-service training, drivers are trained to NEVER wave on other drivers as a courtesy. Examples of this are waiving other buses through intersections and stop signs, or allowing cars or buses to pass a stopped bus, while preparing to load or unload students.

The most hazardous practice of which we have become aware is delaying the activation of the red school lights to allow other vehicles or buses to legally pass a school bus. This practice is extremely unsafe and can result in dire consequences. Children waiting at bus stops are expecting bus drivers to follow their normal routine. When a school bus driver approaches their bus stop, the children correctly assume the red school lights will be activated when the bus reaches the stop location. If a driver delays this process by holding the amber school lights on to allow another vehicle or school bus to pass, the child may cross the road to approach the bus. As this occurs, the vehicles that were allowed to pass the school bus, put the crossing children in extreme danger. The school bus driver would be held responsible should the unthinkable happen with a child being struck by the passing vehicle.

Please obey your training and the law in order to avoid a potential tragedy. Also, please be aware that if a driver is observed allowing this “courtesy” to other vehicles, that driver will be subject to disciplinary action.



Qs and As From Special Ed

As the new year continues to unfold, many old and new situations and questions re-surface. New and veteran drivers and assistants of special education bus transportation, and family members are experiencing the “little yellow bus” for the first time and sometimes need guidance over certain situations. Some of these situations and questions have been brought to our attention and we would like to share with you a couple of those:

Q. Should all special needs students be picked up curb to curb?

A. It is our intent to pick up these students as close to the home/daycare as possible; but, there are limits to the areas that the bus can service:

- Buses are not allowed to travel on private driveways. (few exceptions)
- Buses cannot travel on dirt roads.
- Buses must use only public roads. Private roads/common use driveways are not to be used (most of these roads have a white name sign, not the standard green used for public roads.) (few exceptions)
- Buses should not be in commercial parking lots. (few exceptions)
- Any exception must be approved by The Transportation Services Department.

Q. Who determines what type of equipment is needed for a special needs child to be used when riding the bus?



A. The I.E.P. (Individual Education Plan) team makes all the decisions regarding the education, school site, and relative services a student would need to be successful going to and from school and at school. The team is made up of educators, parents, student, a school psychologist and any other person involved with the student's education. Once it is determined by this team that a child needs special education transportation, the team then determines if any additional equipment is necessary for a safe ride. All Carroll County special education buses are equipped with seat belts and should be worn by the students. Some students may need a car seat because of their size, age, or difficulties sitting. Some students may need to use a safety vest to help them sit up or stay in their seats. Students that use a wheelchair need the lift to help them on and off the bus.

Children learn what they live: If they live with ridicule, they learn to be shy. If they live with tolerance, they learn to be patient. If they live with praise, they learn to appreciate.

BY Dorothy Law Nolte, Ph.D.



HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL BUS

Did you ever wonder about the origins of the school bus? The first school bus was horse-drawn and introduced in 1827 by George Shillibeer for a Quaker school at Abney Park in Stoke Newington, London, and designed to carry 25 children. The earliest school buses were referred to as “school hacks,” “school trucks,” or “kid hacks.” “Hack” was a term used for certain types of horse-drawn carriages; and, Wayne Works, founded in 1837, was the company who made horse-drawn carriages. Early school buses primarily served rural areas where it was deemed impractical for young students to walk the distances necessary to get back and forth from school on their own. Sometimes they were no more than a truck with a tarpaulin stretched over the bed.

In 1914, Wayne Works dropped a wooden “kid hack” onto an automobile chassis, creating a predecessor to the modern motor school bus. Passengers sat on perimeter seating facing the center rather than the front of the bus. Entry and egress was through a door at the rear, a design begun in non-motorized days so as not to startle the horses (a possible precursor to the rear emergency door). Although Gillig Brothers had invented and patented the standard canvas curtain design, Wayne Works was one of the earliest school bus companies to offer glass in place of the standard canvas curtains in the passenger area. The design was known as the “California top” and featured a slightly curved reinforced metal roof with windows separated by pillars. Each window was adjustable using a latching mechanism.

In April of 1939, Dr. Frank W. Cyr, a professor at Columbia University in New York organized a meeting to establish national school bus construction standards which included yellow body paint for school buses. Later becoming known as “National School Bus Chrome Yellow,” the color was selected because black lettering on that hue was easiest to see in the semi-darkness of early morning and late afternoon. During the seven-day conference, funded by a \$5,000 Rockefeller Foundation grant, a total of 45 standards were created, including specifications regarding body length, ceiling height and aisle width. It included transportation officials from each of the then 48 states as well as specialists from school bus manufacturing and paint companies.

Transit-style buses—those with a flat front end—were manufactured in the 1930’s by Wayne Works, Crown Coach and Gillig Brothers and are today known as Type D school buses. Crown Coach built the first heavy-duty, high-capacity, transit-type school coach in 1932 and named it the “Super Coach”. As a result of the “Baby Boom”, the use of the transit-style school bus sky rocketed during the mid 1950’s. In 1959 Gillig Brothers introduced the rear-engine, diesel-powered school bus. The C-180 Transit Coach became the most popular rear-engine transit-style school bus. In 1950, Albert L. Luce, founder of the Blue Bird Body Company, developed a transit-style design which evolved into the company’s All-American, the oldest Type D product line among current manufacturers. However, the conventional Type C design with a truck-type hood and front end, would continue to dominate U.S. school bus manufacturing throughout the end of the 20th century.

By the mid 1940’s, most states had traffic laws requiring motorists to stop for school buses while children were loading or unloading. Around 1946, possibly the first system of traffic warning signal lights on school buses was used in Virginia; it was comprised of sealed-beam headlamps with red rather than colorless glass lenses. A motorized rotary switch applied power alternately to the red lights mounted at the left and right of the front and rear of the bus. In the 1950’s, states began to specify a mechanical stop arm which the driver would swing out from the left side of the bus to warn traffic of a stop in progress. Today, regulations specify the stop arm to be a double-faced regulation octagonal red stop sign at least 45 cm. with white border and uppercase legend. Many North American States call for school bus yellow retro-reflective conspicuity tape on the sides and rear of buses to mark their length, width and height. Some states, as well as school districts call for strobe lights on the roof. Starting in 1977, safety standards for structural integrity were required. Safety standards for school bus rollover protection, body strength passenger seating and crash protection and fuel system integrity were all implemented in April of 1977. During the past decade cameras have become common equipment installed inside school buses, primarily to monitor and record passengers’ behavior.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SBcUnUCbEsg>

Rising early and listening to the weather,
 Hoping the conditions would be much better.
 With snow on the ground and still falling,
 Two hours late Carroll County is calling.



Carefully driving at a safe speed,
 Yielding to others as we proceed.
 By this time the route is half complete
 As the passengers are safe in their seat.

Arriving safely and opening the bus door,
 Cleaning the snow off is now the first chore.
 Freeing the bus of all the snow and ice,
 Remembering safety and paying the price.

A

The wipers are keeping the windshield clear,
 Allowing the driver to spot crossing deer.
 Safety is foremost on the driver's mind
 Being careful not to leave any passengers
 behind.

S

Pre-trip is complete and one turn of the key,
 First stop in sight and on time we will be,
 Passengers on board and off we go
 To the next stop as it continues to snow.

N

Arriving at the school safe and sound
 Even though the driver's heart may pound.
 Early dismissal could be the call,
 But the driver is always on the ball.

O

W

Y

The bus seldom slips and slides,
 But, if it were to move from side to side,
 The automatic snow chains go into action -
 And, the bus instantly gains better traction

D

A

Y

By Rick Sommer



The Crew was Marooned

CALENDAR
Carroll County Public Schools

February

- 7 Two Hours and Forty-Five Minutes Early Dismissal for Elementary Students; Professional Time for Elementary Teachers; Schools Closed for Pre-Kindergarten and Prep Students
- 17 Schools/Offices Closed – Presidents' Day
- 18 Schools **ARE NOW OPEN** for Students.

March

- 10 Two Hours and Forty-Five Minutes Early Dismissal System-wide; Professional Development Time available for Instructional Staff; Schools Closed for Pre-Kindergarten and Prep Students
- 14 Regular Education Route Stop Sheets and Regular Education Route Manifests; Special Education Route Manifests due in Transportation Services
- 24 Spring Bus Inspection (8:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.) Winters Mill High
- 25 Spring Bus Inspection (8:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.) Century High
- 26 Spring Bus Inspection (8:45 a.m. to 11:45a.m.) Manchester Valley High
- 27 Spring Bus Inspection (8:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.) Winters Mill High
- 28 Spring Bus Inspection (8:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.) Francis Scott Key High
- 31 Marking Period Ends. Two Hours and Forty-Five Minutes Early Dismissal System-wide; Teachers Work on End of Marking Period Items; Schools Closed for Pre-Kindergarten and Prep Students



April

- 14-21 Schools/Offices Closed – Spring Holiday
- 22 Schools /Offices Reopen

May

- 12 Two Hours and Forty-Five Minutes Early Dismissal for Elementary Students; Professional Time for Elementary Teachers; Schools Closed for Pre-Kindergarten and Prep Students
- 26 Schools/Offices Closed – Memorial Day

June

- 11 Last Day for Pre-Kindergarten Students
- 12 Last Day for Students, Two Hours and Forty-Five Minutes Early Dismissal System-wide – Professional Time for Teacher

