



**S.C. Department of Education  
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## **Severe Weather Safety Suggestions for School Bus Drivers**

It is imperative that school district transportation departments, including all drivers, be familiar with severe weather procedures. There are several considerations that can be taken in advance to potentially reduce the impact later. By attending training and being familiar with emergency plans, drivers and other transportation personnel are better prepared to make educated decisions about the well-being of the passengers.

- All personnel must understand the differences between “watches” and “warnings”.
- All transportation department personnel should consider participating in storm spotter training. Spotters provide invaluable assistance and critical information to decision makers when hazardous weather threatens. This will also provide the necessary information for drivers to make informed decisions when facing severe weather conditions. Information about the National weather Service Storm Spotter Program can be found at <https://www.weather.gov/skywarn/sc-skywarn>.
- All warnings and watches should be broadcasted over the district communication radio network. Dispatch should monitor and announce any changing weather conditions.
- All transportation departments should have a NOAA Weather Radio. Watches and warnings can also be received from several Internet sites, including the National Weather Service at [www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov).
- If a tornado watch is announced, drivers should continue their route cautiously but monitor their district communication system for changing conditions.
- If a tornado warning is announced, the school and driver should hold children at school until the warning is lifted. Parents and drivers who have arrived at the school should be brought into the school and directed to a severe weather safe area.
- If drivers are already on their route when a warning is issued, they should proceed to the nearest school (if safe to do so) and take their students inside. Drivers should be aware of schools and alternate sites such as fire stations, public buildings, and emergency shelters that may be located on their route.
  - If an immediate threat exists, the driver should pull the bus off the road and stop the vehicle.

- If shelter is not available or there is no time to reach shelter, students should be evacuated 100 feet from the bus and instructed to lie in a ditch or ravine with their face down. In this instance, the driver should also:
  - notify the district transportation office and 911 as soon as possible;
  - remain aware of the potential for flooding;
  - avoid taking shelter under an overpass;
  - avoid utility poles and overhead wires; and
  - instruct students to use their arms to protect head and neck.
- Although ***NOT*** recommended, if students are kept on the bus during an immediate threat, they should sit below the window level and use a jacket to protect their head and face.
- During any other watch or warning, it is recommended that a designated person, per the district emergency plan, determine the best course of action based on the unique predictions and factors related to the weather threat.
- Drivers must never allow students off the bus to move storm debris, such as downed trees, limbs, or dangerous items such as cable or power lines. Instead, the driver should notify the district transportation department and have them report the storm damage to the appropriate authorities. Depending on the circumstances, the driver may also need to contact 911 (public safety) and request assistance.
- ***Drivers should never drive through water that is running across the roadway.***
- Working with local emergency response agencies, districts should consider performing severe weather bus evacuation exercises with all transportation personnel on a regular basis.