COLORADO
Department of Education
School Finance and Operations Division

Small-Capacity Vehicle and Type A Bus Route/Activity Guide

2026-2027

Colorado Department of Education
School Transportation Unit | 201 E Colfax Ave., Denver, CO 80203
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INTRODUCTION

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) School Transportation Unit issues these guidelines to assist public and charter school districts, service providers, and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) with developing policies and procedures for the transportation of students. These guidelines provide interpretations, suggestions, options, industry standards, best practices, and ideas that are consistent with 1 CCR 301-26, The Colorado Rules for the Operation, Maintenance, and Inspection of School Transportation Vehicles; 1 CCR 301-25, Colorado Minimum Standards Governing School Transportation Vehicles, which promote transportation integrity in school transportation departments. We hope this publication will serve as a valuable resource for transportation providers in their efforts to comply with relevant legislation and regulations.

Acknowledgments

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Unit One – The Profession of Student Transportation: Standards, Culture, and Compliance

PART 1: THE PROFESSION AND PERSONAL READINESS

The Professionalism and Role of the Operator

Never permit yourself or others to say, “I’m just the bus driver.” Instead, speak with the absolute pride of your office: **“I am a Professional School Bus Driver.”**

Operating a school transportation vehicle requires a highly specialized skill set that goes far beyond standard driving. In addition to completing rigorous, legally mandated technical training, professional drivers must demonstrate exceptional personal character, patience, and constant situational awareness to ensure student safety.

Consider the unique demands of this profession:

- Safely navigate a high-occupancy, heavy vehicle through diverse and hazardous weather conditions.
- Navigate diverse terrain, ranging from flat plains to high-altitude mountain descents.
- Manage unpredictable traffic and adhere to strict route schedules while maintaining passenger order for up to 70 occupants, relying primarily on a central rearview mirror for cabin monitoring.

This role requires a highly specialized skill set and a strong commitment to professional responsibility. Training focuses on developing advanced skills in student communication, passenger management, and safety protocols.

School transportation vehicle operators maintain a significant developmental influence over the students they transport. Professional demeanor, ethics, and personal respect set a direct example for passengers. Unlike traditional commercial driving, this role carries a profound responsibility to students, families, school administrators, and the community every time the vehicle is operated.

Life in a Fishbowl: The Reality of Public Scrutiny

Professionalism in pupil transportation requires a continuous commitment that extends beyond regular working hours. A driver's public conduct, both on and off duty, directly reflects the reputation of the school district, charter school, or transportation provider.

Because school transportation operators are entrusted with student safety, the community holds their technical skills, personal integrity, and conduct to an exceptionally high standard. Families expect drivers to be responsible, disciplined individuals who consistently model positive behavior. Operational data supports this expectation: when students respect a driver's leadership and personal conduct, onboard disciplinary incidents decrease significantly.

The Professional's Daily Self-Audit

To maintain professional standards and community trust, operators should perform a daily self-evaluation based on the following seven core questions:

- **Am I presenting a professional image?**
    - *Standard:* Wearing clean, professional, modest clothing paired with firm, stable, correct footwear.
- **Is the vehicle placed in my care properly maintained?**
    - *Standard:* Ensuring the passenger cabin is clear of debris, windows are clean, and the interior environment is sanitary and welcoming.
- **Can my organization count on my punctuality?**
    - *Standard:* Arriving at the transportation facility ahead of schedule to ensure unhurried, thorough vehicle inspections and on-time dispatching.
- **Can families rely on my route timing?**
    - *Standard:* Maintaining a consistent, safe tracking cadence so that the bus arrives at designated neighborhood stops precisely on schedule every day.
- **Can my passengers count on my equity?**
    - *Standard:* Administering bus rules and passenger management strategies in a fair, calm, and completely impartial manner.
- **Am I actively modeling the behavior I demand?**
    - *Standard:* Setting an uncompromised example of interpersonal respect by treating motorists, educators, and parents with distinct professionalism.
- **Does my conduct shield my employer from criticism?**
    - *Standard:* Driving and communicating in a disciplined manner that reflects positively on my own character and the integrity of my organization.

Drivers who can confidently answer "yes" to each of these questions have established the foundation for a successful and impactful career in student transportation. Ultimately, the industry standard remains absolute: **“To be respected, you must first be respectable.”**

Your Personal Pre-Trip Assessment

A driver’s personal pre-trip assessment is as critical to safety as the vehicle's mechanical inspection. Physical health, emotional stability, and mental focus are the primary factors driving performance behind the wheel. Chronic or acute stress directly degrades situational awareness, impairs cognitive processing, and slows physical reaction times.

Before operating any school transportation vehicle, drivers must systematically evaluate their personal fitness for duty across the following criteria:

- **Sleep Hygiene and Fatigue Management:** Fatigue is a leading contributing factor in vehicle accidents. A well-rested operator remains alert to developing traffic emergencies and maintains the sharp cognitive processing required to accurately judge speeds and stopping distances. Adequate rest also builds psychological resilience, reducing the likelihood of overreacting to environmental stressors, erratic motorists, or student disruptions.
- **Physical Health and Medications:** Acute illness and the medications used to treat it can severely impair concentration, motor coordination, and rapid decision-making. Over-the-counter medications such as antihistamines, cough suppressants, and cold remedies frequently cause drowsiness, blurred vision, and cognitive delays. Operating a school transportation vehicle is strictly prohibited if physical health is compromised by severe illness or by medications that impair driving ability.
- **Professional Attire and Ergonomic Safety:** Drivers must wear professional clothing that does not interfere with vehicle operation. Loose clothing, drawstrings, long hair left untied, and jewelry are strongly advised against because they can catch on handrails, doors, or controls.

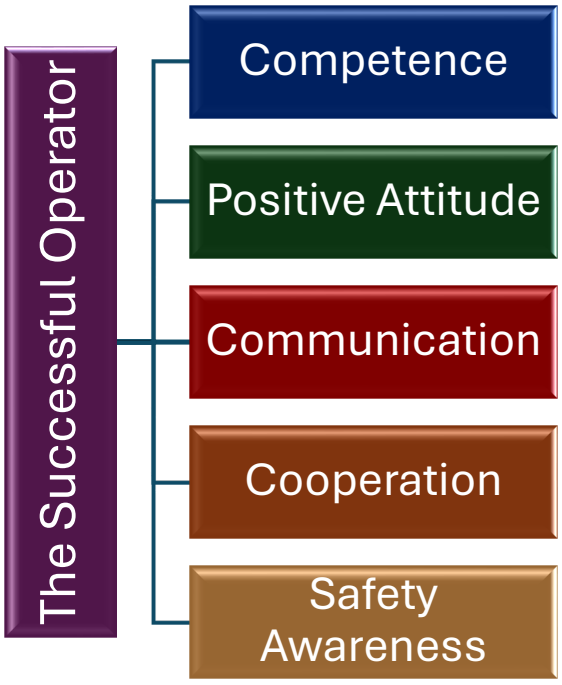
  Footwear must be enclosed, securely fitted, and slip-resistant to ensure stable pedal control and prevent falls on steps or slick ground. Sandals, flip-flops, clogs, and high heels are prohibited. All attire that is provocative or displays graphics promoting drugs, tobacco, alcohol, or explicit content is prohibited.
- **Substance Prohibitions (Drugs and Alcohol):** State and federal laws strictly prohibit the possession, use, or influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or any impairing controlled substances while operating a school transportation vehicle.

Consuming alcohol or any intoxicating substance prior to reporting for duty is illegal. Violations may result in immediate termination, permanent license revocation, and criminal prosecution.

- **Professional Confidence:** Drivers must maintain a balanced level of operational confidence. Overconfidence leads to minimized risks and unnecessary, hazardous driving maneuvers. Conversely, a lack of confidence leads to hesitation in critical traffic situations when decisive action is required for safety.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Drivers must keep personal conflicts and emotional distractions out of the driver's seat. Strong emotions narrow a driver's field of vision and compromise defensive driving performance. Professional operators must compartmentalize personal worries before entering the vehicle.
- **Long-Term Mental Health Awareness:** Mental health conditions often develop gradually. While highly treatable, they require time and professional care to manage. Chronic depression, unremitting anxiety, or severe psychological burnout can stem from chemical imbalances or prolonged trauma, directly affecting cognitive alertness and empathy. Operators experiencing persistent mental or emotional distress have a professional duty to proactively seek out help from employee assistance programs (EAP) or mental health medical professionals.
- **Self-Esteem and Behavioral Safety:** Personal self-esteem directly correlates with risk tolerance on the road. Traffic safety studies show that drivers experiencing low self-esteem or severe alienation have a higher statistical incidence of motor vehicle accidents. Recognizing the value and dignity of the pupil transportation profession reinforces safe, risk-averse, and self-protective driving habits.

PART 2: PILLARS OF OPERATIONAL SUCCESS

To achieve excellence and ensure compliance within the State of Colorado, a school transportation vehicle operator must master five core pillars. These "Five Keys" are interconnected professional disciplines. When practiced together, they elevate an operator from a commercial driver to a pupil transportation professional dedicated to safeguarding the community's safety and dignity.



Competence: The Foundation of Mastery

Competence extends far beyond basic steering and mechanical handling. True competence requires a continuous commitment to operational mastery and technical precision.

A professional operator maintains a thorough, practical understanding of both federal and state mandates. This includes federal frameworks like the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) regulations and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), alongside Colorado-specific rules:

- **1 CCR 301-26:** State rules governing the operation, maintenance, and inspection of public school transportation vehicles.
- **1 CCR 301-25:** State rules establishing the minimum standards for school transportation vehicle manufacturing and safety equipment.

Competent operators apply this regulatory knowledge daily by performing meticulous, uncompromised safety inspections and actively participating in ongoing training to sharpen their technical skills.

A Positive Attitude: Emotional Leadership

An operator's personal attitude sets the emotional environment for the entire vehicle. As the first school representative that students encounter in the morning and the last, they see at night, the driver's demeanor serves as a model of emotional control and leadership.

Maintaining a positive attitude requires professional resilience, the disciplined ability to remain calm, focused, and objective despite heavy traffic, adverse weather, or student behavioral issues.

Clear Communication: Risk Management

Effective communication links the isolated vehicle to the broader school system. Because drivers operate independently on the roadway, precise and professional language helps prevent misunderstandings and manage risk during emergencies. Clear communication is critical for delivering calm, unambiguous safety instructions to passengers, maintaining open lines with district stakeholders, and relaying factual, concise data to dispatch via two-way radio networks.

Proactive Cooperation: The Strength of a Unified Team

No school bus driver operates in a vacuum. Operators are key members of a large transportation team that spans from federal safety panels down to local maintenance facilities. Cooperation is the operational commitment to work smoothly across professional boundaries to achieve shared goals.

Cooperative drivers maintain the integrity of this network by:

- Partnering with fleet technicians through clear, documented maintenance reports.
- Aligning with school principals to enforce student behavior standards consistently.
- Supporting peer operators by sharing critical, real-time route safety data.

Safety Awareness: The Uncompromised Shield

Safety awareness is an active mindset of protective vigilance, not just a static list of rules. Drivers must view their entire environment through the lens of risk reduction, defensive driving, and passenger protection.

High safety awareness means:

- **Constant mirror checks:** Continuously tracking the vehicle's surroundings.
- **Space buffers:** Maintaining safe following and stopping distances, especially in bad weather.
- **No shortcuts:** Strictly follow all mandatory steps for student tracking and railroad crossings.

PART 3: THE GOVERNANCE HIERARCHY AND TRANSPORTATION TEAM

The Hierarchy of Compliance

To maintain the highest level of safety, operators must understand the exact differences between laws, rules, regulations, policies, and recommendations. A professional driver must approach these standards with a disciplined, positive attitude, treating them as the mandatory foundation of their work.

Law

This is a requirement passed by a legislative body and signed by the Chief Executive. At the Federal level, the legislative body is Congress. At the State level, it is the state legislature. Laws/statutes are requirements that must be obeyed. The Colorado Revised Statutes are an example of a state statute, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is an example of a federal law.

Rules and Regulations

Synonymous terms for requirements adopted by an executive department with the authority to establish rules for carrying out the program. A definite procedure must be followed when adopting administrative rules. When adopted, the rules have the same effect as laws. They are requirements that must be obeyed. The Colorado Department of Education's Annual Inspection/Operation Rules for School Transportation and the Colorado Minimum Standards Governing School Transportation Vehicles are examples of Rules.

Policy

A course of action, guiding principle, or procedure adopted by any authoritative body that is expedient, prudent, or advantageous. Policies are principles or procedures that one is expected to follow, but they are not absolutely mandated as laws or rules.

School boards may have policies and procedures at the local school district, charter, or service provider level related to the pupil transportation program. Examples of school, charter, or service provider policies include student discipline and dress code policies.

Procedure

Refers to the official, standardized protocols and step-by-step instructions established by Educational Entities. These rules ensure the safe, efficient, and compliant movement of students to and from school, on field trips, or during extracurricular activities.

Recommendation

This is an officially proposed plan, advisory guideline, or requirement detailing how a student should be safely transported. It provides counsel or specific accommodations tailored to an individual student's needs, as well as to broader vehicular safety standards.

Best Practice

This is a standardized, proven method or strategy designed to maximize safety, efficiency, and legal compliance beyond baseline regulations. Because there is no single instruction manual for pupil transportation, best practices serve as benchmarks for navigating its complexities.

Tier	Governing Body	Authority Level	Consequence of Breach
Law / Statute	Federal Congress / State Legislature	Absolute Mandate	Criminal/Civil Sanctions, Citation
Rule / Regulation	Federal Administrations (FMCSA) / State Agencies (CDE)	Full Force of Law	Loss of Certification, Fleet Grounding, Fines
Policy / Procedure	Local School Boards / Executive Directors	Employment Mandate	Disciplinary Action, Termination
Recommendation	Manufacturers / Safety Panels (NHTSA, NSC)	Advisory Standard	Voided Warranties, Increased Tort Liability

The Transportation Team Structure

Each team member involved in pupil transportation plays a critical role in the safety ecosystem. For a school transportation operator, knowing the distinct functions, boundaries, and responsibilities of each team member is vital to ensuring that subsequent actions during daily operations or emergencies are unified and compliant.

Federal Oversight and Regulatory Bodies

- **United States Department of Transportation (USDOT):** Ensures a fast, safe, efficient, accessible, and convenient transportation system that meets vital national interests. Established by Congress in 1966, it is the parent department for all federal surface transportation administrations.
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA):** An agency within the USDOT charged with writing, implementing, and enforcing the *Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS)*. It regulates vehicle safety features, mandates the universal Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) system, and oversees recalls.
- **Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA):** Directly regulates the commercial trucking and motorcoach industries in the United States. Its primary mission is to reduce crashes, injuries, and fatalities involving large trucks and buses by setting federal standards for CDL qualifications, drug clearinghouse rules, and hours of service.

State and Regional Governance

- **State Board of Education and Colorado Department of Education (CDE):** Statutorily mandated under Section 42-4-1904, C.R.S., to adopt and enforce regulations governing the safe operation of all vehicles used for the transportation of school children.
- **CDE School Transportation Unit:** The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) School Transportation Unit is committed to ensuring that every student has access to a safe, reliable, and efficient journey to and from school. We recognize that a student's educational experience begins the moment they board a school bus, and we work to provide the safe and supportive foundation that makes learning possible.

  Our office is responsible for overseeing compliance with state and federal laws, rules, and regulations governing school transportation vehicles, operations, and driver qualifications. Through consistent oversight, clear guidance, and responsible stewardship of state resources, we support schools and transportation providers in meeting these expectations with confidence and integrity.

  We partner with school districts, charter schools, and transportation providers across Colorado to promote safe and effective operations. Our work is grounded in the standards established by Colorado's Minimum

Standards Governing School Transportation Vehicles and the Rules for the Operation, Maintenance, and Inspection of School Transportation Vehicles.

Through training, inspections, technical assistance, and ongoing collaboration, we strive to ensure that every school transportation system operates at the highest level of safety, compliance, and professionalism—so that students can arrive ready to learn and return home safely each day.

- **Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES):** Regional educational service agencies organized under Article 5 of Title 22, C.R.S. They operate as an extension of local member school districts, supplying specialized educational services—such as special education administrative units—to two or more districts cooperatively.

Local Education Agencies and Operators

- **Colorado Public School Districts, Charters, or Service Providers:** Organized pursuant to Article 30 of Title 22, C.R.S., to provide and administer the pupil transportation system for eligible students living within their boundaries. Includes *Public Charter Schools* and those authorized via the *Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI)*.

- **Board of Education (School Board):** The locally elected governing body responsible for creating, adopting, and administering school board policies, funding allocations, and student behavior standards.

- **Superintendent:** The chief executive administrator or manager in charge of the entire school district or charter school system.

Administrative and Operations Leadership

- **Transportation Director/Supervisor:** Provides direct administrative leadership, strategic management, purchasing, and operational supervision to all pupil transportation personnel and route networks.

- **Fleet Director/Supervisor:** Provides direct administrative management and professional supervision to all transportation mechanics, technicians, maintenance scheduling, and vehicle inspections.

- **Maintenance Mechanic/Technician:** Executes specialized, safety-critical maintenance and repairs on all machinery, powertrain components, and structural safety systems to ensure absolute fleet safety and compliance.

- **Dispatcher:** Serves as the central communication hub, managing two-way radio traffic, tracking logistics, and relaying time-sensitive information between active vehicles, school sites, and emergency services.

Educational, Family, and Trip Support Staff

- **Principals:** Site-level educational leaders who hold executive authority over a building. They manage and resolve disciplinary issues, conduct parent conferences, and administer building consequences arising from student misconduct on the bus.
- **Teachers:** Professional educators who instruct students as a career. They are vital links for open and honest communication regarding a student's unique physical, emotional, or behavioral needs. This is an important person to whom you can communicate openly and honestly about student needs.
- **Pupils:** The foundational reason the student transportation system exists. Responsible for conducting themselves in an orderly, safe manner so the driver can focus entirely on the driving task.
- **Parents / Guardians:** Responsible for ensuring that pupils are prepared, properly dressed for the weather, and arrive at their designated bus stops on time. They provide essential support by reinforcing safety expectations.
- **Chaperones:** Any adult designated by school authority to maintain order, safety, and proper conduct during activity trips or field events.
- **Coaches:** Direct and train student-athletes. In many districts, coaches undergo specialized training to operate school transportation vehicles, including multi-function buses, for activity trips.

PART 4: MANAGING YOUR VEHICLE, YOUR CARGO, AND YOUR TIME

Defining Your Customer Base and Performance Expectations

A school transportation vehicle serves as a rolling billboard for your organization. Aggressive driving, poor handling of traffic situations, or traffic violations will result in numerous complaints before the vehicle is returned to the yard.

Operators serve a diverse, specialized customer base:

- **Primary Passengers:** Students ranging from early childhood through young adulthood (up to age 26 in specialized regional programs).
- **Professional Stakeholders:** Supervisors, educators, coaches, and chaperones.

Core Performance Qualifications

To safely execute these duties, an operator must possess and maintain the following specialized performance abilities:

- **Fleet Adaptability:** The physical skill and technical competence to operate varying sizes and mechanical configurations of Type A school buses, Type A multi-function buses, and small-capacity vehicles.
- **Core Geographical Knowledge and Awareness:** A thorough, practical understanding of local service areas, regional routes, high-risk intersections, and shifting mountain terrain.
- **Regulatory Understanding:** Full understanding of local and state traffic laws, safety rules, and regulations specific to school transportation vehicle operations.
- **Emergency Decision-Making:** The mental clarity and situational awareness required to make safe, split-second decisions during traffic emergencies, mechanical breakdowns, or sudden hazardous weather.

Scope of Operational Responsibilities

An operator must strictly execute the following logistical and safety duties every day:

- **Route Accuracy:** Follow established schedules, time points, and authorized stops exactly as written. Never change a route without explicit clearance from dispatch.
- **Fuel and Fluid Maintenance:** Check fluid levels and maintain enough fuel to ensure the tank never drops below the district's minimum limit.
- **Cleanliness and Safety:** Keep the vehicle interior clean. Ensure that safety walkways, stepwells, and emergency exits are always completely clear of obstacles.

- **Thorough Inspections:** Check the vehicle's mechanical condition by completing strict pre-trip, en-route, and post-trip safety inspections. Document all defects on official Daily Inspection Reports.
- **Incident Reporting:** Report all traffic accidents, minor vehicle contact, and passenger injuries to the transportation supervisor right away.
- **Accurate Record Keeping:** Keep accurate mileage, fuel, defect reports, and student behavior logs and submit the records to the transportation department in a timely manner.

Cargo Management and Carry-On Item Restrictions

As a professional school bus driver, you are legally responsible for ensuring that all carry-on items, passenger baggage, and equipment are properly stored and secured before moving the vehicle. In a collision, sudden stop, or rollover, any loose item inside the bus instantly becomes a dangerous flying object that can cause severe or fatal injuries.

Students often carry a large amount of gear—especially when traveling for athletic events. Drivers must strictly enforce the following safety rules:

- **Passenger Storage Standard:** Students may only bring personal items into the seating area if they can securely hold them in their lap or between their feet without taking up another student's seat space.
- **Structural Boundaries (1 CCR 301-26):** If an object cannot be held securely by a student, it must be mechanically or structurally secured using approved tie-downs, cargo nets, or designated luggage compartments.
- **Height Limitations:** Please ensure that any items placed on passenger seats are not stacked higher than the top of the seatback.
- **Emergency Exit Access:** Under no circumstances may any carry-on item, equipment bag, or personal effect block, obstruct, or narrow the center aisle, the stepwell, or the clearance path of any emergency exit door, window, or roof hatch.

12.7.1 General Cargo and Medical Supplies

(A) School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall ensure that all carry-on items are properly handled to minimize the danger to all others.

(B) All baggage, articles, equipment, or medical supplies (except those held by individual passengers) shall be secured in a manner that assures unrestricted access to all exits by occupants, does not restrict the driver's ability to operate the bus, and/or protects all occupants against injury resulting from falling or displacement of any baggage, article, or equipment.

(1) Oxygen cylinders that are medically necessary meet this standard if they are securely attached to a wheelchair or otherwise secured in the vehicle and do not impede access to any exit. Educational Entities shall use reasonable care in determining the number of cylinders that may be safely transported at one time.

Chemical and Hazardous Materials Restrictions

Chemical and Cleaning Supply Regulations

The Colorado Department of Education limits the amount of cleaning supplies, chemicals, and fluids that can be carried on a school vehicle. In a crash, first responders must be able to quickly identify any leaked liquids or chemicals to treat students safely.

To meet these safety standards, follow these rules for all authorized onboard cleaning solutions:

- **Keep Quantities Minimal:** Carry only the minimum amount of approved cleaning solutions needed for the trip.
- **Proper Labeling:** Ensure every container is clearly labeled with its corresponding Safety Data Sheet (SDS) information.
- **Secure Storage:** Secure all containers in a designated area or bracket to prevent them from leaking, tipping, or shifting while the bus is moving.

12.7.2 Chemicals and Cleaning Supplies

(A) All chemicals and cleaning supplies carried on a School Transportation Vehicle shall meet the following precautions:

(1) The container is non-breakable;

(2) The container is labeled with contents;

(3) The container is secured in a bracket, or in a closed compartment in the driver's area, or in a compartment on the exterior of the bus; and

(4) The containers and/or quantities of products are no more than 32 ounces in size.

(B) Pressurized aerosols are prohibited.

Cabin and Exterior Decoration Prohibitions

Interior decorations are strictly prohibited if they block the driver's direct line of sight, mirror views, or emergency exit signs. This standard is enforced to ensure uncompromised visibility and structural safety inside the cabin.

Altering the outside of the vehicle is against State regulations. Under state regulation **1 CCR 301-25** (Colorado Minimum Standards Governing School Transportation Vehicles), the law strictly defines the required national school bus glossy yellow paint formula, reflective tape placement, font sizes, and official lettering. No unapproved decals, signs, or modifications may be added to the vehicle exterior without violating this state standard.

12.7.3 Interior and Exterior Decorations

(A) Interior decorations shall not be located within the driver's area (including the space in front of the front barriers, the step-well, dash, walls and ceiling, the windshield, the entry door, the driver's side window, and all windows in front of the front barrier), the first two passenger windows on both sides of the vehicle or all windows on the rear of the School Transportation Vehicle.

(B) Other decorations within the passenger compartment shall not:

(1) Cover any required lettering;

(2) Impede the aisle or any emergency exit;

(3) Hang from the walls and/or ceiling.

(C) Per the effective date of these rules, School Transportation Vehicles owned or leased by the Educational Entity that are used for student transportation shall not have the windows obstructed in any way by advertising, decorations, or vehicle wraps.

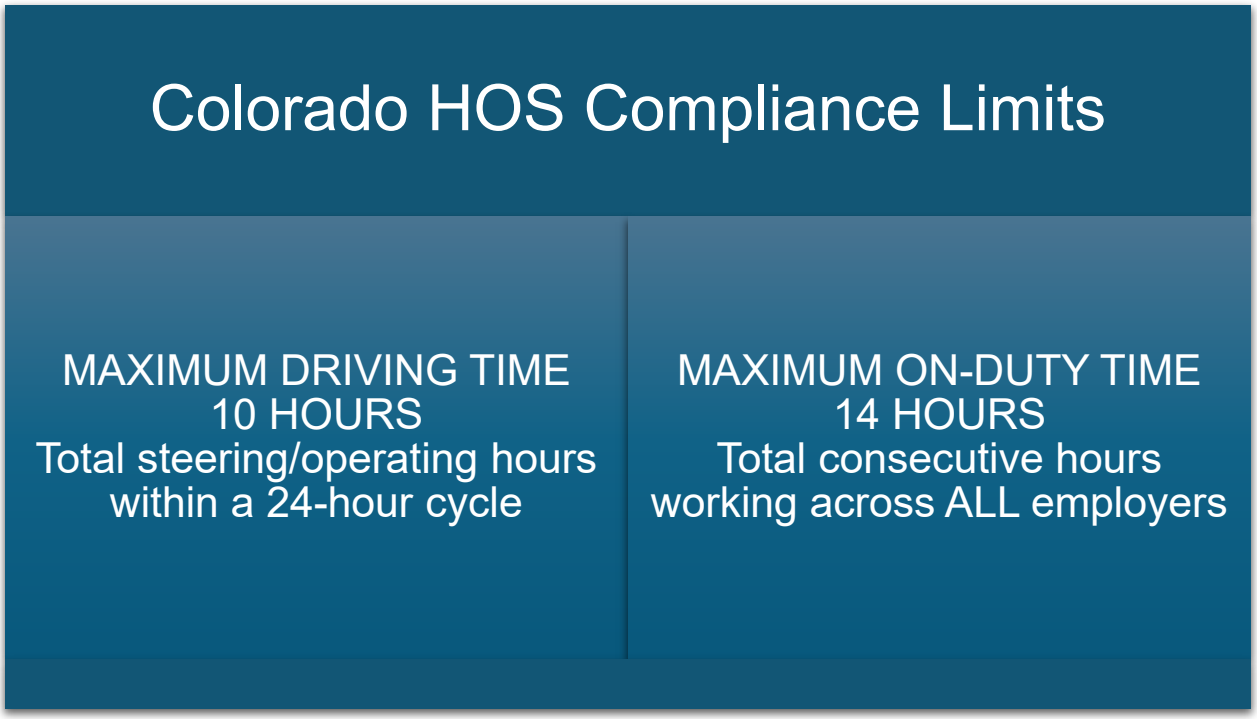
(1) Exception: Tint applied by the vehicle manufacturer to industry standards, as permitted in 1 CCR 301-25.

(2) Exception: Route identification is permitted per 1 CCR 301-25.

Maximum Driving Time and Hours of Service (HOS)

Managing driver fatigue is a strict federal and state safety requirement. When calculating your maximum allowable driving and on-duty time, you must count all working hours accumulated across all employers. This includes non-driving commercial work, split shifts, and secondary part-time jobs.

Per Colorado rules, school transportation operators must work strictly within the following limits during any 24-hour period:



Exceeding these limits violates commercial transportation safety laws. Doing so will expose both you and the school district to severe legal liability in the event of an accident.

13.1 Maximum Driving and On-Duty Time

13.1.1 School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall not drive, and an Educational Entity shall not require or permit a School Transportation Vehicle Operator to drive, in violation of the hours-of-service limits established in this Section.

13.1.2 All School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall document that they are in compliance with this Section.

(A) A School Transportation Vehicle Operator's daily log, or equivalent, shall be completed for the trip in the School Transportation Vehicle Operator's own handwriting when the trip requires a scheduled or unscheduled overnight stay away from the work reporting location.

13.1.3 Definitions

(A) "Day" means any consecutive 24-hour period beginning at a time designated by the Educational Entity.

(B) "On-Duty Time" means all time worked for all employers, including all driving and non-driving duties.

(1) "On-Duty Not-Driving" means all time spent for pre-trip/post-trip inspections, loading and unloading students, cleaning the bus, administrative paperwork, or if the School Transportation Vehicle Operator is not free to leave the location of a School-Related Event.

(2) "On-Duty Driving" means the period during which the School Transportation Vehicle Operator is at the controls of a School Transportation Vehicle while it is in motion.

(C) "Off-Duty Time (Rest/Waiting)" means the time spent by School Transportation Vehicle Operators of School Transportation Vehicles during special events, meal stops, and School-Related Events—regardless of compensation—as off-duty, provided that the subsequent criteria are satisfied.

(1) The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall be relieved of all duty and responsibility for the care and custody of the students, and

(2) The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall be at liberty to pursue activities of their choice, including leaving the premises on which the School-Related Event is located.

13.1.4 Daily Limits

(A) A School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall not drive after accumulating 10 hours of driving time or after 14 consecutive hours of on-duty time until the required off-duty period is completed.

(1) The required 10 hours off-duty shall consist of:

(a) One period of at least six consecutive hours; and

(b) The remaining off-duty time accumulated in no more than two additional periods.

(2) This would include on-duty time for all employers.

13.1.5 Weekly Limits

(A) School Transportation Vehicle Operators are prohibited from driving after being on duty for more than 70 hours in any seven consecutive days.

13.1.6 Emergency Exception

(A) In case of an emergency, an operator may complete the trip without being in violation if such a trip reasonably could have been completed absent the emergency.

13.1.7 Federal Compliance Option

(A) In lieu of section 13.0 of these rules, an Educational Entity may comply with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, 49 C.F.R. § 395.

Emergency Evacuations and Activity Trip Documentation

In an emergency, breakdown, or crash, you might be the only adult on the scene. Passengers will look to you for leadership, calm, and clear directions on what to do.

To make sure everyone is prepared, keeping accurate records is a legal must:

- **Evacuation Drills:** State regulation 1 CCR 301-26 requires transportation departments to keep formal, written proof that emergency evacuation drills are conducted twice a year.
- **Activity Trips:** For all school-sanctioned events and field trips, you must give a verbal emergency evacuation briefing to all passengers before you depart.
- **Documentation:** Once you finish your route, immediately sign, date, and submit your physical or digital verification log to the transportation department.

See Unit 7 for more details.

Distracted Driving and Cognitive Diversion Mandates

Distracted driving represents an ongoing crisis on modern roadways. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) data show that thousands of motorists are killed and hundreds of thousands are injured annually in collisions directly caused by distracted driving.

The physical and mechanical effects of distracted driving on a school transportation vehicle operator are catastrophic, resulting in:

- **Delayed Brake Response Time:** A distracted driver takes significantly longer to recognize a hazard and move their foot to the brake pedal. At highway speeds, even a two-second distraction means traveling the length of two football fields completely blind.
- **Loss of Vehicle Control:** Because Type A school buses are higher-profile, heavy vehicles, taking your eyes off the road—even briefly—causes subtle steering corrections that can lead to lane drifting, tire drop-offs on shoulders, or rollovers.
- **Total Blind-Spot Awareness Failure:** Safely operating a school transportation vehicle requires a continuous, disciplined mirror sweep every 5 to 8 seconds. Distraction breaks this scan rhythm, leaving the driver completely unaware of students, pedestrians, or smaller vehicles in the vehicle's blind spots.
- **Increased Stopping Distance:** Any delay in perception and reaction mechanically extends the total distance required to bring a vehicle to a complete stop, drastically increasing the severity of a rear-end or intersection collision.

The Critical Risks of Text Messaging and Mobile Devices

Research confirms that texting while driving is incredibly dangerous because it takes your hands, eyes, and mind off the road all at once. Under Colorado law (C.R.S. 42-4-239), manual texting or data entry while driving is a criminal offense. The law states that anyone 18 or older may not use a wireless telephone to text or perform manual data entry while operating a motor vehicle.

Defensive Driver Protocol: Minimizing Cabin Distractions

To ensure absolute safety and maintain complete focus behind the wheel, professional school transportation operators must strictly enforce the following pre-trip and en-route habits:

- **Communication Blackouts:** Turn off all personal communication devices prior to starting your trip. If a mobile device must be maintained for emergency district communications, it must be positioned within close proximity, be operable while the driver is fully restrained by their seatbelt, and utilize an approved, voice-activated hands-free or earpiece function.
- **The No-Reach Rule:** Drivers are legally non-compliant if they unsafely slide, lean, or reach for a mobile device while the vehicle is in motion, even if they

intend to use a hands-free option. Typing, reading, or scrolling on any mobile device while driving is an absolute safety violation.

- **Set Up Your Area First:** Familiarize yourself completely with the unique layout, switches, climate controls, and dashboard arrays of your assigned vehicle prior to moving. Adjust all seat positions, steering columns, and mirrors before turning the key.
- **Pre-Program Navigation:** Pre-program all necessary emergency radio frequencies and input addresses into GPS mapping systems while the vehicle is completely stopped and parked in the bus yard. Never read maps or adjust routing programs while in motion.
- **Keep the Driver's Area Clear:** Keep the driver's area free of loose clipboards, water bottles, or trash that could slide under your brake pedal. Secure all tools safely.
- **No Eating While Driving:** Never eat while the vehicle is in motion. Plan your schedule to allow for quick breaks while safely parked.
- **Keep Conversations Simple:** Avoid getting drawn into complex or emotionally intense conversations with students or staff while driving. Keep your eyes on the road and your mind on the drive.

Note: Always check your Educational Entity's policy. Many school districts enforce an absolute ban on mobile device use while on duty, overriding any hands-free allowances.

12.1.4 Headphone Usage

(A) Pursuant to C.R.S. 42-4-1411, and to ensure auditory awareness for safe operation and student supervision, a School Transportation Vehicle Operator and/or School Transportation Bus Attendant shall not use headphones, earphones, bone conduction headphones, or similar audio devices that covers, partially covers, or rests upon both ears while performing safety-sensitive functions, including loading or unloading students and any time the vehicle is in motion.

(1) This provision does not include medically prescribed hearing aids or other assistive hearing devices.

(B) The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall not utilize or engage any smart feature on wearable technology (e.g., notifications, calls, messaging, apps, etc.) beyond the device's primary function while loading or unloading students and any time the vehicle is in motion.

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Unit Two – Educational Entity Requirements

PART 1: EVERYDAY RULES AND EDUCATIONAL ENTITY STANDARDS

Operating a student transportation system in Colorado requires strict adherence to state governance standards. These rules ensure that every Educational Entity, including school districts, charter schools, public charter school institutes, contracted service providers, and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), maintains full regulatory compliance and clear administrative accountability

Service Provider Registration Requirements

All external service providers contracted by a school district or charter school to transport students, whether from home to school, school to school, or for school-related events, must formally register with the Colorado Department of Education School Transportation Unit.

- **The Registration Requirement:** Registration is completed by submitting an official Service Provider Registration Form. This submission serves as a self-certification that all school transportation vehicles owned, leased, or rented by the provider for contracted student transport meet the Colorado Minimum Standards Governing School Transportation Vehicles, and that the provider complies with all Colorado Rules for the Operation, Maintenance, and Inspection of School Transportation Vehicles.
- **Registration Fee and Renewal Schedule:** Registration is free. Service providers must renew their registration every three years. School districts and charter schools must only use service providers that have a current CDE STAR review and are actively included on the state's Registered Service Provider list.
- **Statutory Exception:** Service Providers that hold a current Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Registration in good standing are completely exempt from these specific registration requirements.

5.1 Responsibilities and Governance

5.1.1 All Service Providers shall register with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) School Transportation Unit by submitting the Service Provider Registration Form. Submission of this registration form constitutes self-certification by the Service Provider that all School Transportation Vehicles used for contracted service – whether leased, rented, or owned – meet or exceed the Colorado Minimum Standards.

Furthermore, this form submission by the Service Provider self-certifies compliance with the Colorado Rules for the Operation, Maintenance, and Inspection of School Transportation Vehicles. There shall be no fee to register.

(A) Service Providers shall renew their registration every three years.

(B) School Districts and Charter Schools should only utilize Service Providers that have a current CDE STAR review and are listed on the Registered Service Provider list.

(C) Exception: Service Providers with a current PUC Registration in good standing are exempt from the requirements of this Rule.

Strategic Route Planning and Optimization

Educational Entities have exclusive authority to establish, design, and systematically approve all routes and route maps.

- **The Route Definition:** "Route" means a documented and authorized itinerary approved by an Educational Entity for the transportation of students. A Route consists of travel between identified locations, including student stops, school campuses, or other approved facilities, operated by a vehicle and driver meeting all applicable state and federal safety standards. This definition includes regular daily schedules, shuttle services, and specialized transport, regardless of whether the itinerary follows a fixed timetable.

14.2.2 Route Design

(A) Student stops shall not be located on the side of any major thoroughfare whenever access to the destination of the passenger is possible by a road or street which is adjacent to the major thoroughfare.

(B) Routes shall be designed as to:

(1) Eliminate railroad crossings where practicable; and

(2) Educational Entities shall design Routes to minimize student ride times while considering student educational needs, geographic boundaries, terrain, traffic congestion, and financial resources within the district.

(a) A local board of education, or the governing body of a charter school, may establish a maximum student ride time.

(3) Student stops shall be located no less than two hundred feet apart, consistent with the requirement that alternating flashing amber warning signal lamps be activated not less than two hundred feet in advance of the stop on the roadway where the stop is to be performed.

(a) Exception: In areas where wildlife may create a high risk of threat to students' safety while they are waiting and/or walking to a student stop, designated stops may be less than 200 feet apart upon detailed written approval by the school district board of education or governing body of a charter school (or the board's designee).

(i) A copy of the written approval shall be kept in the school transportation office, and School Transportation Vehicle Route Operators shall be given written notice of the exception and have it indicated on Route sheets.

14.3 Route Prohibitions and Constraints

14.3.1 Crossing Prohibitions

(A) Educational Entities shall ensure that if students are required to cross a roadway, highway, or private road to access the student stop, the student(s) are prohibited from the following:

(1) Crossing any roadway constructed or designed to permit three or more separate lanes of vehicular traffic in either direction, including turn lanes;

(2) Crossing any roadway constructed with a median (raised, depressed, or painted) separating multiple lanes of traffic.

(3) Crossing any railroad crossings not designated for pedestrian crossings.

14.3.2 Operational Constraints and Exceptions

(A) Alternating flashing red warning signal lamps shall not be activated within 200 feet of an intersection if the intersection is controlled by a traffic control device, as defined in these rules.

(B) Four-way hazard lamps shall be used on private property, such as parking lots.

(C) Pursuant to C.R.S. 42-4-1903(2), School Transportation Vehicle Operators are not required to actuate the alternating flashing red warning signal lamps on a school bus when:

(1) The student stop is at a location where the local traffic regulatory authority has, by prior written designation, declared such actuation unnecessary, and no passenger is required to cross the roadway; or

(2) Discharging or loading passengers who require the assistance of a lift device, and no passenger is required to cross the roadway.

(3) When using a Type A-1 Multifunction School Activity Bus or Small-Capacity Vehicle for Route purposes.

(D) School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall not relocate a student stop without the approval of the Educational Entity.

Passenger Controls and Authorized Occupants

To maintain strict liability control and physical vehicle security, the passenger manifest of any school transportation vehicle is legally restricted.

- **Authorized Passengers:** No individual may board or be transported within a School Transportation Vehicle unless they fall into one of the following approved categories:
    1. *Educational Entity Personnel* acting within the scope of their official duties.
    2. *Students* currently enrolled in the corresponding school district or charter school.
    3. *Law Enforcement Officials* engaging in official public safety actions.
    4. *Authorized Individuals* who have received explicit, documented prior authorization directly from the leadership of the Educational Entity.

12.5.1 Authorized Occupants

(A) Only Educational Entity personnel, students enrolled in a school district or charter school, law enforcement officials, or individuals who have received prior authorization from the Educational Entity may be passengers on any School Transportation Vehicle.

Emergency Procedures and Contingency Planning

Educational Entities must maintain an active, written safety-contingency infrastructure. Every entity is required to establish and enforce formal, comprehensive written emergency procedures and contingency plans to dictate immediate field actions during the following operational disruptions:

1. **Traffic Accidents:** Step-by-step scene management and safety protocols.
2. **Vehicle Breakdowns:** Mechanical isolation protocols and passenger containment measures.
3. **Unexpected School Closings:** Weather-induced or facility-related emergency dismissals.
4. **Unforeseen Route Changes:** Immediate adjustments to transit maps due to gridlock or road hazards.
5. **Emergency Relocation of Student Stops:** Dynamic stop changes are enforced when a primary stop becomes unsafe or structurally compromised due to localized threats.

5.1 Responsibilities and Governance

5.1.2 Educational Entities shall have written emergency procedures and/or contingency plans to be followed in the event of a traffic accident, vehicle breakdown, unexpected school closing, unforeseen Route change, or relocation of a student stop in an emergency.

Surveillance and Digital Media Management Policies

To protect the privacy of students and staff while ensuring behavioral accountability, any educational entity using cameras or surveillance systems on its vehicles must establish and follow written policies for managing recorded media. These policies must strictly define data retention timelines, access restrictions, and authorized review protocols for all captured video and audio data.

5.1 Responsibilities and Governance

5.1.3 Educational Entities utilizing camera or surveillance systems on School Transportation Vehicles shall establish, implement, and maintain written policies and procedures governing the management of recorded media.

Autonomous Technology and the Natural Person Standard

The legal responsibility for the trajectory, braking, and overall operation of a school transportation vehicle rests exclusively with human judgment.

- **The Natural Person Requirement:** Every school transportation vehicle actively in service must be operated by a Natural Person (a human being).
- **Automation Threshold Limits:** While modern vehicles feature increasing integration of Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS), the use of automated driving technology is strictly limited. Automated driving features aboard a school transportation vehicle shall not exceed Level 2 automation as defined by SAE J3016. The human operator must remain fully engaged, maintaining continuous, uncompromised physical control over the vehicle at all times.

5.1 Responsibilities and Governance

5.1.4 Every School Transportation Vehicle in service shall be operated by a Natural Person, as defined in these rules.

(A) Any automated driving technology used on a School Transportation Vehicle shall not exceed Level 2 automation as defined in SAE J3016.

PART 2: TEAM QUALIFICATIONS AND DRIVER COMPLIANCE FILES

Because school transportation staff work directly with students, Colorado law requires strict background checks and up-to-date qualification files for everyone on the team.

Job Description Acknowledgment

When you are hired, your district or company must provide you with a copy of your specific job description. You must sign and date this document (in person or electronically) before you perform any work with students. This signed acknowledgment is required for:

- School Transportation Vehicle Operators
- School Transportation Bus Attendants
- CDE Annual Inspectors
- Entry-Level Driver Instructors

5.2 Personnel Standards

5.2.1 Educational Entities shall, at the time of hire, provide each member of Transportation Personnel with a copy of the applicable transportation job description. The job description shall be signed and acknowledged by the employee and shall apply to School Transportation Vehicle Operators, School Transportation Bus Attendants, CDE Annual Inspectors, and Entry-Level Driver Instructors.

Mandatory Background Vetting

School districts and charter schools must conduct thorough, mandatory criminal background checks on all transportation staff before hire (per Colorado Revised Statutes 22-32-122 and 22-32-109.8). This includes the following positions:

- Transportation Supervisors
- Driver Trainers
- School Transportation Vehicle Operators
- School Transportation Bus Attendants
- Fleet Maintenance Technicians
- Dispatchers

5.2 Personnel Standards

5.2.2 Educational Entities shall conduct background checks pursuant to Section 22-32-122(4) C.R.S. or Section 22-32-109.8, whichever is applicable, on all supervisors, trainers, School Transportation Vehicle Operators, School Transportation Bus Attendants, technicians, and dispatchers

The Qualification File

Educational Entities must build and maintain individual qualification files for all transportation personnel. These files serve as primary legal evidence of operational compliance and must include written proof of all qualification requirements required under 1 CCR 301-26, Section 6.0.

5.2 Personnel Standards

5.2.3 Educational Entities shall maintain individual compliance files for all Transportation Personnel.

(A) Files shall include written substantiation of all requirements

applicable under Section 6.0.

(B) Documentation for each training event shall include, at a minimum:

(1) Trainer name and signature of all attendees;

(2) Date and total duration of instruction;

(3) Itemized description of the topics covered and the time allotted to each.

6.0 Qualification File Requirements

6.0.1 General Requirement:

(A) Each Educational Entity shall maintain qualification files for all Transportation Personnel subject to this Section.

(B) Unless otherwise specified, required Annual documentation shall be completed and retained within the Annual timeframe established by these Rules.

6.1 School Transportation Vehicle Operators

6.1.1 Core Permanent Qualification File Requirements (All School Transportation Vehicle Operators)

(A) Educational Entities shall maintain a permanent qualification file for each School Transportation Vehicle Operator that contains the following documentation:

(1) Documentation of the job description, signed by the employee to acknowledge receipt and understanding, as required by Rule 5.2.1.

(2) A copy of the driver's preliminary Motor Vehicle Record (MVR), authenticated by the reviewer's initials or an electronic equivalent.

(3) Documentation demonstrating completion of mountain and adverse weather training pursuant to C.R.S. 42-4-1902.

(4) Documentation demonstrating completion of mandatory reporter training pursuant to sections C.R.S. 22-32-109(1)(bb) and 19-3-304.

(5) Documentation demonstrating completion of confidentiality

training pursuant to sections C.R.S. 22-1-123 and 22-32-109.3.

(6) Documentation demonstrating completion of review and acknowledgment of the Educational Entity's policies (JKA and JKA-R) regarding the Use of Physical Intervention and Restraint on students.

(7) Documentation of an initial driver performance evaluation, including a pre-trip inspection conducted in a vehicle that is similar in type and size to the vehicle the applicant is assigned to operate.

(8) Documentation demonstrating completion of the training for the proper use and care of Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS) and proper wheelchair securement when the operator is engaged in transportation involving these systems and devices, prior to transporting students.

(9) School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall have access to and thoroughly review the applicable operator guide (either the School Bus/Multifunction Bus/Motor Coach Operator Guide or the Type A Multifunction Bus/Small-Capacity Vehicle Operator Guide) and sign the Certificate of Receipt and Understanding.

6.1.2 CDL Operator Qualification File Requirements (Vehicles 16+ Capacity)

(A) Annual File Requirements:

(1) A copy of a current, valid commercial driver's license (CDL) with the proper class and endorsement for the size and type of vehicle(s) to be driven.

(2) The Medical Examination Certification documentation required pursuant to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, 49 C.F.R. § 383.71.

(3) A Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) review shall be conducted annually. The MVR shall verify that the operator possesses a current, valid Class B Commercial Driver's License (CDL) or higher with the required endorsements and a valid medical certificate. The evaluator shall initial or digitally sign the MVR to document completion of the review.

(4) Documentation pursuant to Rule 5.2.3(B) of a minimum of six hours of in-service (continuing education) training annually. A portion of this Annual in-service requirement may occur during the school year.

(5) Successful completion of the Annual CDE School Bus/Multifunction Bus/Motor Coach Operator written examination with a minimum passing score of eighty (80) percent.

(6) A driver performance evaluation, including a pre-trip inspection.

(a) This evaluation shall be conducted in a vehicle that is similar in type and size to the vehicle the applicant is assigned to operate. Educational Entities have the option to re-evaluate at their discretion.

(7) Documentation verifying successful completion of first aid training, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and universal precautions, within ninety (90) calendar days of initial employment.

(a) If the School Transportation Vehicle Operator holds a current first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation certificate, it will meet the requirements of this section.

(b) School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall receive first aid training and/or recertification training every two years thereafter.

(B) Additional Permanent File Requirements:

(1) Pre-service (new driver) training documentation. The driver qualification file shall contain a preliminary motor vehicle record and one of the following:

(a) Entry-Level commercial operators shall have a copy of the following training certificate(s) and training syllabus placed in their qualification file, indicating that they have passed all required FMCSA pre-service training.

(i) Class B Theory Certificate and Syllabus;

(ii) Passenger Theory Certificate and Syllabus;

(iii) School Bus Theory Certificate and Syllabus;

(iv) Class B Behind-the-wheel Certificate and Evaluation;

(v) Passenger Behind-the-wheel Certificate and Evaluation;

(vi) School Bus Behind-the-wheel Certificate and Evaluation.

(b) Documentation verifying that the School Transportation Vehicle Operator completed pre-service training prior to February 7, 2022, that included training on the types of duties they may be required to perform.

The Multi-Employer Rule

If a School Transportation Vehicle Operator, School Transportation Bus Attendant, or CDE Annual Inspector works concurrently for more than one Educational Entity, or operates an outside vehicle inspection site, each individual employer must maintain a separate compliance file with full documentation in accordance with this rule.

5.2 Personnel Standards

5.2.3 Educational Entities shall maintain individual compliance files for all Transportation Personnel.

(C) If a School Transportation Vehicle Operator, School Transportation Bus Attendant, or CDE Annual Inspector works for more than one Educational Entity, or is the operator of an outside inspection site, each employer shall maintain a file with documentation in accordance with this rule.

Supervisor Training: The "New to Transportation" Requirement

Managing a school transportation department requires a solid understanding of complex state and federal rules. Because of this, Colorado requires specialized training for anyone in a leadership role.

- **Who Must Take It?** Any transportation director, manager, or supervisor who directly oversees staff, driver training, safety files, fleet maintenance, or local policies.

- **The Requirement:** You must successfully complete the official **CDE "New to Transportation" Class**.
- **The Deadline:** This certification must be completed within your **first 12 months** of taking on a supervisory role.

5.2 Personnel Standards

5.2.4 Educational Entities shall require all transportation directors or other supervisory positions responsible for direct oversight of any aspects of Transportation Personnel, training, record keeping, fleet operations and maintenance, general operations, and policies to complete the CDE New to Transportation Class within the first 12 months of employment.

PART 3: SPECIALIZED TRAINING AND SPECIAL NEEDS TRANSPORTATION

Before a key is turned or a route is dispatched, operators and attendants must receive specific instructional and medical-behavioral training tailored to their vehicle configuration and passenger manifest/roster/seating chart.

Required Guides

Before you transport students for the first time, your employer must give you the official **CDE School Transportation Vehicle Operator Guide** or **School Transportation Bus Attendant Guide**. You must read and understand this guide before driving

5.3.1 Transportation Documentation and Personnel Training

(A) Educational Entities shall present all School Transportation Vehicle Operators and School Transportation Bus Attendants with the applicable CDE School Transportation Vehicle Operator or School Transportation Bus Attendant Guide prior to transporting students.

Towing a Trailer

You are strictly prohibited from towing a trailer behind any school transportation vehicle unless your official qualification file contains written proof of your trailer-towing training or documented experience.

5.3.1 Transportation Documentation and Personnel Training

(B) School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall have documentation demonstrating completion of trailer towing training or verifiable experience prior to driving a School Transportation Vehicle with a trailer attached.

Special Needs Transportation and IEP Requirements

Transporting students with physical, medical, or behavioral needs requires proactive planning.

- **Before Services Begin:** The district must provide you with all necessary passenger documentation (such as medical alerts, behavioral plans, and specialized harness requirements) *before* you start transporting the student.
- **IEP Updates:** If a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) transfers into the district or has their transportation plan changed, the district must get those updated files to you as soon as possible, and always *before* their bus service starts.
- **Mandatory Training:** If you are assigned to transport students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), you must receive documented training on how to support their IEPs. This training includes:
- **Behavioral Intervention:** De-escalation tactics and positive behavior supports.
- **Personalized Learning Systems (PLS):** Understanding how to adjust your communication and instructions to match how a student processes information.
- **Individualized Health Care Plans:** Knowing how to monitor specialized medical equipment and respond to a student's medical emergencies

5.3.2 Transporting Students with Special Needs

(A) Educational Entities shall provide School Transportation Vehicle Operators and School Transportation Bus Attendants with all documentation necessary to safely transport assigned students, including Child Safety Restraint System requirements and other relevant medical or behavioral information, prior to the initiation of transportation services.

(1) When an Educational Entity enrolls, transfers, or assumes responsibility for a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that includes transportation services, the Educational Entity shall ensure that all documentation applicable to transportation is provided to the appropriate transportation personnel or provider prior to the initiation of services, and as soon as practicable following any determination or revision of the student’s transportation needs, to support safe and appropriate transportation.

(B) Any School Transportation Vehicle Operator and School Transportation Bus Attendant assigned to students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) shall receive documented training on the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Per 34 C.F.R. § 300.156, this training shall include, but is not limited to:

(1) Behavioral intervention strategies;

(2) Personalized Learning Systems (PLS) protocols;

(3) Individualized health care plan implementation.

Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS) and Wheelchair Securement Training

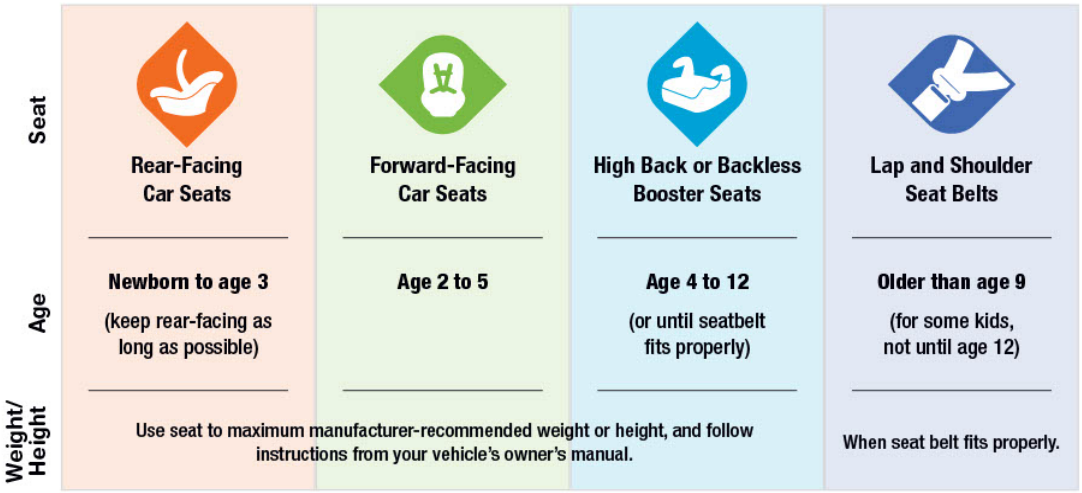
Before you transport any student who requires a safety seat or a wheelchair, you must complete and document your specialized training. This training must be on file in your qualification folder and cover the proper use, care, maintenance, and storage of these systems

What the Training Covers:

- **Safety Seat Setup:** How to choose, adjust, and position age-, weight-, and height-appropriate safety restraints for passengers of all ages.
- **Identifying Securement Points:** How to inspect a wheelchair and locate the manufacturer's designated, welded attachment points for safety securements.
- **The 7-Point Securement System:** How to properly install a crash-rated Wheelchair Tie-down and Occupant Restraint System (WTORS). This system must always consist of:
    - **The 4 Floor Straps (Securing the Chair):**
        - **Where to hook them:** Always attach straps to a solid, welded part of the wheelchair's main frame. **Never** attach straps to wheels, footrests, armrests, or any part that can be detached.
        - **The angle:** Hook the front straps so they pull forward at a 45-degree angle. Hook the rear straps so they pull backward at an angle between 30 and 45 degrees.
        - **No twists or bends:** Keep the straps perfectly straight. They must never bend around wheels, footrests, or sharp edges.
    - **The 3-Point Seatbelt (Securing the Student):**
        - This is a separate lap and shoulder belt system to secure the passenger.

- **The Lap Belt:** Must be placed low and snug across the student's pelvic bones (hips), **never** across the soft abdomen. Keep it inside the wheelchair armrests so it sits flat against the student's body.
- **The Shoulder Belt:** Must cross diagonally over the center of the chest and shoulder. **Never** let it cross the student's face or neck, and never tuck it under their arm.

- **System Integrity:** Knowing that all parts of your 7-point securement system must come from the same manufacturer, mixing different brands is strictly prohibited.
- **Daily Storage:** How to safely detach, clean, and store all straps and belts in a secure onboard compartment at the end of each day.



Above guidelines based on NHTSA recommendations. Learn more at CarSeatsColorado.com.

6.1.1 Core Permanent Qualification File Requirements (All School Transportation Vehicle Operators)

(8) Documentation demonstrating completion of the training for the proper use and care of Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS) and proper wheelchair securement when the operator is engaged in transportation involving these systems and devices, prior to transporting students.

12.6.1 Seat Belts

(C) Preschool Passengers:

(1) Shall use an age-, weight-, and height-appropriate child safety restraint system when riding in any School Transportation Vehicle.

(2) Pursuant to sections C.R.S. 42-4-236 and 42-4-237, all preschool-aged children riding in small-capacity vehicles shall use an appropriate child safety restraint system as required by the Colorado Child-Passenger Safety Law.

12.6.2 Wheelchair Securement

(A) Pursuant to FMVSS 222 - School Bus Passenger Seating and Crash Protection, each wheelchair securement space shall use a 7-point system that consists of four securements to the floor of the bus and a 3-point wheelchair tiedown occupant restraint system (WTORS).

(1) An ANSI/RESNA WC18-compliant WTORS may be specified when transporting a wheelchair that is fully compliant with WC19, which includes a crash-tested wheelchair-anchored pelvic belt.

(B) All systems shall be crash-rated. Each 7-point system must consist of components from a single manufacturer.

(C) Wheelchair securement and WTORS components use shall be detached daily and stored in a clean, secure onboard compartment that is accessible to the operator but resistant to displacement or vandalism.

PART 4: MEDICAL FITNESS, ALERTNESS, AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Driving a school transportation vehicle requires complete physical readiness. Colorado law establishes strict standards for your physical health, your mental alertness while driving, and daily bus safety procedures.

Physical Performance Standards

To work as a driver, attendant, inspector, or instructor, you must be physically capable of performing the basic duties of the job. Most importantly, both drivers and attendants must be able to successfully lead an emergency evacuation of the vehicle.

Vehicle Post-Trip Inspection Protocols (Students Left Unattended)

Accidentally leaving a student on an unattended school bus is a critical safety failure.

- **The Walk-Back Rule:** At the end of every route, activity trip, or work shift, and before the operator exits the vehicle, you must conduct a thorough physical and visual check of the interior passenger compartment from the front seats all the way to the very back row.

- **Disciplinary Actions:** Educational Entities must enforce strict disciplinary policies for any operator who fails to check and clear their vehicle.

11.1.4 Post-Trip Student Verification

(A) Educational Entities shall have a procedure in place to verify that students are not left on an unattended School Transportation Vehicle.

Mandatory Emergency Evacuation Drills

- **Route Emergency Evacuation Drills:** Students who ride regular, daily routes must participate in physical emergency evacuation drills and receive safety instruction **twice every school year** (once in the fall and once in the spring). Small-capacity passenger vehicles are exempt from these formal drills.
- **Special Needs Considerations:** If you drive a route with students who have physical disabilities or medical plans, the transportation department must keep a detailed, written evacuation plan on file. This plan must be reviewed and updated by staff **twice a year**.
- **Activity & School-Related Event Evacuation Instructions:** Before departing on any school-related field trip or athletic event, you must give passengers verbal emergency evacuation instructions. This instruction must explain where the emergency exits are and how to use them. The Educational Entity must keep a record proving this briefing was given.
- **Audit Documentation Requirements:** Educational Entities must document the execution and completion of all route drills, special education plans, and verbal activity trip instructions.

See Unit 7 for more details.

Annual Compliance Testing and Vehicle Inspections

To keep all fleet components and personnel continuously aligned on safety, strict annual review timelines must be enforced.

- **Annual Driver Testing:** Every year, you must pass a CDE written exam with a score of **80% or higher.** If you are a route operator, you will also need to complete an annual hands-on driving and pre-trip evaluation in a vehicle similar to the one you drive. If you are an activity driver, the annual driving evaluation is up to the Educational Entity's discretion.
- **The Annual Inspection Definition:** "Annual," when used in reference to required vehicle inspections, means valid through the last calendar day of the month that is exactly 12 months from the date of the previous inspection. All

school transportation vehicles and school-program tow trailers must display a valid annual inspection sticker issued by a certified CDE Annual Inspector to operate legally.

6.1.2 CDL Operator Qualification File Requirements (Vehicles 16+ Capacity)

(5) Successful completion of the Annual CDE School Bus/Multifunction Bus/Motor Coach Operator written examination with a minimum passing score of eighty (80) percent.

11.2.1 Inspection Requirements and Frequency

(A) Educational Entities shall ensure all School Transportation Vehicles and trailers, pursuant to 1 CCR 301-26, pass a CDE Annual inspection prior to transporting students and annually thereafter.

Fatigue, Illness, and "Reasonable Cause"

- **Do Not Drive Impaired:** You are strictly prohibited from transporting students if you are too tired, too sick, or otherwise physically impaired. If you cannot operate the vehicle safely, you must not drive.

- **District Medical Requests:** If your supervisor has a reasonable cause to believe that a medical issue is affecting your ability to drive safely, the district has the legal right to require you to get a medical evaluation or a doctor's release.

5.4 Medical Fitness and Safety

5.4.1 Educational Entities shall develop job qualification standards to ensure that each School Transportation Vehicle Operator, School Transportation Bus Attendant, CDE Annual Inspector, and School Transportation Entry-Level Driver Instructor can perform all essential functions consistent with federal and state regulations.

(A) School Transportation Vehicle Operators and School Transportation Bus Attendants shall demonstrate the ability to execute all core duties, specifically including emergency evacuations, in accordance with the standards defined by the employing Educational Entity.

Clinical Return-to-Work Clearances

School transportation vehicle operators or bus attendants who experience acute medical conditions, sudden serious illness, or physical injuries affecting their safety, vision, or physical capability must submit a formal medical return-to-work release. This

documentation, along with any local policy requirements, must be verified and approved by the Educational Entity before the employee can resume safety-sensitive duties.

- *Statutory Exception:* Individuals who are actively navigating approved, documented medical programs under the *Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)* or Colorado's *Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI)* program with established, intermittent medical leave are excluded from this mandatory re-examination trigger, provided their immediate alertness is uncompromised.

5.4 Medical Fitness and Safety

5.4.3 School Transportation Vehicle Operators and/or School Transportation Bus Attendants experiencing acute medical conditions, sudden illness, or injuries impacting safety, vision, or physical capability shall submit a clinical return-to-work release. Such documentation, along with any additional requirements under local policy, shall be verified by the Educational Entity before the school transportation employee resumes assigned duties.

(A) Pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 391.45(g), CDL operators shall obtain a new DOT Physical after returning from a medical condition (physical or mental injury or disease) that has impaired the driver's ability to perform his or her normal duties.

(B) Exception: Individuals who are currently under programs such as FMLA or FAMLI with approved intermittent leave are excluded from Rule 5.4.3.

PART 5: RECORD RETENTION AND COMPLIANCE

To stay compliant with state and federal laws, school districts and service providers must keep organized, accurate records. These records are grouped into three main categories, each with its own strict storage rules and timelines.

Driver and Personnel Qualification Files

Every school bus driver, bus attendant (paraprofessional), CDE annual inspector, and driver instructor must have their own separate qualification file.

- **Permanent File Retention:** All items required in the Core Permanent Qualification File requirements must be maintained continuously for the duration of the individual's employment.

- **Annual File Retention:** All items required in the Annual Qualification File requirements must be maintained for the **current year, plus 5 years** of past history.
- **When an Employee Leaves (The 1-Year Standard):** Once an employee leaves or retires, their complete file must be stored securely for **at least 1 year** before it can be destroyed. Your local school district policy may require keeping files longer than the state's one-year minimum.
    - **Educational Entity Policy:** The Educational Entity policy may indicate or require that the separation retention period be longer than the one-year timeline designated by the Colorado Department of Education.
- **Multi-Employer Files:** If an operator provides services for more than one district or service provider, a complete, standalone qualification file must be actively maintained by *each* individual employer.

5.2 Personnel Standards

5.2.3 Educational Entities shall maintain individual compliance files for all Transportation Personnel.

(C) If a School Transportation Vehicle Operator, School Transportation Bus Attendant, or CDE Annual Inspector works for more than one Educational Entity, or is the operator of an outside inspection site, each employer shall maintain a file with documentation in accordance with this rule.

Operational Safety and Evacuation Logs

Critical daily operational and safety documentation must be retained to verify compliance with safety regulations.

- **Emergency Evacuation Drills:** Written logs proving that your route students completed their twice-yearly drills (fall and spring), along with signed records of verbal safety instructions given before field trips, must be saved for **3 years**.
- **Daily Pre-Trip Inspections/Driver Vehicle Inspection Reports (DVIR):** Daily written or electronic pre-trip and post-trip inspection sheets must be saved in date order for **at least 1 year** (or longer if required by your local board policy).
- **Maintenance, Defects, and Annual CDE Inspections:** All records of safety defects, repairs, regular preventative maintenance, and annual CDE inspection sheets must be kept for **as long as the Educational Entity owns the vehicle**. When the vehicle is retired or sold, these records can be cleared.

Vehicle Cameras and Video Storage

If your vehicles are equipped with security cameras to monitor student behavior or driving safety, use these rules to manage the footage:

- **Normal Daily Footage:** Routine, everyday footage with no events is automatically overwritten on a continuous loop. The best practice is for your system to retain this footage for **14 to 30 days** before overwriting it.
- **Incident Footage:** If a camera captures a crash, a traffic ticket, a safety hazard, or a student behavior issue that leads to school discipline, that footage **cannot** be deleted. You must download, secure, and save that video clip for **at least 3 years** (or until all legal or administrative actions are completely resolved).

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Unit Three – Vehicle Familiarization and Spatial Maneuvering

PART 1: TYPES OF VEHICLES AND LEGAL DEFINITIONS

Every vehicle used to transport students in Colorado fits into a specific legal category. Colorado law (1 CCR 301-26) regulates these vehicles under strict rules to keep our students and fleets safe. No matter where the engine is or what fuel it burns, the law groups these vehicles into specific types:

What is a School Transportation Vehicle

This is the official, legal umbrella term for **any vehicle** owned, leased, rented, or hired by a school district, charter school, or contracted bus company to transport students.

2.0 Definitions

2.13 “School Transportation Vehicle” means every motor vehicle that is owned, leased, or authorized by an Educational Entity, and is operated for the transportation of students for Route or School-Related Event purposes within the State of Colorado. This definition excludes vehicles operated as common carriers or informal carpooling.

School Bus

To be classified as a school bus, a vehicle must be designed to carry **more than 10 passengers** and meet strict federal and state safety standards. They are easy to spot because they are painted "National School Bus Yellow" and have flashing lights (amber and red) and a pull-out stop sign arm. There are four types of school buses:

- **Type A:** A conversion bus constructed utilizing a cutaway front-section chassis with a left-side driver’s door, designed to transport smaller passenger loads.
    - There are two classes of Type A vehicles. These classes are based on vehicle capacity.
        - Type A-1 is 14 passengers or fewer (not including the driver). Does not require a CDL to drive.
        - Type A-2 is 15 passengers or more (not including the driver). The driver of a Type A-2 bus is required to carry a Class C CDL or higher.



- **Type B:** Constructed utilizing a stripped chassis where the body is installed over the engine compartment, with a portion of the engine extending into the driver's cabin.



- **Type C (Conventional):** The traditional industry standard constructed utilizing a bared chassis with the entire engine compartment mounted completely forward of the windshield and passenger firewall.



- **Type D (Transit Style):** Constructed utilizing a stripped chassis with the engine mounted either completely forward of the front axle (Front Engine/FE), or completely behind the rear axle (Rear Engine/RE), maximizing internal forward visibility and cabin space.



Multifunction School Activity Bus (Multifunction Bus)

A multifunction bus is built with the exact same heavy-duty safety frame as a regular school bus, but with two major differences:

- It is not painted school-bus yellow.
- It does not have flashing student-loading lights or a pull-out stop sign arm.





Because a multifunction bus cannot control traffic, **you are strictly prohibited from using one to pick up or drop off students on a public roadside** where traffic would normally have to stop for you. You can only use it to transport students from one building or event directly to another (point-to-point). *(Exception: Small Type A-1 multifunction buses can be used for regular routes).*

Small-Capacity Vehicle

This is any vehicle designed and rated by the manufacturer to carry **10 or fewer people** (including the driver). Educational Entities use these to transport small groups of students, students with special needs, or to navigate tight rural routes where a big bus cannot fit.



PART 2: COMPARING TYPE A-1 BUSES AND SMALL-CAPACITY VEHICLES

The physical differences between a Type A-1 Bus (Cutaway style) and a Small-Capacity Vehicle (such as an SUV or minivan) directly impact how each vehicle handles, how weight is distributed, and how much space they require on the road. Even though both are non-CDL vehicles, they have vastly different footprints compared to a standard sedan:

Physical Metric	Type A-1 Bus Specifications	Small-Capacity Vehicle Specifications (SUV/Minivan)
Wheelbase Length	11.5 to 13.5 feet	9.5 to 11.2 feet
Total Structural Length	18 to 22 feet	16 to 19 feet
Total Roof Height	8.5 to 10 feet	5.5 to 6.5 feet
Base Body Width	8 Feet (96 inches)	6.5 to 6.8 feet (78 to 81 inches)
Total Operational Width (With Mirrors)	9.5 to 10.5 feet	8 feet
Unloaded Curb Weight	4 to 5 tons (8,000 to 10,000 pounds)	2.2 to 3 tons (4,500 to 6,000 pounds)
Loaded Gross Weight (GVWR)	5 to 7.25 tons (10,000 to 14,500 pounds)	3 to 4.25 tons (6,000 to 8,500 pounds)
Passenger Rated Capacity	Up to 14 passengers (not including the driver)	Up to 9 passengers (not including the driver)

Length, Height, and Off-Tracking (Wheelbase)

- **Height Clearances:** At nearly 10 feet tall, a Type A-1 bus cannot clear standard residential garages, drive-thrus, or low-hanging tree branches that a standard SUV or minivan can easily slip under. You must always watch for low-clearance warnings.
- **The Pivot Factor (Off-Tracking):** Because a Type A-1 bus has a wider body and a longer wheelbase than an SUV, the rear wheels will "cut the corner" (off-track) much more aggressively during turns. When driving a Type A-1, you must pull slightly further forward into an intersection before initiating a turn to prevent your rear dual wheels from clipping the curb. See more in Part 3 below.

Real Width vs. Lane Space

- **The Type A-1 Footprint:** While an SUV drives like a standard family vehicle, a Type A-1 bus is built on a wide dual-rear-wheel utility chassis. The body is 8 feet wide, and with the wide-angle safety mirrors extended, your operating width is over 10 feet.
- **Narrow Lanes:** On narrow neighborhood roads or construction zones where driving lanes are restricted to 9 feet, a Type A-1 bus will take up the entire lane. Drivers must remain perfectly centered in their lane and rely heavily on their side mirrors to keep from clipping parked cars, mailboxes, or roadside signs.

Weight Limits on Rural Roads and Bridges

- **Understanding Gross Weight:** Fully loaded with students, a Type A-1 bus can weigh up to 7 tons (14,500 lbs.). While standard highway bridges are built for massive tractor-trailers, small neighborhood bridges, rural gravel roads, or private park bridges often have restrictive weight limits (sometimes capped as low as 3 to 5 tons).
- **The Operator's Duty:** Before driving any route or activity trip that navigates rural or residential structures, you must verify your vehicle's loaded weight. Crossing any bridge with a posted weight limit lower than your vehicle's Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) is extremely dangerous and strictly illegal.

PART 3: TURNING AND REVERSING SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION VEHICLE

While driving a Type A-1 cutaway bus or a small-capacity vehicle (like a large SUV or transit van) feels more like driving a personal vehicle than a 40-foot school bus, you still cannot handle them exactly like a standard car. Their increased length, wider bodies, and rear overhangs require specific maneuvering techniques.

How the Back Wheels Turn (Off-Tracking)

When you turn a vehicle, the rear wheels do not follow the exact same path as the front wheels. Instead, they cut inward toward the corner. This shortcutting action is called **off-tracking**.

- **Type A-1 Bus:** Because a Type A-1 bus is built on a longer utility chassis with a wider rear axle, it off-tracks significantly more than a standard car. The rear dual wheels act as a pivot point. If you turn the steering wheel too early when making a right-hand turn, your rear tires will jump the curb, risking pedestrian safety and damaging the tires.

- **Small-Capacity Vehicle (SUV/Minivan):** While off-tracking is minimal in a small-capacity vehicle such as an SUV or minivan, it still occurs. When navigating tight parking lots, school drop-off lanes, or driveways, turning too tightly can cause your rear tire to clip curbs, landscape rocks, or other low-lying hazards.

Watching the "Tail-Swing"

Because the rear wheels of a vehicle are positioned several feet forward of the actual rear bumper, the body section hanging behind the rear tires is called the overhang. When you make a sharp turn in one direction, this rear overhang swings out in the opposite direction.

- **Type A-1 Bus Tail-Swing:** A Type A-1 bus typically has about 4 to 6 feet of body overhang past the rear axle. When you make a sharp right turn, the rear bumper will swing out 1 to 2 feet to the left. Before making a sharp turn in tight school loading zones or dual-turn lanes, you must check your mirrors to ensure your tail-swing does not clip a vehicle next to you.
- **Small-Capacity Vehicle Tail-Swing:** An SUV or minivan has very little tail-swing (usually only a few inches), but drivers must still be cautious when pulling away from curbs or tight parallel parking lines to avoid scraping adjacent vehicles.

Reversing and the Rear Overhang

The rear overhang of a Type A-1 bus or large SUV creates a significant hazard when backing up.

- **Type A-1 Rear Overhang:** When backing into a parking space, the rear body of a Type A-1 bus will hang several feet past the curb line before the back tires ever touch the concrete. Any obstacle near the edge of the curb—such as a signpost, fence, tree branch, or parked car—can easily be hit by the back of your bus before your tires reach the parking block.
- **Blind Spots:** Both Type A-1 buses and large SUVs have massive blind zones directly behind them. In a Type A-1 bus, your rearview mirror is often blocked by passenger seats or a solid rear wall, forcing you to rely entirely on side mirrors and backup cameras.
- **Safety Rule:** Always back up at a slow walking pace. If you are backing up on school grounds, use a physical spotter outside the vehicle whenever possible to guide you.

PART 4: BALANCE, WEIGHT, AND PASSENGER SAFETY

Even though Type A-1 buses and small-capacity vehicles (SUVs and minivans) are much lighter than 40-foot commercial school buses, their specific weights, shapes, and passenger layouts still create unique handling and safety challenges. You must understand how these vehicles balance and move to keep your students safe.

Center of Gravity (Stability Differences)

A Type A-1 cutaway bus is built on a truck-style chassis, meaning its cabin floor and passenger seats sit significantly higher off the ground than a standard car. This higher center of gravity makes the bus more top-heavy. Taking a corner too fast or making sudden, jerky steering adjustments can cause the vehicle to sway violently or tip.

- **The Full-Load Risk:** This tipping hazard increases when the bus is full. The seats are raised another 1 to 1½ feet off the floor, meaning the weight of all the students is suspended high inside the bus.
- **Aisle Standees:** Students must never stand in the aisle while the vehicle is in motion. Having passengers out of their seats completely ruins the vehicle's stability and makes it incredibly dangerous during sudden stops or turns.
- **Small-Capacity Vehicles (Lower Center of Gravity):** SUVs and minivans have a lower center of gravity than a Type A-1 bus, making them more stable. However, they are still taller and heavier than standard sedans. If they are fully loaded with students and heavy gear (such as sports equipment or backpacks), they can still experience significant body roll in sharp curves.

Low Undercarriage Obstructions

- **Type A-1 Bus Clearance:** While a Type A-1 bus has decent ground clearance beneath the axle, it features a long body overhang behind the rear tires. Driving over steep driveways, deep drainage dips, or speed bumps can cause the rear bumper or exhaust pipe to scrape the pavement (especially when weighted down with students).
- **Small-Capacity Vehicle Clearance:** Standard minivans and cars sit very low to the ground. When fully loaded, the suspension compresses significantly. Drivers must take extra care over speed bumps, steep transitions, and snow-packed roads to avoid damaging the vehicle's underside or oil pan.

The Entry Step Hazard

There is a constant danger that a child trying to climb into the Type A-1 bus might lose their grip on the handrail, slip, and fall backward under the side of the bus, right next to the front tire. Drivers must watch the doorway closely during loading.

- **Small-Capacity Vehicles:** While minivans and SUVs have lower step-in heights, they do not have passenger handrails. Children can easily slip on wet running boards or trip over seatbelt straps when climbing into the back rows.

Acceleration and Stopping Distances

Because a vehicle is heavy, its speed and braking are governed by momentum:

- **Type A-1 Buses (Slow to Move, Slower to Stop):** A loaded Type A-1 bus can weigh up to 14,500 lbs. (7.25 tons). Because of this weight, it cannot accelerate quickly to merge onto highways or pull out from stop signs. Additionally, its momentum means it takes a much longer distance to stop than a normal car. You must leave a generous following cushion, look far ahead, and begin braking much earlier than you would in a personal vehicle.
- **Small-Capacity Vehicles:** While SUVs and minivans accelerate and brake more like standard cars, they still carry much more weight when fully loaded. Do not expect "sports car" braking performance; a packed vehicle requires a larger stopping cushion than an empty one.

Passenger Movement and Weight Shifts

In smaller vehicles, student behavior can physically impact how the vehicle handles:

- **Sudden Weight Shifts:** If a group of students in a Type A-1 bus or a large SUV suddenly slides or leans to one side together, it can cause the vehicle to pull or sway.
- **Driver Distraction and Control:** Because passengers in Type A-1 buses and SUVs sit very close to the driver, loud or rowdy behavior is incredibly distracting. Maintaining a quiet, orderly cabin is a critical component of safe vehicle control.

PART 5: THE DANGER ZONES (BLIND SPOTS)

Even though Type A-1 buses and small-capacity vehicles (SUVs and minivans) are smaller than full-size school buses, they still have critical blind spots. These areas are called the **Danger Zones**—the spaces around the vehicle where students, pedestrians, or small obstacles are completely hidden from the driver's view.

Because these smaller vehicles are often used around schools, active loading zones, and residential neighborhoods, knowing where your blind spots are is vital to preventing accidents.

The danger zones may extend as much as 30 feet from the front bumper, with the first 10 feet being the most dangerous, 10 feet from the left and right sides of the bus, and 10 feet behind the rear bumper of the school bus. In addition, the entire area to the left of the bus is always considered dangerous because of passing cars.

1. The Front Danger Zone

The area directly in front of the front bumper is a major blind spot.

- **The Hood Obstruction:** Both Type A-1 buses (built on truck/van chassis) and large SUVs have high, prominent hoods. This blocks your direct view of the ground for several feet in front of the vehicle.
- **The Eye-Level Variable:** The size of this blind spot depends on your height and seat adjustment. A shorter driver with a lower eye level will have a much larger front blind spot, making it impossible to see a small child standing close to the front bumper.

2. The Rear Danger Zone

The area directly behind your vehicle is a highly hazardous blind spot, especially during backing maneuvers.

- **Type A-1 Buses:** The interior rearview mirror is useless for seeing behind the vehicle because passenger seats, wheelchair lifts, or a solid rear wall block your line of sight. You must rely entirely on your flat and convex side mirrors, along with your backup camera (if present).
- **Small-Capacity Vehicles (SUVs/Minivans):** While these vehicles have rear windows, passenger headrests, luggage, or thick rear roof pillars (D-pillars) severely restrict your view.
- **The Risk:** A small child, a bicycle, or a low safety post can easily be completely hidden directly behind either vehicle.

3. The Driver-Side Danger Zone

This blind spot runs along the left side of the vehicle, directly below the window level.

- In Type A-1 buses, the wide bus body sticks out further than the driver's cabin, creating a larger blind spot right behind your left shoulder.

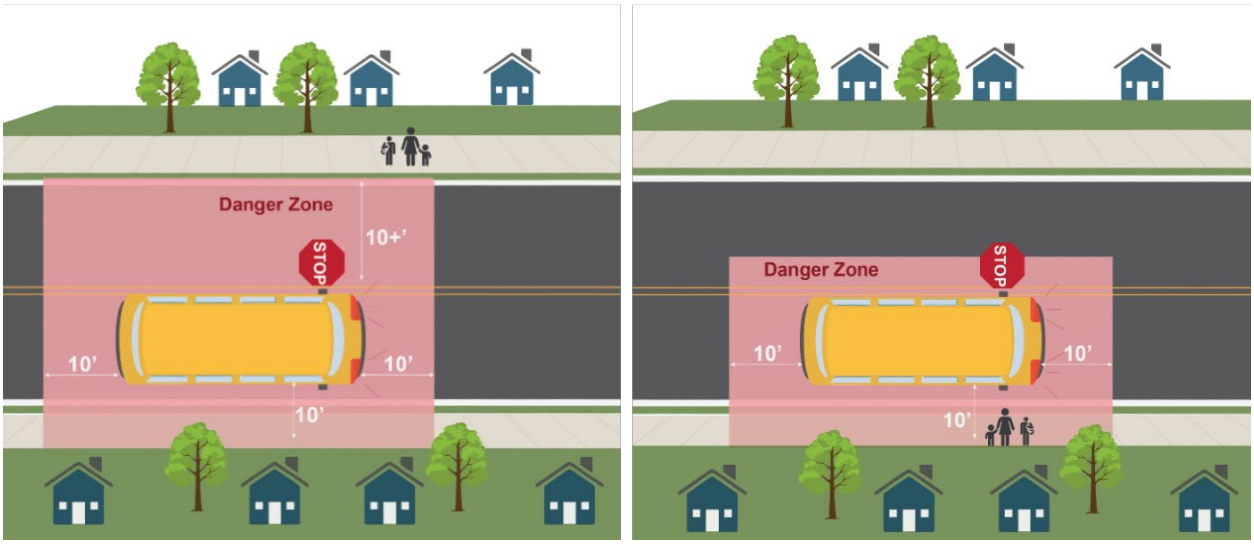
4. The Passenger-Side Danger Zone

This is the most dangerous area around any school vehicle.

- **Type A-1 Buses:** Because you sit on the far left side of the cabin, you are positioned far away from the right-side windows. The wide body of the Type A-1 bus creates a massive blind spot along the entire right side. The highest-risk zones are directly in front of the front right tire and around the rear wheels.
- **Small-Capacity Vehicles:** Thick structural metal pillars (the B and C pillars between the side windows) create blind spots on your right side. If an SUV is loaded with passenger bags or equipment, your over-the-shoulder visibility is further compromised

The High-Risk Areas

The highest-risk zones are directly in front of the front-right tire and right around the rear dual tires. Students walking near these tires are completely invisible to the driver.



How to Handle the Danger Zones

1. **Adjust Your Mirrors:** Adjust your side mirrors before every shift so you can see the ground along the sides of your vehicle and the rear tires.
2. **Rock before Roll:** Rock your body forward and backward in your seat to look around thick window pillars and side mirrors before pulling away from a stop.
3. **Use the "Double Look":** Look twice to the right before making turns or changing lanes.

PART 6: HOW TO ADJUST YOUR MIRRORS

To eliminate dangerous blind spots, you must carefully adjust your mirrors before every trip. The view in your mirrors must connect perfectly with what you can see out your windows. Because Type A-1 buses and small-capacity vehicles (SUVs/minivans) have different mirror setups, you must know how to adjust both.

FMVSS 111 (Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 111, Rear Visibility)

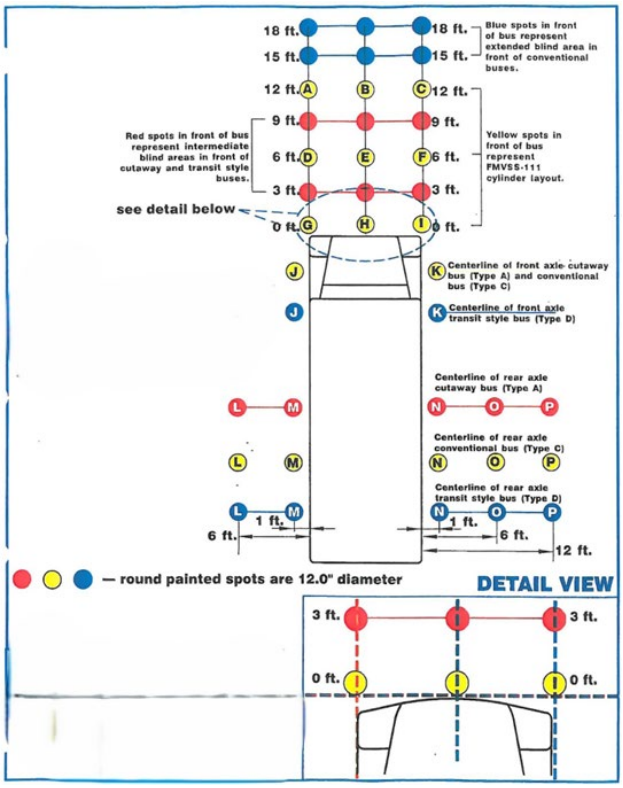
Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 111 (Rear Visibility) is a federal regulation designed to reduce crashes caused by blind spots behind and beside vehicles.

The standard applies to passenger cars, trucks, buses, multipurpose passenger vehicles (MPVs), school buses, and low-speed vehicles.

The Mirror Grid (Field of View Requirements)

Manufacturers must test and certify that a driver can see specific ground targets placed in a "grid" around the vehicle. Properly adjusted mirrors ensure you can see these critical safety zones before moving.

The image below shows the distances at which each target should be placed around the school transportation vehicle to ensure the mirrors are set correctly.





Adjusting Mirrors on a Type A-1 Bus

A Type A-1 bus uses a split side-mirror system and hood-mounted crossover mirrors:

- **Hood-Mounted Crossover Mirrors (The front-corner bubbles):**
    - **What you should see:** These round mirrors must be set so you can see the ground directly in front of your bumper, bridging the gap with what you see directly through the windshield.
    - **Tire view:** You must be able to see where both front tires touch the ground and the entire walking path leading to the passenger entry door.
- **Side Flat Mirrors (Top mirror):**
    - **What you should see:** Adjust these so you see just a tiny sliver of the bus body in the inside edge of the glass.
    - **Road view:** The view should run straight back, showing at least one full lane next to you and the road for at least four bus lengths behind you.
- **Side Convex Mirrors (Bottom wide-angle mirror):**

    - **What you should see: T**hese curved mirrors must show the entire side wall of the bus, all the way up to the window line.
    - **Ground view:** You must see where your rear tires touch the pavement, plus at least one full driving lane next to the bus.
- **Interior Rearview Mirror**
    - **What you should see:** Position this mirror so the top edge of the back emergency window aligns with the top of the mirror glass.
    - **Student view:** The mirror must display all passenger seating rows, including the heads of students seated in the center rows directly behind the driver's station, allowing you to continuously monitor passenger behavior.

Adjusting Mirrors on Small-Capacity Vehicles (SUVs & Minivans)

Adjusting your car mirrors correctly is crucial for eliminating blind spots and maximizing road visibility. Standard passenger vehicles do not have crossover mirrors, meaning you must rely on your windows and a properly set "blind-spot" mirror pattern:

- **Side Mirrors (Driver & Passenger):**
    - **How to set them:** Lean your head to the left until it almost touches the driver's side window, then adjust the left mirror until you can just barely see the side of your SUV. Lean your head to the right (towards the center of the vehicle) and adjust the passenger-side mirror the same way.
    - **Why this works:** When you sit back normally, this wide setting eliminates your blind spots. Cars passing you will transition seamlessly from your rearview mirror to your side mirrors and then to your side vision.
- **Interior Rearview Mirror:**
    - **The balance:** Sit in your normal, upright driving position. Adjust the mirror until you have a clear, centered view directly through your rear windshield without moving your head.

The "A-Pillar" and Mirror Blind Spot (The Leaning Rule)

On both Type A-1 buses and modern SUVs/minivans, the metal pillars framing the windshield (the "A-pillars") and the large side mirror housings create a major blind spot right at the front corners of the vehicle. This block can completely hide a pedestrian in a crosswalk or an oncoming car at a four-way stop.

- **The Leaning Rule:** Whenever you approach an intersection, crosswalk, or railroad crossing, you must physically lean forward over the steering wheel and peer around your windshield pillars and mirror frames. Never assume a corner is clear just because you looked through the glass; you must actively look *around* your blind spots.

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Unit Four – Vehicle Inspections

PART 1: THE PURPOSE AND LEGAL BASIS OF INSPECTIONS

A vehicle inspection is a highly organized, step-by-step check of your vehicle's mechanical and electrical systems before, during, and after a run. Whether you drive a Type A-1 bus or a small-capacity SUV, your job is to use your senses, looking, listening, feeling, touching, and smelling, to catch issues like fluid leaks, loose parts, or strange odors before they lead to a breakdown.

Legal Foundations and Penalties

The Colorado Model Traffic Code states clearly that it is unlawful for any person to drive, or for any school entity to knowingly permit someone to drive, an unsafe vehicle on a public highway. A vehicle is legally considered unsafe if it lacks required parts or if its safety equipment (such as brakes, tires, or steering) is not properly adjusted and in good working order.

- **Police Spot Inspections:** Uniformed police officers have the legal authority to stop a school transportation vehicle at any time if they have a reasonable cause to believe it is unsafe. They can conduct a spot test of the vehicle's equipment.
- **Out-of-Service Mandates:** If an officer finds a vehicle to be hazardous, they can issue a legal summons to the driver. Furthermore, if they judge that continuing to drive the vehicle would be dangerous, they can order the vehicle immediately grounded (put "Out of Service") at the operator's expense, requiring it to be towed away rather than driven.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-202 Unsafe vehicles – penalty – identification plates

(1) It is unlawful for any person to drive or move or for the owner to cause or knowingly permit to be driven or moved on any highway any vehicle or combination of vehicles which is in such unsafe condition as to endanger any person, or which does not contain those parts or is not at all times equipped with such lamps and other equipment in proper condition and adjustment as required in this section and sections 204 to 231 and part 3 of this Code, or which is equipped in any manner in violation of said sections and part 3 or for any person to do any act forbidden or fail to perform any act required under said sections and part 3.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-203 Unsafe vehicles – spot inspections

(1) Uniformed police officers, at any time upon reasonable cause, may require the driver of a vehicle to stop and submit such vehicle and its equipment to an inspection and such test with reference thereto as may be appropriate. The fact that a vehicle is an older model vehicle shall not alone constitute reasonable cause. In the event such vehicle is found to be in an unsafe condition or the required equipment is not present or is not in proper repair and adjustment, the officer may give a written notice and issue a summons to the driver. Said notice shall require that such vehicle be placed in safe condition and properly equipped or that its equipment be placed in proper repair and adjustment, the particulars of which shall be specified on said notice.

(2) In the event any such vehicle is, in the reasonable judgment of such police officer, in such condition that further operation would be hazardous, the officer may require, in addition to the instructions set forth in subsection (1) of this section, that the vehicle be moved at the operator's expense and not operated under its own power or that it be driven to the nearest garage or other place of safety.

Protecting Passengers and Avoiding Liability

Safety is the single most important reason to inspect your bus. A thorough check protects you, your passengers, and everyone else sharing the road. Discovering a defective component at the bus terminal allows a mechanic to repair it safely, preventing a roadside breakdown or a crash.

Parents and school administrators place immense trust in transportation professionals. Skipping an inspection creates severe legal liability. If a component fails and a student is injured, a driver who fails to complete their inspection paperwork will face severe professional and legal consequences.

Preventing Roadside Breakdown Risks

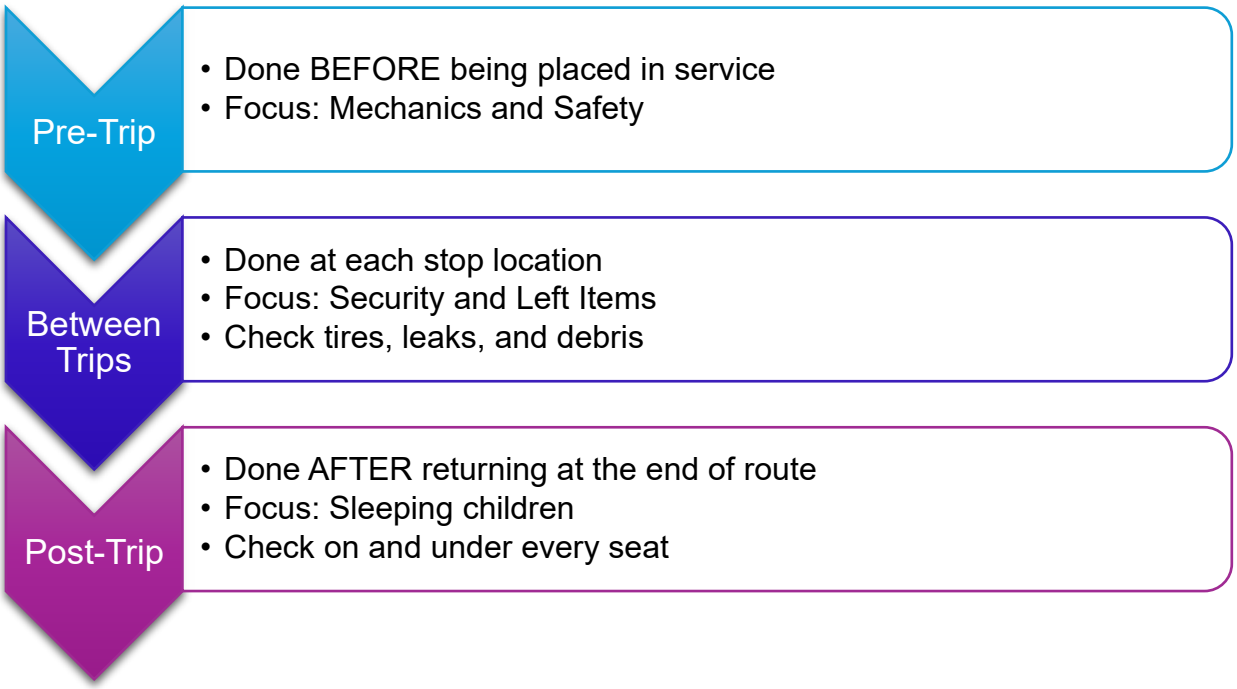
A broken-down vehicle parked on the shoulder of a high-speed roadway creates an immediate hazard. Passing motorists often slow down or stop to look, which dramatically increases the risk of a secondary traffic accident.

Furthermore, unexpected breakdowns cause severe anxiety for young students and may pose a life-threatening crisis if your passengers include medically fragile children, such as a student with severe diabetes who requires a timed insulin dose or snack. When students do not arrive on time, the phones in the transportation department start to ring "off the walls"! Many families depend on their students to arrive within a specific period due to work schedules and after-school events.

Proactively checking items like your engine fan belts, fluid levels, and tire pressures helps keep your vehicle reliable and in good working order, and helps avoid these high-stress situations.

PART 2: THE THREE ESSENTIAL TYPES OF INSPECTIONS

Colorado rules require multiple layers of vehicle verification throughout the operating day. Every inspection must be carefully documented and maintained at the Educational Entity for a year.



The Pre-Trip Inspection

This check must be completed before a vehicle is placed into service for the day. You must follow a systematic checklist to verify that the vehicle is mechanically sound and safe to load passengers. You must also report defects as soon as you become aware of them. You have a responsibility to drive a safe bus. Mechanics cannot make necessary repairs, nor do they know something needs repair unless they receive appropriate feedback from you.

Your district/charter and service provider must keep pre-trip inspection forms for at least six months. The forms must be filled out completely and carefully, and each form should have a full driver's signature.

- **Large Vehicles:** For standard school buses, multifunction activity buses, and motor coaches, you are required by law to check, at a minimum, every item listed on the CDE Form School Bus/Multifunction Pre and Post-Trip Requirements.
- **Small Capacity Vehicles:** For smaller production passenger vehicles (like SUVs and minivans holding 10 or fewer occupants), you must check and document every item on the CDE Form Small Vehicle Pre and Post-Trip Requirements.

The Between-Trip Inspection

Whenever you park the bus at a mid-day destination, a school building, or a field trip site, you must perform a brief walk-around check before starting your next leg. Walk around the exterior to check for freshly picked-up debris in your tires, look under the engine compartment for new fluid leaks, and glance down the passenger aisle to remove any trash or safety hazards left behind.

The Post-Trip Inspection

A complete post-trip inspection must be performed at the end of each vehicle's daily operations. The heaviest amounts of dirt are brought to your vehicle in the morning when students have been waiting outside to board. If you sweep your vehicle after your morning run, in the afternoon, all you have to do is pick up any trash and do a quick sweep, and your vehicle will look neat and clean all day long. Studies show that school buses kept clean demonstrate to students that the driver takes pride in caring for the vehicle, and, in return, students will take better care of it. It also shows that in well-kept buses, drivers have fewer discipline issues.

While you will check the vehicle's overall condition, the primary focus of the post-trip inspection is to ensure that no students are left behind in an unattended vehicle.

You must physically walk all the way to the back row of the bus, looking completely over, under, and between every single passenger seat cushion to scan for sleeping, injured, or hidden children.

11.1 Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Inspection Requirements

11.1.1 Inspection Requirements and Frequency

(A) A daily pre-trip inspection shall be completed prior to a vehicle being placed in service.

(B) A daily post-trip inspection shall be completed at the end of each vehicle's daily operation.

11.1.2 Documentation

(A) Documentation of completion shall be maintained for each inspection performed.

(1) Pre-trips shall be documented prior to the vehicle being placed in service.

(2) Post-trips shall be documented at the end of the vehicle's daily operation.

(B) Documentation shall be completed by the School Transportation Vehicle Operator or other Transportation Personnel authorized by the Educational Entity.

PART 3: PRE-TRIP CHECKS AND DEFECT REPORTING

When performing your mandatory pre-trip check, you must examine several key structural zones as described on the CDE School Bus/Multifunction School Activity Bus Pre- and Post-Trip Form (Type A-1) or the CDE Small Vehicle Pre- and Post-Trip Requirements Form. You are checking to ensure every component is safely mounted, not cracked or broken, and working perfectly. The items below are some of the areas that you will be checking. Your trainer will provide more details and further describe your pre-trip requirements.

Inside the Engine Compartment (Fluid Levels & Belts)

Before starting the engine, open the hood or access door to inspect the core mechanical systems:

- **Fluid Level Verification:** Check the engine oil, power steering fluid, windshield washer fluid, and engine coolant levels. Fluids must remain within safe operating limits. Look for any active drips or wet puddles beneath the engine block.
- **Belts and Hoses:** Inspect all engine drive belts for cracks, fraying, or excessive slack. Check rubber hoses for leaks, bulging, or brittle spots.

Exterior Walk-Around (Tires, Wheels, & Suspension)

Walk the perimeter of the vehicle to verify its structural integrity:

- **Tires and Rims:** Tires must have adequate tread depth and correct air pressure. Check that the rubber has no sidewall cuts, bulges, or exposed steel belts. Ensure that all wheel lug nuts are tight and present, with no rust trails or shiny metal cracks that indicate a loose wheel.

- **Type A-1 Bus Suspension & Wheels:** Inspect the heavy commercial dual rear wheels for debris caught between the tires. Look for rust trails or shiny metal cracks across the wheel rims, which indicate loose lug nuts. Look behind the wheels to verify that your leaf springs, U-bolts, and commercial shock absorbers are intact, secure, and free of leaks.

- **Small-Capacity Vehicle Suspension & Wheels:** Inspect standard single-wheel lug nuts for tightness. Because these vehicles use passenger-car suspension, check that the coil springs and struts are intact and secure, and that the struts are not leaking fluid.

Safety and First Aid Equipment

Every vehicle must carry a fully stocked, securely mounted safety kit that is easily accessible by the driver. These items are often overlooked and checked as non-compliant during your district or charter school's STAR review. You must verify that these items are on board or are in working order every morning:

- **Fire Extinguisher:** Must be fully charged, with its pressure gauge needle resting in the green zone, and its safety pin securely locked in place.
    - **Type A-1 Buses:** Must carry a 5-pound, dry-chemical fire extinguisher with a rating not less than 2A10BC.
    - **Small-Capacity Vehicles:** Must carry at least a 2½-pound, dry-chemical fire extinguisher with a rating not less than 1A10BC.
- **Reflective Triangles:** A protective plastic case containing three (3) bidirectional emergency warning triangles must be on board to mark your vehicle if you break down.
- **Body Fluid Clean-Up Kit:** A sealed, dustproof container used to safely manage biohazards. Because the sanitizing materials inside can degrade over time, school entities should replace the entire kit every 36 months.
- **Webbing/Seatbelt Cutter:** Vehicles must carry at least one durable webbing cutter featuring a full-width handgrip and a protected blade. It must be securely mounted within easy reach of the driver while buckled. If the blade shows any signs of rust or corrosion, it must be replaced immediately.
- **Emergency Exits:** Checking emergency exits during a daily pre-trip inspection is one of the most critical safety duties a professional operator performs. According to the CDE safety and inspection standards, a thorough pre-trip check of emergency exits is vital for several life-saving, legal, and operational reasons:

1. **The Window of Survival**
    - In an absolute crisis, such as a vehicle fire or rollover, the primary exit may be jammed or blocked. Pre-tripping alternative escape routes ensures they are functional and will not stick.
    - **Every Second Matters:** If a mechanism is corroded, broken, or frozen stiff from cold weather, a driver or student cannot afford to waste critical seconds fighting a stuck latch during a real emergency.
2. **Ensuring Strict Clearance Paths (No Blockages)**
    - **Aisle and Exit Integrity:** Part of the inspection ensures that emergency exits are completely accessible. Under strict operational rules, under no circumstances may any carry-on items, equipment bags, or luggage block, narrow, or obstruct the center aisle or the clear path leading to any emergency door, window, or roof hatch. Checking this during the pre-trip prevents the hazardous practice of piling activity trip gear in front of vital exit routes.
    - **Type A-1 Bus Exits:** You must physically test the designated emergency doors, push-out windows, and roof hatches. Opening these exits during your pre-trip must trigger the electronic audible alarm in the driver's cockpit. This system prevents a door from flying open on a high-speed highway without your immediate knowledge.
    - **Small-Capacity Vehicle Exits:** Standard SUVs and minivans do *not* have roof hatches, emergency push-out windows, or interlock buzzers. Instead, their emergency exits are the standard side doors and the rear liftgate/hatch. You must verify that the rear liftgate opens smoothly from the inside and that **manual child-safety door locks** on the rear passenger doors are correctly engaged before starting your route.
3. **Verification of Warning Systems (Electronic Interlocks)**
    - **The Interlock/Buzzer Check:** School buses are legally equipped with an electronic warning buzzer system connected to the emergency exits. During the pre-trip, opening an exit must trigger the audible alarm in the driver’s cockpit.
    - **Preventing Intentional or Unintentional Opening:** This buzzer alerts the operator if an exit has accidentally unlatched while in motion or if a student is tampering with a handle in the back of the bus. If the buzzer or warning system is defective, a door could fly open on a high-speed highway

without the driver's immediate knowledge, creating an extreme risk of a passenger falling out of the vehicle.

4. **Mitigating Roadside Breakdown and Secondary Accident Risks**

    - **High-Risk Secondary Environments:** Every vehicle failure or unexpected roadside stop puts passengers in a potentially volatile environment along high-speed shoulders. If an immediate evacuation is deemed necessary because it is unsafe to keep passengers inside the vehicle, the driver must be 100% certain that the emergency doors will open smoothly to execute a rapid, controlled exit toward a safe zone away from traffic.

Defect Reporting, Resolution, and "Out-of-Service" Laws

Under Colorado Code (1 CCR 301-26), any damage, defect, or deficiency affecting safety or regulatory compliance must be reported immediately to your educational entity upon discovery.

- **Reporting Requirements:** Your written or electronic defect report must contain the educational entity's name, the date and time of submission, a detailed description of the defect, and your name.

- **Resolution:** The district must repair the reported defect or document why no repair is necessary. The vehicle must be confirmed safe by a qualified mechanic before transporting students.

- **Out-of-Service Criteria:** A school vehicle may be designated "out-of-service" by the school entity, a CDE Annual Inspector, or the CDE School Transportation Unit.

- **Emergency Roadside Operation Exception**: If your vehicle is discovered to be in an unsafe condition *while being driven on a roadway*, you may continue driving it only to the nearest place where repairs can safely be completed. This is only legal if continuing to drive is determined to be less hazardous to the public than permitting the vehicle to remain stranded on the side of the road.

11.3 Maintenance and Repair

11.3.1 General Maintenance Requirements

(A) Educational Entities shall ensure all School Transportation Vehicles are systematically inspected, maintained, and repaired by a qualified mechanic.

(1) Safe Condition:

(a) An Educational Entity shall not permit student transportation in any vehicle that is not in a safe and proper operating condition.

(2) Documentation:

(a) Separate files shall be maintained for each School Transportation Vehicle containing records of Annual inspections, preventative maintenance (PM), reported defects, and all corresponding repairs.

11.3.2 Defect Reporting and Resolution

(A) Any damage, defect, or deficiency affecting safety or regulatory compliance shall be reported immediately to the Educational Entity upon discovery.

(B) Educational Entities shall have a system to document preventative maintenance, reported defects, and repairs made to School Transportation Vehicles.

(1) Report Content shall include:

(a) Educational Entity’s name,

(b) Date and time of the submission of the report,

(c) Detailed description of the defect,

(d) Name of the preparer.

(2) Resolution:

(a) Educational Entities, or a representative agent, shall repair the reported defect/deficiency or document why no repair is necessary. The vehicle shall be confirmed safe prior to transporting students.

11.3.3 Out-of-Service Criteria

(A) A School Transportation Vehicle may be designated "out-of-service" by the Educational Entity, a CDE Annual Inspector, or the CDE School Transportation Unit.

(1) Educational Entities shall not transport students in a School Transportation Vehicle that is not in a safe and proper

operating condition.

(2) Emergency Operation:

(a) Any School Transportation Vehicle discovered to be in an unsafe condition while being operated on the highway, roadway, or private road may be continued in operation only to the nearest place where repairs can safely be effected.

(b) Such operation shall be conducted only if it is less hazardous to the public than to permit the vehicle to remain on the highway, roadway, or private road.

(B) Reinstatement:

(1) Required repairs shall be completed before student transport. If the School Transportation Vehicle was placed out of service during an Annual inspection, it shall pass a new CDE Annual Inspection before returning to service.

PART 4: THE HYDRAULIC AND EV BRAKE SAFETY TESTS

Brakes are the most critical safety system on a heavy transportation vehicle. You must test their operation daily using a precise mechanical sequence before leaving the terminal yard.

The Hydraulic Brake Test

Because your vehicle relies on hydraulic fluid to push the brake pads against the wheels, any leak in the lines or master cylinder will cause a catastrophic loss of braking power. You must verify that the system holds constant, sealed pressure before every trip:

- **The Test Procedure:** With the engine turned off, press and pump the brake pedal three times, then press down firmly on the pedal and hold it for 5 seconds.
- **The Evaluation:** The pedal must remain completely firm and stable. If the pedal slowly sinks down toward the floorboard during those 5 seconds, there is a fluid leak or mechanical failure in the system. The vehicle must be placed out of service immediately.

Electric Vehicle Braking Systems and Regenerative Power

As school districts transition to greener fleets, you may operate an electric Type A-1 bus, transit van, or SUV. Electric drivetrains introduce a unique braking style:

- **Regenerative Braking Systems:** On electric vehicles, the braking system may generate power during deceleration to recharge the vehicle's high-voltage battery system.
- **The Driving Feel:** When you lift your foot off the accelerator, the regenerative system acts like a brake, slowing the vehicle down immediately and smoothly before you ever touch the brake pedal. Operators must be familiar with these unique slowing characteristics to avoid jerky stops and to maintain smooth passenger comfort.

Parking Brake Operational Testing Procedure

Type A-1 buses and small-capacity vehicles use a mechanical, cable-actuated parking brake (activated by a hand lever or a foot pedal on the far left) rather than an air-pressure parking brake. To ensure this mechanical cable has not stretched or snapped, you must test it daily:

- **The Test Procedure:** Apply the parking brake fully. Shift the transmission into Drive (or low gear).
- **The Evaluation:** Gently press the accelerator pedal to give the vehicle a light "tug." The parking brake must hold the vehicle completely still. If the vehicle rolls forward, slips, or the brake does not fully hold against engine idle torque, it is defective and must be adjusted by a mechanic before you transport students.

PART 5: THE ANNUAL INSPECTION

While you are responsible for daily pre- and post-trip safety checks, Colorado law requires every student transportation vehicle in your fleet to undergo a deep, highly regulated mechanical verification once a year.

Whether you operate a Type A-1 bus or a small-capacity vehicle (SUV/minivan), the vehicle cannot legally transport a single student unless it holds a current, passing state certification.

Certified Annual Inspections

Every school transportation vehicle and student-transit trailer must successfully pass a comprehensive CDE Annual Inspection before it is ever allowed to carry students. This inspection must be repeated at least once every 12 months.

- **New Fleet Additions:** Any newly purchased, used, leased, or rented vehicle added to your fleet must successfully clear this annual state inspection *prior* to transporting its first passenger.
- **The STU-25 Affidavit:** The results of this rigorous mechanical check must be officially documented on the CDE Form STU-25 (Affidavit of Annual Inspection). By law, a current copy of this signed affidavit must be carried inside the vehicle at all times, and the original copy must be filed in the transportation department's vehicle maintenance folder.
- **The STU-26 Checklist:** The inspector must systematically check and document every required field on the CDE Form STU-26 (Annual Inspection and Preventive Maintenance Requirements). All inspected criteria must meet or exceed the vehicle manufacturer’s specifications.

Certified Inspection Sites

Annual inspections cannot be performed in a standard driveway, an empty parking lot, or an unapproved shop. They can only be conducted at a facility that holds a valid CDE Inspection Site Certificate. To earn and maintain this state certification, the shop facility must meet strict state criteria:

- **Physical Space and Flooring:** The shop bay must be large enough to completely hold the vehicle and all required diagnostic tools. The floor surface or concrete pad must be engineered to safely support the maximum loaded weight of the largest vehicle in the fleet.
- **Environment and Tools:** The shop must feature adequate lighting and proper ventilation systems. Most importantly, the site must contain professional tools that are specifically designed and precisely calibrated to take accurate readings of critical safety items, such as tire tread depths and brake lining thicknesses.
- **Site Applications:** The shop operator must submit a formal request to CDE to prove their facility meets these requirements, and the official state certificate must be clearly posted on the shop wall.

PART 6: THE CDE "STAR" PERFORMANCE REVIEW

To ensure that local Educational Entities fully comply with all state safety rules, the Colorado Department of Education conducts regular field audits. This official oversight process is known as the CDE School Transportation Advisory Review (STAR).

During a STAR audit, state transportation analysts visit your local facility to perform a thorough review of your entire operation, ensuring safety rules are followed and risks are minimized for Colorado students. They will review:

- **Driver Qualification Files:** Checking to ensure every operator has a valid driver's license, current medical forms, up-to-date background checks, and documented pre-service and annual safety training hours.
- **Maintenance and Inspection Records:** Verifying that daily pre-trip and post-trip sheets are filled out properly and that annual STU-25 affidavits are current for every active vehicle.
- **Operational Rules Compliance:** Reviewing route sheets, evidence that emergency evacuation drills were completed, and verification that drivers are strictly adhering to Colorado's mandatory driver hours-of-service limitations to prevent fatigue.

Passing the STAR review demonstrates that your transportation department is running a compliant, safe program that minimizes risks for Colorado students.

Most Common Items Found During a STAR Review

The CDE frequently flags specific safety items as non-compliant during STAR reviews. An attentive operator should catch and report *all* of the following issues during a standard pre-trip, between-trip, or post-trip inspection:

- **Emergency Kits:** First Aid Kits or Bodily Fluid Clean-up Kits that are missing entirely, are unsealed, or are missing required individual items.
- **Passenger Seating:** Broken-down seat cushion padding or seat bottoms that are not securely latched down to the vehicle frame.
- **Emergency Exits:** Peeling or missing instructional and identification stickers on emergency doors or windows.
- **Exit Operations:** Stiff, uninspected handles that make emergency exits hard to open, or malfunctioning electronic warning buzzers on Type A-1 buses.

- **Documentation:** Incomplete, unsigned, or missing pre-trip and post-trip inspection records.
- **Unsecured Cargo:** Loose gear, sports equipment, luggage, or cleaning supplies in the passenger compartment (creating a projectile hazard).
- **Electrical Systems:** Inoperative lights, cracked indicator lenses, or blown bulbs.

The Consequences of Non-Compliance

During a STAR review, state analysts will visually inspect several fleet vehicles.

- **Out-of-Service Grounding:** If CDE analysts discover any defect on a vehicle that meets the CDE Out-of-Service Criteria or is deemed potentially dangerous, the vehicle will be immediately placed Out-of-Service.
- **No Student Transport:** The vehicle is legally grounded and cannot be used to transport students until a qualified mechanic completes the necessary repairs and documents the resolution.
- **Corrective Action Plan:** Your district or charter school must respond in writing to the CDE outlining the corrective actions taken to resolve any deficiencies discovered during the audit.

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Unit Five – Vehicle Operations

PART 1: THE FOUNDATIONS OF DEFENSIVE DRIVING

Driving a Type A-1 school bus or a small-capacity vehicle (SUV/minivan) requires a much higher level of skill, responsibility, and attention than driving a normal personal car. You are managing a vehicle loaded with students, meaning you must always look out for potential hazards and manage your vehicle to prevent accidents.

The Five Qualities of a Defensive Driver

1. **Knowledge:** You must know the traffic laws, your vehicle's physical limits, and school district safety policies inside and out.
2. **Alertness:** You must stay fully awake and focused on the road, constantly scanning your surroundings for changing conditions.
3. **Foresight:** You must look far ahead to predict what other drivers might do, or how a sharp curve or a hill up ahead will change your driving.
4. **Judgment:** You must make smart, calm decisions about speed, spacing, and lane positioning.
5. **Skill:** You must know how to physically operate the steering, gears, and brakes smoothly under any circumstances.

The Five Keys to Driving Safely

1. **Aim High in Steering:** Look at least 12 to 15 seconds down the road ahead of you (about a quarter-mile on the highway) so you can spot problems early.
2. **Get the Big Picture:** Don't just stare at the car directly in front of you. Watch the sidewalks, intersections, and all lanes of traffic.
3. **Keep Your Eyes Moving:** Shift your gaze back and forth between the road ahead, the sides of the street, and your mirrors every few seconds.
4. **Leave Yourself an Out:** Maintain a cushion of open space all around your bus so you have room to move if someone cuts you off.
5. **Make Sure They See You:** Use your signals, headlights, hazard lights, or horn to communicate your presence clearly to other drivers.

The Strategic "Three A's" of Defensive Driving

To protect the structural integrity of the vehicle and ensure the uncompromised shield of passenger safety, a professional school transportation operator must master the Three A's of Defensive Driving. This framework shifts defensive driving from a passive theory to a continuous, active process of cognitive threat assessment and mechanical prevention.

1. AWARENESS: Continuous Environment Evaluation

Awareness is the cognitive foundation of defensive driving. An operator cannot defend against a hazard they have failed to perceive. Professional awareness requires active, relentless visual scanning and space management.

- **Active Visual Scanning (The 15-Second Horizon):** Operators must maintain a high visual lead time, scanning at least 15 seconds ahead in urban environments and up to a quarter-mile on open highways. This visual field must be continuously penetrated to identify decelerating vehicles, changing traffic control devices, and erratic motorist patterns.
- **Systematic Mirror Sweeps:** Operators must execute a complete mirror sweep every 4 to 5 seconds to maintain 360-degree situational awareness, monitoring the vehicle's blind spots, lane positioning, and the tracking paths of the rear tires.
- **Peripheral Threat Identification:** Awareness demands constant tracking of high-risk roadside hazards, including distracted pedestrians, bicyclists, active school crossing zones, merging delivery vehicles, and changing surface conditions.

Awareness reminds you that children are apt to do the craziest things at the worst possible times.

2. ANTICIPATION: Predictive Hazard Mapping

Anticipation is the process of critically examining perceived road dynamics and predicting the worst-case scenario. Professional operators do not wait for a hazard to materialize; they anticipate it and pre-plan a strategic escape route.

- **Predicting Motorist Non-Compliance:** Operators must approach every intersection, roundabout, and merge point assuming that other motorists will fail to yield the right-of-way, violate traffic signals, or cut abruptly in front of the long wheelbase of the bus.
- **Targeting Distracted and High-Risk Drivers:** Operators must scan for visual indicators of impairment or cognitive diversion in surrounding traffic, such as lane

drifting, erratic speed changes, or mobile phone usage, categorizing these vehicles as immediate operational threats.

- **Proactive Environmental Scaling:** Anticipation requires the driver to adjust driving metrics *before* entering a challenging space. This includes proactively dropping speed when approaching blind crests, entering sharp curves, encountering steep mountain grades, or operating in deteriorating visibility.

3. ACTION: Decisive Executive Execution

Action is the mechanical culmination of awareness and anticipation. Once a hazard is identified and a conflict is anticipated, the operator must execute prompt, smooth, and legally compliant vehicle control maneuvers to completely eliminate collision risks.

- **Proactive Speed Calibration:** Action dictates that an operator immediately lift off the accelerator or safely apply the service brakes to create a larger safety cushion the moment a potential conflict is anticipated, adhering strictly to safe stopping distance physics.
- **Establishing Space Buffers:** Operators must safely adjust lane positioning within legal boundaries to establish maximum lateral clearance from roadside hazards, stationary construction zones, or disabled vehicles parked on highway shoulders.
- **Defensive Communication Management:** The operator must communicate the bus's presence and operational intentions early and clearly by utilizing the vehicle's directional signals, hazard warning lamps, brake lights, or horn to command the attention of distracted drivers and protect the safety envelope of the bus.

PART 2: COMFORT, CONTROLS, AND COOPERATION

Before you even turn the key, you must set up your environment for maximum safety and comfort.

Setting Up Your Driver's Seat

When driving long distances, poor posture can cause fatigue or minor aches. Set up your seat using these targets:

- Sit with your lower back completely flat against the seat back.
- Adjust the seat up or down so your hips are slightly higher than your knees.
- Move the seat forward or backward so your knees still have a slight bend when you push the pedals all the way to the floor.

- Ensure your arms reach the steering wheel comfortably without forcing you to lean forward or twist your back.

Shifting an Automatic Transmission

Nearly all modern Type A-1 school buses and small-capacity vehicles are equipped with automatic transmissions. Operators must exercise strict safety steps when starting and managing them:

- **The “Safe Start”:**
    - Check that the parking brake is set.
    - Depress the service brake pedal firmly. The vehicle must be in Neutral (N) or Park (P) depending on the vehicle type.
    - Turn the key (or press the ignition button) to the “on” or “accessory” position and allow the vehicle to cycle through its computer setup until the dashboard gauges settle.
    - *Diesel Engine Note:* If your Type A-1 bus features a diesel engine, wait until the "wait to start" indicator light shuts off before engaging the starter.
    - Once the vehicle has completed the start-up process, engage the starter.
- **Incline Management:** When climbing or descending steep mountain grades, do not let an automatic transmission constantly shift ("hunt" for gears), which causes overheating.
    - **Type A-1 Buses:** Manually shift the selector into a lower range (such as "2" or "3", or use the electronic button keypad to lock out higher gears) to secure stable engine braking.
    - **Small-Capacity Vehicles:** Depending on the vehicle capabilities, shift the transmission selector into Low (L) mode, switch to Manual (M) mode, and use the "+" and "-" toggle buttons on the shifter, or engage the "Tow/Haul" button if equipped to lock the torque converter and control your descent.
- **The Turning Prohibition:** Drivers are strictly prohibited from manually shifting transmission modes or adjusting gear ranges while actively executing a turn or traversing railroad or light rail tracks. Select the correct target gear range *before* commencing the maneuver to prevent stalling. Coasting in neutral is strictly illegal under Colorado law (Section 42-4-1009, C.R.S.) as it removes engine control and can damage the transmission.

Note: In the event that your vehicle is equipped with a manual transmission, double-clutching and shifting must be executed smoothly using the tachometer RPMs to guide gear transitions without losing sight of the road.

Safety Restraints

As the professional operator, you bear direct legal responsibility for safety compliance inside the cabin:

- **Driver Requirements:** Operators must have their safety belt fastened, worn correctly, and properly adjusted *prior* to placing the vehicle in motion.
- **Small-Capacity Passenger Rules (Under 10,000 lbs. GVWR):** All passengers riding in a small-capacity vehicle (SUVs, minivans, transit vans) must have their safety belts fastened and properly adjusted before the vehicle moves and must comply with all Colorado Child Passenger Safety Laws.
- **Type A-1 Bus Passenger Rules:** If a Type A-1 school bus or multifunction school activity bus is fully equipped with safety belts, all passengers are legally required to wear them correctly adjusted while the vehicle is in motion
- **Preschool Restraints:** Preschool-aged passengers must use an age-, weight-, and height-appropriate child safety restraint system (CSRS) when riding in any school transportation vehicle, pursuant to Colorado Child-Passenger Safety Laws (C.R.S. 42-4-236 and 42-4-237).
- **Passenger Constraints:** You are legally responsible for making sure every passenger wears their seat belt if the vehicle is equipped with seat belts. If the vehicle uses specialized Child Safety Restraint Systems (CSRS), they must be properly adjusted and secured according to manufacturer guidelines.

12.6.1 Seat Belts

(A) School Transportation Vehicle Operators:

(1) Shall have the safety belt fastened, worn correctly, and properly adjusted prior to the School Transportation Vehicle being placed in motion.

(B) School-Aged and Adult Passengers:

(1) All passengers in a School Transportation Vehicle under 10,000 lbs. GVWR shall have their safety belts fastened, worn correctly, and

properly adjusted prior to the School Transportation Vehicle being placed in motion.

(2) If a Type A-1 school bus or multifunction school activity bus is fully equipped with safety belts, all passengers shall have their safety belts fastened, worn correctly, and properly adjusted prior to the School Transportation Vehicle being placed in motion.

(C) Preschool Passengers:

(1) Shall use an age-, weight-, and height-appropriate child safety restraint system when riding in any School Transportation Vehicle.

(2) Pursuant to sections C.R.S. 42-4-236 and 42-4-237, all preschool-aged children riding in small-capacity vehicles shall use an appropriate child safety restraint system as required by the Colorado Child-Passenger Safety Law.

Stopping and Parking the Vehicle

When bringing the vehicle to its final stop at a terminal, school, or layover spot, you must secure it safely:

- Apply the parking brake firmly.
- Shift the transmission into Neutral or Park.
- Turn off all electrical accessories (wipers, radios, fans) to prevent draining the battery.
- Turn off the engine and remove the ignition key.
- **Secure the Vehicle:** Lock the service door and emergency exit door on a Type A-1 bus, or securely lock the driver, passenger, and rear doors on a small-capacity vehicle to prevent unauthorized entry.

PART 3: SPACE MANAGEMENT, SPEEDS, AND LANE POSITIONING

Operating a Type A-1 school bus or a small-capacity vehicle (SUV/minivan) demands a keen understanding of space and speed management. While these vehicles are smaller than 40-foot school buses, they are still heavier and have a higher center of gravity than standard passenger cars.

Following Distance Rules

Maintaining a protective envelope of space around your vehicle is your best defense against collisions.

- **The 4-to-5-Second Rule:** Under ideal weather conditions on a dry road, you must maintain a safe following distance based on your vehicle type:
    - **Type A-1 Buses:** Maintain at least a 4-second following distance. If traveling above 40 mph, add an extra second for added safety.
    - **Small-Capacity Vehicles (SUVs/Minivans):** Maintain a minimum 3-second following distance under ideal conditions, increasing this gap as speed and vehicle load increase.
- **When Stopped in Traffic:** Always stop far enough behind the car in front of you so that you can see its rear tires touching the pavement. This leaves a safety gap of about 15 feet, giving you room to steer around them if they break down or roll backward.

Managing Your Space and Roadway Position

Because of the sizes of the school transportation vehicles, maintaining lane position and space is imperative:

- **Understanding your width:** This was largely covered in Unit Two.
    - **Type A-1 Buses:** Typically span about 8 feet wide (expanding to approximately 9.5 to 10 feet when accounting for extended side mirrors and front crossover mirrors)**.**
    - **Small-Capacity Vehicles (SUVs/Minivans):** Typically span 6 to 7 feet wide (expanding to about 8 feet with standard side mirrors)**.**
- **Lane Centering:** Keep the vehicle perfectly centered within your travel lane. Avoid hugging the right shoulder line (which invites tire damage from road debris or forces you onto unpaved shoulders) or the left centerline (which increases the risk of mirror-to-mirror strikes with passing vehicles).
- **Roadway Position –** Staying to the Right (C.R.S. § 42-4-1001): Colorado law states that any vehicle proceeding at less than the normal speed of traffic under existing conditions must be driven in the right-hand lane:
    - While Type A-1 buses and SUVs accelerate faster than large transit buses, they can still become "slower traffic" when climbing steep mountain grades, dealing with adverse weather, or carrying a full passenger load. You must stay in the outermost (far-right) lane unless you are:
        - Preparing for an upcoming left turn.
        - Safely passing an even slower vehicle.

        - Avoiding a road hazard.
        - Complying with the Colorado Move-Over Law.
    - **The Slower Traffic Law (C.R.S. § 42-4-1001):** Colorado law states that any vehicle proceeding at *less than the normal speed of traffic* under existing conditions must be driven in the right-hand lane. Because school buses are large, heavy vehicles that accelerate slowly, especially when fully loaded or climbing steep mountain grades, they naturally fall under this requirement. To avoid blocking the flow of traffic, school bus operators must maintain lane discipline by staying in the outermost (far-right) lane.

- **Overhead Clearance Buffers:** Drivers must maintain continuous awareness of low bridges, overpasses, canopy roofs, and low-hanging tree branches. Always maintain a 12-inch safety buffer between the roof of your vehicle and any overhead structure.

- **Type A-1 Buses:** Typically stand 8.5 to 10 feet tall. You must be highly vigilant around low-clearance bridges, school canopies, and tree branches.

- **Small-Capacity Vehicles:** Typically stand 6 to 6.5 feet tall. While you will clear standard highway bridges easily, you must stay alert to low clearances in parking garages, bank or school drive-thrus, and low-hanging branches in residential neighborhoods

Managing Tailgaters

You cannot stop people from driving too close behind you, but you can reduce the danger:

- **Slow Down Gradually:** Drop your speed slightly. Traveling at a slower speed reduces the impact force if they hit you, and encourages them to pass you safely.
- **Increase Your Front Gap:** When someone tailgates you, increase your own following distance from the car *ahead* of you. This gives you a massive cushion so you will never have to brake suddenly, preventing the tailgater from slamming into your rear bumper.

The Basic Speed Law

The Colorado Basic Speed Law dictates that you must never drive faster than what is reasonable and prudent under the conditions then existing, regardless of the posted speed limit.

The "Reasonable and Prudent" Mandate:

"No person shall drive a vehicle on a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions then existing." – C.R.S. § 42-4-1101(1)

The term "reasonable" refers to a person who possesses sound judgment and acts in a fair and sensible manner. It is often used to describe a situation where no one with a sensible mind would object. Other synonyms include rational, logical, fair, fair-minded, just, and equitable.

"Prudent" refers to acting with care and thought for the future. For instance, no wise or well-judged money manager would authorize a loan without first knowing its purpose. Synonyms for "prudent" include "sensible" and "well-advised." It's important to keep in mind that the person determining whether your speed was reasonable and prudent is the one to pay attention to!

Even if you are driving *under* the posted speed limit, you can still be cited for a traffic violation if your speed is unsafe for current conditions. Factors that legally require you to reduce your speed include:

- Weather Hazards: Snow, ice, slush, heavy rain, or standing water.
- Visibility Restrictions: Dense fog, blowing dust, smoke, blinding sunlight, or driving at night in areas with poor lighting.
- Traffic Conditions: Heavy bumper-to-bumper congestion or construction zones.
- Roadway Topography: Steep mountain descents, narrow lanes, blind curves, or gravel surfaces.

The Duty to Decrease Speed for "Special Hazards"

The law explicitly states that a driver *must* proactively slow down from an otherwise lawful speed when a "special hazard" arises. The state defines special hazards as:

- Approaching or crossing an intersection or railroad crossing.
- Approaching and going around a sharp curve or cresting a hill.
- Traveling on a narrow or winding roadway.
- The presence of pedestrians, cyclists, highway maintenance workers, or emergency vehicles on the shoulder.

"Prima Facie" vs. Absolute Speed Limits

Colorado uses a prima facie speed limit system for its default limits. *Prima facie* means "at first glance" or "presumed." If you exceed a default limit, it is legally presumed that you were driving at an unreasonable and imprudent speed.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-1101. Speed Limits

(1) No person shall drive a vehicle on a highway at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions then existing.

(2) Except when a special hazard exists that requires a lower speed, the following speeds shall be lawful:

- 20 mph: Narrow, winding mountain highways or blind curves.
- 25 mph: Any designated business district.
- 30 mph: Any designated residential district.
- 40 mph: Open mountain highways.
- 55 mph: Open, unsurfaced, or two-lane highways, not on the interstate system.
- 65 mph: Four-lane surfaced freeways, expressways, and interstates.
- Any speed not in excess of a speed limit designated by an official traffic control device.
- (3) No driver of a vehicle shall fail to decrease the speed of such vehicle from an otherwise lawful speed to a reasonable and prudent speed when a special hazard exists with respect to pedestrians or other traffic or by reason of weather or highway conditions.

⚠️ The Absolute Maximum: No matter how perfect the conditions are, 75 mph is the absolute maximum legal speed limit anywhere in the State of Colorado. Neither CDOT nor local municipalities has the legal authority to authorize a speed zone higher than 75 mph.

Penalties for Violating the Basic Speed Law

If a law enforcement officer determines you were driving too fast for conditions (even if you were traveling below the posted limit), you can be cited for a Class A traffic infraction. This carries a base fine of $100, statutory court surcharges, and a mandatory assessment of 3 DMV points against your driver's license.

Speed Control and Total Stopping Distance

Driving at speeds incompatible with vehicle control is a leading cause of fatal crashes. Drivers must actively adjust their speed to match current driving conditions, including traction, curves, visibility, traffic density, and hills.

Understanding Total Stopping Distance

Total stopping distance is the cumulative distance a vehicle travels across multiple phases of driver and mechanical reaction.

For standard vehicles, the formula is:

Perception Distance + Reaction Distance + Braking Distance = Total Stopping Distance

- **Perception Distance:** The distance a vehicle travels from the moment a hazard comes into view until the driver's brain recognizes it. For an alert driver, average perception time is ¾ second. At 55 mph, this accounts for 60 feet of travel.
- **Reaction Distance:** The distance traveled from the moment the brain signals the foot to transition from the accelerator to the brake pedal. The average driver's reaction time is ¾ second, adding another 60 feet of travel at 55 mph.
- **Braking Distance:** The physical distance required for the vehicle to come to a complete stop once the brakes are applied. At 55 mph on dry pavement with properly functioning brakes, a heavy vehicle takes approximately 4.5 seconds and 170 feet to stop.

Total Stopping Distance Calculations (At 55 mph)

At 55 mph under ideal conditions, a heavy vehicle requires approximately **5 seconds** to stop, traversing a distance roughly equivalent to the length of a football field.

Hydraulic Brake Systems

Perception Distance (PD) + Reaction Distance (RD) + Braking Distance (BD) = Total Stopping Distance

60 ft + 60 ft + 170 ft = 290 feet

The Exponential Effect of Speed

High speeds drastically compound stopping distances due to the laws of physics. Whenever a vehicle's speed doubles, its required stopping distance and its destructive impact force increase fourfold.

Speed Management and Vehicle Control

Speed and Curves

Drivers must proactively adjust their speed before entering curves. Taking a curve too fast forces the vehicle to combat physics, resulting in one of two catastrophic outcomes:

- **Loss of Traction:** The tires slip, causing the vehicle to skid straight off the road.
- **Vehicle Rollover:** The tires maintain traction, but the centrifugal force flips the vehicle.

⚠️ **Important:** Keep in mind that vehicles with a high center of gravity (especially Type A-1 buses) can roll over at or below the posted advisory speed limit because those limits are calculated for standard passenger cars.

Safe Cornering Guidelines:

- **Slow Down Early:** Reduce your vehicle to a safe speed *before* entering the curve. Braking while already inside a curve disrupts vehicle stabilization and can trigger a jackknife or skid.
- **Never Exceed the Advisory Speed:** Treat the posted curve speed as a maximum threshold for ideal conditions.
- **Maintain Power:** Select a gear that allows for slight acceleration through the apex of the curve. This stabilizes the chassis and maintains tire traction.

Speed and Distance Ahead

A fundamental safety rule of driving is the ability to stop within the distance you can clearly see ahead.

- **Adverse Weather:** Fog, heavy rain, blinding snow, and dust require immediate speed reductions to ensure your stopping sight distance matches your total stopping distance.
- **Night Driving:** Your field of vision is significantly shorter when using low beams compared to high beams.
- **The Headlight Rule:** Never "outdrive" your headlights. If your total stopping distance at your current speed exceeds the reach of your headlight beams, you are driving blindly into potential hazards.

Speed and Traffic Flow

Drivers should strive to match the safe, legal flow of surrounding traffic. Maintaining a consistent speed and a safe following distance reduces points of conflict with other motorists.

Attempting to drive faster than the flow of traffic to "save time" is statistically ineffective and highly dangerous. Operating above the surrounding traffic speed results in:

- **Frequent Lane Changes:** Constantly passing other vehicles exponentially increases your risk of a collision.
- **Accelerated Driver Fatigue:** The intense mental focus required to weave through traffic causes rapid exhaustion, increasing the probability of a crash.

🚌 **Highway Speed Protocol:** When operating a bus on a highway with a posted speed limit of 75 mph, standard safety protocol dictates driving 5 mph to 10 mph below the maximum limit to account for vehicle mass and passenger safety.

Speed on Downgrades

Selecting an appropriate speed is the single most critical factor when descending long, steep grades safely.

Descending a steep grade too quickly forces you to overuse the service brakes, leading to extreme heat buildup and brake fade (where the hydraulic fluid boils or the brake pads overheat, resulting in a total loss of stopping power).

Mountain Descent Protocol:

1. **Plan Ahead:** Pay close attention to advanced warning signs indicating upcoming downhill grades and runaway truck ramps.
2. **Pre-Inspect:** Perform a quick brake check and monitor your air pressure gauges before starting down the hill.
3. **Downshift Early:** Shift the transmission into a lower gear *before* the descent begins. Utilize the engine's compression (or auxiliary retarders, if road conditions are dry) to control your speed, reserving the service brakes only for periodic, targeted slowing.

PART 4: ROAD MANEUVERS (TURNING & INTERSECTIONS)

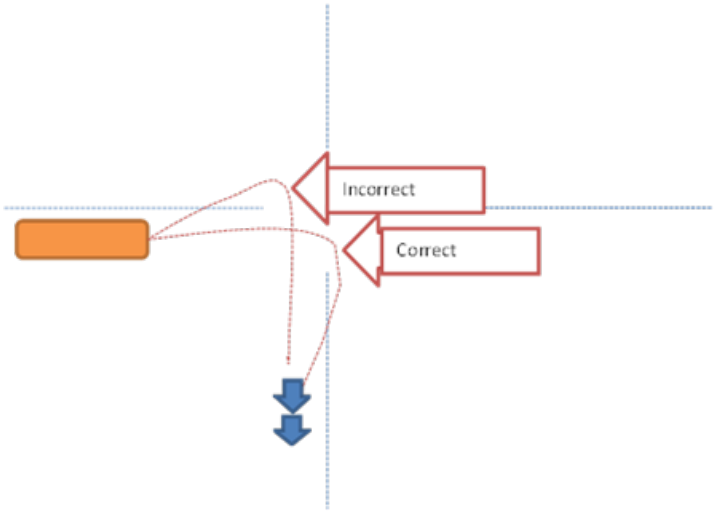
While Type A-1 buses and small-capacity vehicles handle similarly to standard passenger vans or large SUVs, they are still wider, taller, and heavier than standard

cars. Executing road maneuvers requires heightened visual scanning, crisp signaling, and an awareness of your vehicle's slightly larger footprint.

Executing a Right Turn

Type A-1 vehicles do not require a massive "swing wide" into adjacent lanes, but they do experience mild off-track (the rear wheels cutting closer to the curb than the front wheels). To prevent your rear tires from clipping the curb or a sidewalk light pole, use these steps:

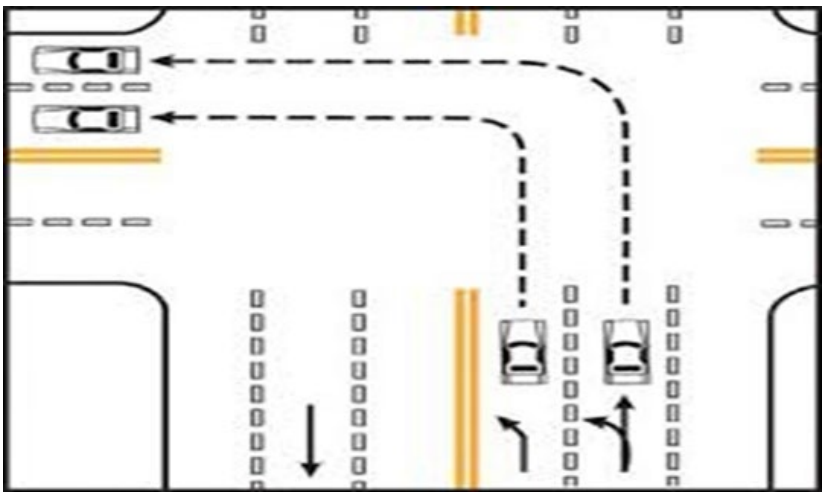
- Turn on your right turn signal 100 to 300 feet (or 3 to 5 seconds) before the turn.
- Keep the vehicle centered in your lane as you approach. Do not hug the left line, as smaller cars may misinterpret this and attempt to squeeze past you on the right.
- Drive straight into the intersection before starting your turn. Do not swing left into the adjacent lane before turning, as cars may try to squeeze under your right side.
- Watch your right-side flat and convex mirrors throughout the turn to ensure your rear tire comfortably clears the curb line.



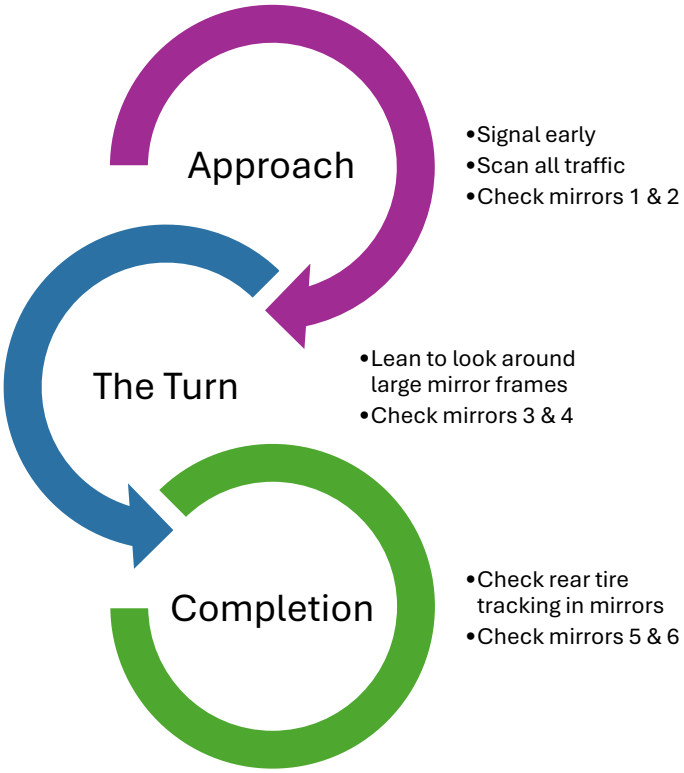
Executing a Left Turn

- Ensure your left turn signal is active at least 100 feet before the turn (or 200 feet if you are traveling faster than 40 mph).
- Drive forward until the front bumper reaches the center point of the intersection before turning the wheel. Turning too early will cause the left side of your vehicle to cut across oncoming traffic lanes.

- Check your left side mirror continuously during the turn to ensure your rear tires do not slide over the center line or clip cars waiting in the left-turn lane.
- Maintain your lane of travel when conducting left-hand turns.



Executing a Turn



Crossing Intersections Safely

Never assume you have the right-of-way.

- **Stale Green Lights:** If a traffic light has been green for a long time, treat it as a "stale green light"—take your foot off the gas pedal early and prepare to stop, as it will likely turn red before you arrive.

- **A-Pillar Blind Spots:** While small-capacity vehicles do not have massive commercial truck mirrors, the thick front windshield pillars (A-pillars) can easily hide pedestrians, cyclists, or small vehicles. Physically lean forward and shift your torso to peer around the pillars and side mirrors before entering an intersection.

- **Uncontrolled Intersections:** At a four-way stop or an uncontrolled crossing, yield to the vehicle that arrived first. If two vehicles arrive at the same time, yield to the driver on your right. Before entering any intersection, perform a Left-Right-Left visual sweep.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-802 Pedestrians' Right of Way in Crosswalks

(1) When traffic control signals are not in place or not in operation, the driver of a vehicle shall yield the right-of-way, slowing down or stopping if need be to so yield, to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within a crosswalk when the pedestrian is upon the half of the roadway upon which the vehicle is traveling or when the pedestrian is approaching so closely from the opposite half of the roadway as to be in danger.

Changing Lanes Safely

Never execute a lane change abruptly. Always perform the **M.S.M. Sequence**:

1. **M - Mirror Scan:** Check your flat and convex side mirrors to verify the target lane is completely clear.
2. **S - Signal Intent:** Actuate your turn signal at least 4 to 5 seconds before moving to give other drivers time to react.
3. **M - Maneuver:** Slide the vehicle smoothly into the target lane. Avoid jerky steering movements, and cancel the signal immediately upon clearing the lane line

Passing and Overtaking

Passing another vehicle in a small-capacity school bus requires deliberate planning due to the added weight of the passengers, which slows down your acceleration rates compared to a standard car:

- **The Scanning Buffer:** Only pass another vehicle if it is completely legal and necessary. Ensure you have a completely clear visual horizon ahead. Do not pass on two-lane roads near intersections, curves, hilltops, or railroad tracks.
- **The Clearing Margin:** Signal your lane changes at least 100 feet in advance (200 feet if traveling over 40 mph). When passing a slower vehicle, do not slide back into the right lane until you can clearly see the entire front bumper and both headlights of the passed vehicle in your interior rearview mirror or passenger-side flat mirror.

Navigating Roundabouts

Because Type A-1 buses possess a shorter wheelbase than large commercial vehicles, they generally fit within standard roundabout lanes without needing to use the concrete truck apron.

- **Speed Reduction:** Slow the vehicle to the posted advisory speed (typically 15 mph or slower) before entry.
- **Lane Discipline:** Choose the correct entry lane based on your intended exit. Maintain a centered lane position within the circulating loop. Do not ride up onto the inner concrete truck apron unless a rare, unusually tight geometry requires it.
- **Yield Priority:** Yield the right-of-way to any traffic already established inside the circulating loop before launching the vehicle into the roundabout.

Starting and Stopping on a Hill

- **Stopping on an Incline:** Bring the vehicle to a smooth, full stop. Keep your right foot firmly pressing the service brake pedal. If stopped for an extended period, shift to Park (or engage the parking brake) to prevent any potential rollback.
- **Launching Up-Grade:** As most Type A-1 and small-capacity vehicles feature automatic transmissions, use your right foot to transition smoothly from the brake to the accelerator. For steeper inclines, lightly apply the throttle to hold the vehicle's position against gravity an instant before completely releasing the brake pedal, ensuring the vehicle does not roll backward.

PART 5: REVERSE MANEUVERS (BACKING UP)

Backing up a school transportation vehicle is incredibly dangerous because the area behind the bus is a massive blind spot. CDE rules strictly prohibit backing up a school transportation vehicle when students are standing outside at a student loading stop.

Backing in a Straight Line

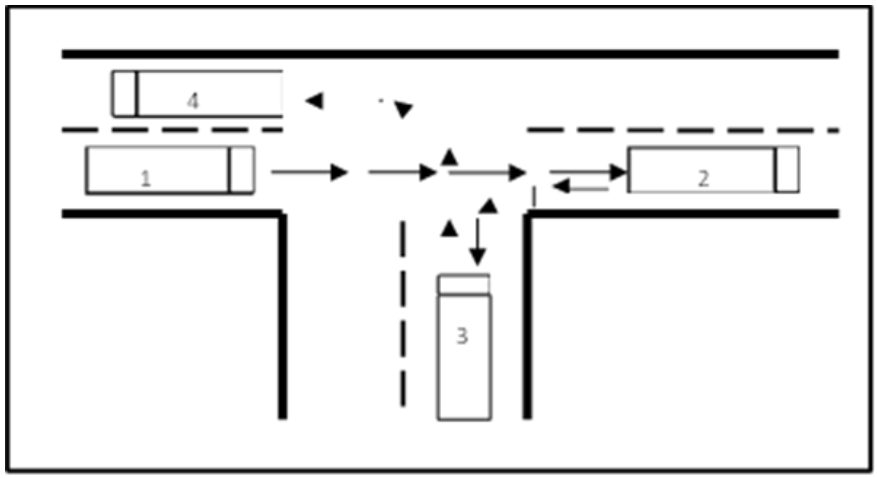
If straight-line backing is unavoidable, execute these safeguards:

- **The Physical Check:** Before stepping into the driver's seat, walk entirely around the rear bumper to confirm the path is clear.
- **Speed Controls:** Keep backing speeds down to a slow crawl (under 2 mph). Keep your foot hovering over the service brake pedal ("creeping"), and use your left and right flat mirrors to make small steering corrections.
- **Actuate Safeguards:** Turn on your four-way amber hazard flashers, tap your horn or ensure your backup alarm is sounding, and use an outside guide (spotter) whenever available.

Executing a Back-Up Turnaround (Y-Turn)

When a route requires a physical turnaround on a narrow roadway, perform the maneuver by backing into an intersection or side road, rather than backing out into main highway traffic:

- **Drive Past the Target Spot:** Signal your intent, drive past the side road entrance, and stop the bus along the right shoulder of the main highway.
- **Secure and Clear:** Activate your 4-way hazard lights and sound your horn. Check all mirrors thoroughly to confirm traffic has stopped.
- **Back into the Side Road:** Slowly reverse the vehicle, turning into the side road until the front bumper completely clears the main highway lane. Move at a slow, careful walking pace.
- **Re-Enter Traffic:** Deactivate your hazard lights, select first gear or Drive, activate your turn signal, and pull forward back onto the main roadway when clear.



PART 6: RAILROAD AND LIGHT RAIL TRACK CROSSINGS

Crossing railroad or light rail tracks is one of the most critical safety routines a school transportation operator performs. A mistake here can be catastrophic.

Because Type A school buses and Type A multifunction school activity buses (MFSABs) are built on cutaway van chassis and look like buses, they are legally classified as school buses under Colorado law. You must perform a full mandatory stop at all passive and active commercial railroad crossings, whether you are carrying passengers or driving empty.

“If it looks like a bus, it must stop.” Under 1 CCR 301-26, operators driving Type A buses must execute a complete stop at all crossings. Only drivers of non-bus small-capacity vehicles (standard SUVs, cars, or unmodified minivans) are exempt from stopping.

Railroad Crossings

Colorado Revised Statute 42-4-707

(1)

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, the driver of a school bus, as defined in subsection (5)(b) of this section, or the driver of a multifunction school activity bus, as defined in subsection (5)(a.5) of this section; the driver of a vehicle carrying hazardous materials that is required to be placarded in accordance with rules issued under section 42-20-108; or the driver of a commercial vehicle, as defined in section 42-4-235, that is transporting passengers, before crossing at grade any tracks of a railroad:

(I) Shall stop the vehicle within fifty feet but not less than fifteen feet from the nearest rail of the railroad;

(II) While stopped, shall listen and look in both directions along the track for any approaching train or on-track equipment or for signals indicating the approach of a train or on-track equipment; and

(III) Shall not proceed until the driver can do so safely.

(b) After stopping as required in this section and upon proceeding when it is safe to do so, the driver of a vehicle described in subsection (1)(a) of this section:

(I) Shall cross only if there is no necessity for changing gears while traversing the crossing; and

(II) Shall not manually shift gears while crossing the tracks.

A full mandatory stop is required at all passive and active commercial railroad crossings **UNLESS** one of the following conditions is legally met:

- The crossing is marked with an official "EXEMPT" sign.
- The crossing is actively regulated by a red/yellow/green traffic control signal (and the light is in the green position).
- Traffic is being manually directed by a police officer or a human flag person.

⚠️ **Important:** If none of these exemptions are present, a full stop is mandatory by law. If you are traversing an exempt or green-signal crossing, you must still reduce your speed, scan carefully in both directions, and be prepared to stop if conditions shift.

The Approach (Approx. 200 Feet Out)

As the bus approaches a commercial railroad crossing that requires a stop:

- **Signal Intentions:** Turn on your 4-way hazard lights at least **200 feet** prior to the nearest rail to give ample warning to motorists behind you.
- **Positioning:** Keep the bus as far to the right of the roadway as possible. Do not form two lanes of traffic unless the highway is specifically marked for four or more lanes of travel.
- **Do Not Coast:** Keep the vehicle firmly in gear; coasting in neutral or with the clutch disengaged during the approach is strictly prohibited.

- **Quiet the Bus:** Use a prearranged signal to alert all students to remain completely quiet. Turn off all noise-making equipment inside the cab, including the AM/FM radio, climate control fans, and heaters.

The Stop

- **Distance Requirements:** Bring the school bus to a full and complete stop. The front bumper must be positioned **no closer than 15 feet and no further than 50 feet** from the nearest rail.

- **Open and Observe:** Once a complete stop is made and student silence is achieved, fully open the driver's side window and the front passenger service door.

- **Look and Listen:** Physically look and listen in both directions along the track(s) for any approaching trains, on-track maintenance equipment, or warning signals. Use the "Rock and Roll" method (moving your torso forward and back) to clear your view around the bus mirrors and structural blind spots.

- **At Night:** Turn off the interior dome lights prior to making your observation to completely eliminate windshield reflection and glare.

The Containment Check ("If it won't fit, don't commit!")

Before deciding to cross, you must visually inspect the space on the other side of the tracks:

- Ensure there is adequate clearance and storage area on the opposite side of the train's right-of-way to hold the entire length of your bus, plus an additional 15 feet of safety buffer.

- If a traffic backup prevents you from clearing this threshold, do not proceed across the tracks, even if the signals or gates indicate it is clear.

- **Multi-Track Rule:** When crossing multiple sets of tracks, do not stop a second time unless the bus is completely clear of the first crossing and has at least 15 feet of clearance in both the front and the rear.

Crossing the Tracks

Once you have fully verified that the tracks are clear and the containment area is safe:

- **Close the Door:** The passenger service door must be completely closed before placing the bus in motion.

- **Select the Right Gear:** Shift the bus into a gear low enough to permit traversing the entirety of the tracks without needing to change gears mid-crossing.
- **Cross Without Shifting:** Proceed smoothly across the tracks. Manually shifting gears while crossing railroad tracks is strictly illegal under Colorado law to eliminate the risk of a stall.
- **Do Not Stop or Back Up:** Once you commit, never stop or attempt to back up the bus on a railroad crossing for any reason.
- **Deactivate Hazards:** Turn off your 4-way hazard lights only after the entire bus has completely cleared the final track.

15.0 Railroad Crossing Procedures

15.1 Mandatory Railroad Crossing Protocol for School Buses, Multifunction Buses, and Motor Coaches

15.1.1 Pursuant to C.R.S. 42-4-707, School Transportation Vehicle Operators of School Buses, Multifunction Buses, and Motor Coaches, whether transporting students or not, shall apply the following procedures during the process of approaching, stopping, and crossing railroad tracks.

(A) Activate the four-way hazard lamps not less than 200 feet from the railroad crossing to alert other motorists of the pending stop for the crossing;

(B) Stop the bus within 50 feet but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail of the railway;

(C) When stopped, the bus shall be as far to the right of the roadway as possible and shall not form two lanes of traffic unless the highway is marked for four or more lanes of traffic; and

(D) Use a prearranged signal to alert students to the need for quiet aboard the bus when approaching railroad tracks. Turn off all noise-making equipment (fans, heater, radio, etc.).

(E) After quietness aboard the stopped bus has been achieved, School Transportation Vehicle Operators

shall open the service door and operator window. The School Transportation Vehicle operator shall listen and look in both directions along the track(s) for any approaching train(s) and for signals indicating the approach of a train or on-track equipment.

(F) If the tracks are clear, the School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall close the service door and may then proceed in a gear low enough to permit crossing the tracks without having to manually shift gears. The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall cancel the four-way hazard lamps after the bus has cleared the tracks.

15.2 Clearance Requirements

15.2.1 Multi-track Crossings

(A) When two or more tracks are to be crossed, the School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall not stop a second time unless the bus is completely clear of the first crossing, with at least 15 feet clearance in the front and at least 15 feet clearance to the rear.

15.2.2 Storage Space

(A) Before crossing the tracks, the bus operator shall verify that there is enough space after the tracks for the bus plus 15 feet if it is necessary to stop after crossing the tracks.

15.3 Exceptions to Stop Requirements

15.3.1 School Transportation Vehicle Operators of Small-Capacity Vehicles are excepted from all requirements regarding railroad tracks.

15.3.2 School Transportation Vehicle Operators of School Buses, Multifunction Buses, and Motor Coaches are not required to stop at crossings controlled

(A) Only by a red, amber, or green traffic control signal when it is in the green position;

(B) Or when the crossing is controlled by a police officer or human flag person;

(C) Or when the crossing is marked with an official “exempt” sign placed on the railroad crossing light post or crossbucks post.

Light Rails

Light Rail Vehicles are six-axle, articulated, bi-directional rail vehicles powered by overhead electrical wires. Light rail tracks in and around downtown Denver pose extreme danger, and school transportation vehicle operators must exercise the highest level of caution when approaching, traveling alongside, or crossing them.

Unlike traditional railroad tracks, RTD light rail tracks are often located within the same roadway used by motorists. In many areas, the tracks run parallel to traffic and may operate with or against the normal flow of traffic. RTD light rail tracks also cross several major streets throughout the Denver area. Because Light Rail Vehicles can travel in either direction, operators must carefully observe all sets of tracks before proceeding. Even after one train has cleared a crossing, another train may be approaching on a different track.

Light Rail Vehicles are very quiet and may appear to be moving more slowly than they actually are. Each car weighs approximately 40 tons and is equipped with a bell, an emergency siren, and three bright lights visible from two to three blocks away. Two lights are located in the normal headlight positions, and the third is centered near the top of the vehicle. Light Rail Vehicles are also equipped with turn signals to indicate their direction of travel.

In most locations, there are no physical barriers, such as curbs or medians, separating vehicle traffic from the light rail tracks. The rails are set in concrete and are lighter in color than the surrounding asphalt; however, certain weather and lighting conditions can make this difference difficult to see. In some areas, tracks are located near parking areas, which may cause confusion for motorists regarding where vehicles may safely and legally park.

A yellow, diamond-shaped warning sign with a black symbol of a streetcar indicates the location of the LRV tracks. At intersections, or by the tracks, these signs have a black bi-directional arrow below the streetcar symbol. Before intersections, these signs have the term "AHEAD" below the streetcar symbol.



Before initiating a standard stop procedure, a driver must identify the layout of the light rail crossing. Per Colorado law, a full mandatory stop is **not** required if:

- The track is a "street railway" within a designated business district.
- Traffic at the crossing is actively regulated by a standard red/yellow/green traffic control signal (and the light is green).

⚠️ **Important:** Even if a stop is not legally mandated at a green-light traffic signal, the driver must still reduce speed, scan both directions, and be prepared to stop if the signal changes or an emergency arises. At all other light rail crossings (such as passive crossings or those with standard crossbucks/gates), the full stopping procedure below must be executed.

The Approach (Approx. 150–200 Feet Out)

Treat light rail crossings as a railroad crossing, except for the use of the hazard lights only when necessary, as they are not recommended or required. As the bus approaches a light rail crossing that requires a stop:

- **Decelerate:** Reduce the bus speed smoothly.
- **Signal Intentions:** Merge to the far-right lane as possible.
- **Do Not Coast:** Keep the vehicle in gear; coasting in neutral or with the clutch disengaged during an approach is strictly prohibited.
- **Quiet the Bus:** Turn off the AM/FM radio, climate control fans, and any other noisy equipment. Explicitly ask passengers to be silent so you can hear oncoming trains.

The Stop

- **If Required to Stop:** Flash the brake lights. Stopping on the tracks is unsafe and unlawful.
- **Positioning:** If required to stop, the front bumper must be no closer than 15 feet and no further than 50 feet from the nearest rail. Always observe the "Stop Here on Red" sign and the location of the white safety stripe (stop line) on the road surface.
- **Secure the Vehicle:** Keep your foot firmly pressed on the service brake to prevent rolling.
- **Look and Listen Light Controlled:** Traffic light-controlled intersections govern both the motorist and the LRV. Treat these intersections like any other traffic-controlled intersection. Look and listen in the appropriate directions for LRVs, motorists, and pedestrians before crossing the tracks.
- **Look and Listen Sign Controlled:** At stop sign-controlled intersections, the Colorado Department of Education recommends that a school bus operator, when stopped, open the driver's side window and service door. Look and listen in both directions for LRVs, motorists, and pedestrians. Close the service door before crossing the tracks.

The Containment Check ("If it won't fit, don't commit!")

Before deciding to cross, look across the tracks at the traffic flow ahead.

- You must ensure there is enough containment or storage area on the other side of the tracks to hold the entire length of your bus, plus an additional 15 feet of safety buffer.
- If traffic is backed up and you cannot fully clear the tracks into a safe zone on the other side, do not begin to cross, even if you have a green light or the gates are up.

PART 7: COMMUNICATIONS AND NIGHT OPERATIONS

Communicating clearly ensures your vehicle is visible and your intentions are understood in all driving environments.

Standard Headlights

You are required to operate your vehicle with the headlights on at all times, even during bright daylight hours. This increases your visibility to other motorists and helps

pedestrians spot your vehicle from a distance. Clean your headlights during your pre-trip check to ensure maximum visibility.

Roof-Mounted White Strobe Lights – If Equipped

Under Colorado rules, this light is not meant for regular, clear-weather driving. You are permitted to use the roof strobe light only when:

- Your vehicle creates an unusual hazard for other motorists.
- You are loading or unloading students during severe, inclement weather (such as heavy fog, blinding snow, or dense rain).
- Structural barriers (like a sharp mountain ridge or a blind curve) block the view of oncoming traffic, and the strobe is needed to help other drivers see the bus.
- Your vehicle has broken down or is moving at a speed of 25 miles per hour or slower, in which case the strobe can be paired with your four-way hazard flashers to warn traffic.

12.2.3 Strobe Lamp Usage

(A) Roof-mounted strobe lamps are permitted only to:

(1) Enhance visibility of the School Transportation Vehicle when visibility is reduced to 1000 feet or less due to lighting or unfavorable atmospheric conditions.

(2) Warn other motorists in conjunction with four-way hazard lamps when the School Transportation Vehicle is traveling at 25 mph or less or is stationary and presents a hazard to traffic.

(3) Enhance visibility while the School Transportation Vehicle is performing safety-sensitive functions.

Required Use of Hazard Warning Lights

Colorado state safety rules dictate specific conditions when an operator must activate their four-way amber hazard flashers:

- Whenever the vehicle is traveling at a speed of 25 mph or slower on a public highway.
- When the vehicle is stopped or disabled on the roadway due to a mechanical breakdown, medical emergency, or severe weather conditions.
- As a warning when approaching any railroad track crossing or preparing to execute a back-up turnaround maneuver.

Horns, Warning Devices, and Communicating

- **The Horn Rule:** The horn is a safety tool, not an instrument for venting anger. Use a quick, gentle tap ("city blow") to alert pedestrians or drivers who aren't paying attention at intersections or backing lanes. Avoid holding the horn down, as other drivers can tune it out.
- **Non-Verbal Safety Communication:** Use your brake lights early to warn drivers behind you that you are slowing down. Never use hand gestures to wave another driver across an intersection, as this can make you legally liable if they pull out into an unseen collision.

Advanced Driving at Night

Night driving brings unique safety challenges because visibility drops significantly:

- **The Low-Beam Target:** Switch your high beams to low beams within 500 feet of an oncoming vehicle or within 300 feet of a vehicle you are trailing.
- **Glare Mitigation:** To keep from being blinded by oncoming high beams, look down toward the right fog line (or white shoulder line) of your lane rather than staring directly into the glare.

PART 8: TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES AND SIGNAGE

A professional school transportation operator must maintain absolute compliance with all official traffic control devices, signs, signals, pavement markings, and delineation systems. These infrastructure elements dictate legal right-of-way, establish speed parameters, and provide predictive data regarding upcoming roadway profiles or hidden roadside obstructions. The primary legal classifications of signage and road markers require distinct operational postures and mechanical adjustments.

Driving Through Road Warnings

Warning signs give you time to prepare for what's coming.

- **Curves and Turns:** When you see a curve sign, slow down *before* you enter the turn. Type A buses are top-heavy, and going into a curve too fast can cause the bus to lean dangerously or slide.
- **Roads Getting Narrower:** If lanes merge or a bridge is narrow, check your mirrors immediately to make sure you have enough space around your vehicle.

- **Roundabouts:** Watch the signs early to choose the correct lane before you enter. Once your vehicle is inside a roundabout, never stop. Keep moving smoothly until you reach your exit.

Sign Shapes and Colors: What They Mean at a Glance

Traffic signs are color-coded and shaped differently so you can recognize them instantly, even from far away or in bad weather.

SHAPE	COLOR	WHAT IT MEANS
Octagon (8-sided)	Red	You must bring the vehicle to a complete stop behind the white line.
Triangle (Pointing Down)	Red and White	Yield. Slow down and watch for other traffic or hazards.
Diamond	Yellow and Black	Warning. This warns you of a hazard or a change in the road ahead.
Pentagon (5-sided)	Bright Yellow-Green	School zone or school crossing. Watch closely for children
Pennant (Flag-shaped)	Yellow and Black	No Passing Zone. This is placed on the left side of the road to indicate that passing is unsafe.
Vertical Rectangle	White	Laws and Rules. These tell you the speed limit or which lane you must turn from.
Horizontal Rectangle	Green or Blue	Directions and Information. Green tells you where the exits and towns are. Blue tells you where services like hospitals are.
Round	Yellow and Black	Railroad crossing ahead
Standardized shapes	Orange and Black	Construction, utility, and maintenance zones signify a highly volatile roadway environment.

Types of Signs

Regulatory

Regulatory signs inform highway users of traffic laws or regulations. Regulatory signs are used to control speeds, such as maximum and minimum speed limits and turning movements. For example, you may recognize these signs with a red circle and a slash mark, which means “no” or “do not.” Regulatory signs control parking. When parking is prohibited, the parking signs have red lettering, such as “No Parking at Any Time,” “No Stopping, Standing, or Parking,” or “No Parking, Bus Stop.” When parking is permitted, the lettering is green, such as “One Hour Parking.”

Regulatory signs can also supplement information given by traffic signals, such as “Stop Here on Red” or “Crosswalk.” Finally, regulatory signs are used for a variety of other controls, such as providing the axle weight limit (GVWR) or “Road Closed to Through Traffic.”

Warning Signs

Warning signs inform the driver of situations ahead that may require extra care. Warning signs can show changes in horizontal alignments, such as turns, curves, and winding roads. Distinct types of intersections ahead are indicated symbolically. These signs can indicate a crossroads or a “T” or “Y” intersection. Advance warnings for traffic control devices can be provided. Warning signs can also indicate highway grades, advance warning of railroad crossings, and roadway surface conditions, such as bumps, soft shoulders, and slippery conditions. They also show various kinds of entrances and crossings, such as truck entrances, deer crossings, and bicycle crossings.

Guide Signs

Guide signs are the third major classification of traffic signs. They guide drivers along streets and highways, inform them of intersecting routes, or direct them to their destination, be it a city, river, park, or similar type of destination. On conventional roads and streets, black messages on white backgrounds are frequently used as an alternative. Two of the most typical guide signs are the familiar destination and mileage signs. On some interchanges, symbolic destination signs are used.

Mileposts are another form of guide sign. Mileage always runs from south to north or west to east and begins at the state line or at a junction where the route begins. Guide signs are also used to show the locations of airports, bus stations, and train stations.

Electronic Traffic Signals: Lights and Arrows

Traffic lights change colors to safely separate the flow at intersections. Because a bus takes longer to accelerate and stop, you must always look ahead to see what the light is doing.

- **Steady Red Light:** Stop completely behind the painted stop line or crosswalk. Remain stopped until the light changes to green.
- **Steady Yellow Light (The "Stale" Light):** The light is about to turn red. If you have not reached the intersection yet, you must slow down and stop safely. Never speed up a heavy bus to try and "beat" a yellow light. If you are already *inside* the intersection when the light turns yellow, continue through smoothly.
- **Steady Green Light:** Go, but proceed with caution. Always look left, right, and ahead before entering the intersection to make sure a cross-traffic car isn't running its red light.
- **Flashing Red Light:** Treat this exactly like a stop sign. Come to a complete stop, look all ways, yield to traffic already there, and proceed when it is safe.
- **Flashing Yellow Light:** Proceed with caution. You do not need to stop, but you must slow down, scan for hazards, and be ready to brake if someone pulls out in front of you.
- **Red Arrow:** You are strictly prohibited from turning or moving in the direction of the arrow.
- **Green Arrow:** You have a "protected" turn. This means oncoming traffic has a red light, and you can safely make your turn. However, you must still watch for pedestrians in the crosswalk.
- **Flashing Yellow Arrow:** You may turn in the direction of the arrow, but you *do not* have the right-of-way. You must yield to all oncoming traffic and pedestrians first, then turn when there is a safe gap.

Painted Road Markings: Lines and Stripes

The painted lines on the asphalt tell you where you are allowed to position your bus and when it is legal to change lanes.

Yellow Lines (Separate traffic moving in opposite directions)

- **Broken (Dotted) Yellow Line:** You may cross this line to pass a slower vehicle if it is safe to do so.

- **Double Solid Yellow Lines:** Passing is strictly prohibited for vehicles traveling in both directions. You must stay in your lane.
- **Solid Yellow Line Next to a Broken Yellow Line:** Look at the line closest to your bus. If the line closest to you is broken, you may pass if it's safe. If the line closest to you is solid, you are in a **No Passing Zone** and must stay in your lane.

White Lines (Separate traffic moving in the same direction, or mark the road edge)

- **Broken (Dotted) White Line:** This separates lanes of traffic moving the same way. You may safely cross this line to change lanes after checking your mirrors and turning on your signal.
- **Solid White Line:** This is a lane boundary where lane changes are discouraged because it is a higher-risk area (like right before an intersection or inside a tunnel). You should stay in your lane unless it is an emergency.
- **Double Solid White Lines:** Changing lanes is completely illegal. You must remain in your lane.
- **Solid White Edge Line (Fog Line):** This marks the outer right edge of the drivable road surface. It helps you see where the shoulder begins during heavy rain or at night.

Special Intersection Markings

- **Stop Lines (Solid White Bars):** These are wide white lines painted across your lane at intersections and stop signs. You must stop *behind* this line so that the front bumper of your bus does not protrude into cross traffic or block walking paths.
- **Crosswalks (White Parallel Lines or Zebra Stripes):** These are dedicated zones for pedestrians. You must never stop the bus on top of a crosswalk, forcing walkers into traffic. Always yield to pedestrians inside these lines.
- **White Lane Arrows:** Some lanes have white arrows painted directly on the pavement (such as a straight arrow combined with a left-turn arrow). You must follow the direction of the arrow painted in your lane.

Delineators

A “Delineator” is a retro-reflective device mounted above the roadway surface and along the side of the roadway in a series to indicate the alignment of the roadway, especially at night or in adverse weather. Below are some specifics on delineators.

- **Delineator Posts:** Posts that are interstate green with colored reflectors. They are in elevated-risk and informational areas of roadways to convey a variety of messages to motorists.

- **Delineator Panels**: Retro-reflective panels that are striped markers consisting of a vertical rectangle with alternating black and yellow stripes sloping downward at an angle of 45 degrees toward the side of the obstruction on which traffic is to pass. These types of delineators can be seen at the end of guardrails, on bridges, etc.

Delineator Color Combinations

- **White Delineators:** These mark the right side of the road.

- **Amber or Yellow Delineators:** These mark the left edge of a divided highway or median.

- **Three Vertically Stacked Amber (Yellow) Front Delineators:** These are called "Object Markers." They tell you there is a solid physical hazard—like a concrete bridge wall or a large drainage pipe—right next to the road. The post is placed exactly where the object starts, letting you know just how close your bus can safely get.

- **Two White Front and One Red Rear Delineators:** These are designed to warn motorists of acceleration and deceleration lanes ahead. The red reflector warns motorists of the wrong way.

- **Two Amber (Yellow) Front and One Red Rear Delineators:** These are normally installed in medians for left-turn deceleration lanes.

- **Blue Front Delineators or Blue Reflective Panels On Interstates:** These mean two things. First, a double blue reflector warns emergency vehicles that a median crossover (a gap where police and snowplows can turn around) is 500 feet ahead. Second, they mark the joints on a bridge so that snowplow drivers know where to raise their blades to avoid damaging it. Bus drivers are legally prohibited from using these median turnarounds.

- **Blue Front Delineators or Blue Reflective Panels on Local Roads:** These show the exact location of a fire hydrant or water main. Never park or idle the bus in front of a blue marker, as emergency crews must have clear access to the water.

- **Three Green Front Delineators:** These are for Department of Transportation maintenance workers. These are installed in front of approaching guardrails with flare ends, not on bridges. They can be found in front of curb heads.

- **Red Delineators:** When a red delineator or red reflective panel is used on a roadway, it serves an immediate, critical warning function: it indicates danger, a strict prohibition, or a wrong-way condition.

    - If you see red reflectors on the pavement or on the side posts, you have accidentally entered an exit ramp or are driving against oncoming traffic. The immediate professional action required is to safely pull over, stop, and turn the vehicle around.

    - On steep mountain passes, red delineators or red reflective panels are used at the very back or upper limits of a runaway truck ramp to mark the final boundary of the safety gravel bed and warn drivers of the impending end of the escape lane.

    - Red delineators are often placed on barricades or posts at the physical end of a street to warn drivers at night that the road does not continue.

    - When configured as a group of reflectors on a post immediately adjacent to a bridge or guardrail approach, a red or red-and-white striped panel (known as an object marker) warns drivers of a fixed structural hazard. It outlines the exact lateral clearance limit of an obstruction on the right shoulder, telling a long-wheelbase vehicle precisely how far it can maneuver before striking a physical barrier.

PART 9: TRAVEL HAZARDS, ROAD RAGE, AND ASSOCIATED LAWS

Hazards on the Road

Professional drivers must actively spot and handle three main types of en route hazards:

- **Work Zones:** Slow down immediately when entering road construction zones. Watch for lane shifts, uneven pavement, and flaggers holding stop paddles.
- **Pedestrian/Bicycle Incursions:** Give bicyclists at least a **3-foot safety buffer** when passing them on the shoulder. Watch closely for children running into the street near parks, schools, and apartment complexes.

- **Roadway Debris:** If you spot debris like blown truck tires or boxes in your lane, check your mirrors before braking hard or swerving. If you cannot change lanes safely, slow down as much as possible to glide over the debris without damaging your air lines or steering systems.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-802 Pedestrians' Right-of-Way

(1) When traffic control signals are not in place or not in operation, the driver of a vehicle shall yield the right-of-way, slowing down or stopping if need be to so yield, to a pedestrian crossing the roadway within a crosswalk when the pedestrian is upon the half of the roadway upon which the vehicle is traveling or when the pedestrian is approaching so closely from the opposite half of the roadway as to be in danger.

Road Rage and Emotional Regulation

Because your vehicle represents your school district or organization, your reactions are constantly being watched, recorded, and judged by your passengers, surrounding motorists, and the general public. Managing your own emotional state is just as critical to safety as managing the vehicle's mechanics.

Understanding the "Fishbowl Effect"

Aggressive driving from the public is an unfortunate reality, but as a professional operator, you must maintain a wall of emotional detachment.

- **An Asymmetric Risk:** An aggressive driver is only risking their personal vehicle; you are carrying up to dozens of student lives. Winning a traffic dispute is never worth the risk of an emergency braking event or a collision.
- **The Power of the Phone:** Assume that every action you take, facial expression you make, or hand gesture you use is being recorded by a surrounding motorist's dashcam or a student's smartphone.

De-Escalation Tactics for the Road

If a motorist cuts you off, tailgates your bumper, flashes their high beams, or honks aggressively, utilize these immediate de-escalation strategies:

- **Break Eye Contact:** Do not look directly at the aggressive driver, glare in your mirrors, or acknowledge their behavior. Eye contact is often interpreted by angry drivers as an invitation to escalate.
- **Zero Gestures:** Keep both hands firmly on the steering wheel. Never wave, throw up your hands in frustration, or use defensive hand signs. Even a casual

"apology wave" can sometimes be misinterpreted as a hostile gesture by an enraged driver.

- **Create a Space Cushion:** If a driver is tailgating you aggressively, slowly ease off the accelerator to increase the tracking distance between your bus and the vehicle ahead of you. This gives you more room to stop smoothly, preventing the tailgater from rear-ending you if you have to brake.
- **Let Them Pass:** If an aggressive driver is trapped behind you, do not slow down deliberately to "teach them a lesson." Instead, activate your turn signal early, safely transition to the right lane, or find a safe, designated pull-out area to let them pass completely.

Emergency Protocol: Active Aggression & Stalking

If an aggressive driver moves past simple frustration and begins actively targeting your vehicle, threatening your passengers, or intentionally blocking your route, execute the following emergency protocol immediately:

- **Contact Dispatch Instantly:** Use your fleet radio or hands-free system to alert dispatch. State your exact location, direction of travel, and a description of the hostile vehicle (make, model, color, and license plate if safely visible). Request immediate law enforcement intervention.
- **Protect Your Passengers:** Do not open the passenger service door under any circumstances. Instruct your students to drop below the window line if the driver is exhibiting erratic, volatile behavior alongside your bus.
- **Never Drive Home or to a Scheduled Stop:** If the vehicle is actively following your route, do not pull over at a regular student drop-off zone or return to the bus depot. Doing so brings a dangerous individual directly to children and staff.
- **Reroute to a Safe Zone:** Keep your doors locked, keep the vehicle moving if safe to do so, and alter your route to drive directly toward the nearest police station, fire station, or heavily populated, well-lit public area.

Colorado Hands-Free Law

In a move to enhance road safety and reduce distracted-driving crashes, a new Colorado law that took effect in 2025 prohibits drivers from using a mobile electronic device while driving, though hands-free accessories are permitted. The law expands the ban on using cellphones beyond just texting. It now includes holding or manually using a phone or other mobile device for voice calls or any other reason, requiring all drivers to use a hands-free device.

The law includes exemptions for individuals reporting emergencies, utility workers, code enforcement officers, animal protection officers, first responders, and individuals in parked vehicles. The law also does not apply to an individual with a commercial driver's license operating a commercial vehicle. These exceptions ensure that critical communications are not hindered in emergency or essential service situations.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-239 Use of a Mobile Electronic Device

(4)

(a) Except as provided in subsection (4)(b) of this section, an individual who violates this section commits a class A traffic infraction, and the court shall assess a penalty as follows:

(I) A fine of $75.00 and a surcharge of $10.00 for the first offense within the immediately preceding 24 months;

(II) A fine of $150.00 and a surcharge of $10.00 dollars for the second offense within the immediately preceding 24 months; or

(III) A fine of $250.00 and a surcharge of $10.00 for the third or subsequent offense within the immediately preceding 24 months.

(5) This section does not apply to an individual with a commercial driver’s license who is operating a commercial vehicle.

Colorado Move Over Law

Roadside spaces are incredibly dangerous environments. Colorado State Patrol and CDOT records demonstrate that roadside crashes are among the most preventable secondary collisions on public highways. As a school transportation operator, you must strictly comply with Colorado’s "Slow Down, Move Over" statutes to protect emergency personnel, maintenance crews, and disabled motorists.

The Full-Coverage Mandate (HB 23-1123 Expansion)

Historically, Move Over laws applied exclusively to police cars, fire engines, ambulances, and tow trucks. Under current Colorado law, the Move Over law applies to ALL stationary vehicles parked on the side of the road with their hazard lights flashing**.** You must afford the exact same defensive space cushion and speed reductions to a disabled private passenger car or a stranded box truck that you would provide to a marked state patrol cruiser.

Step-by-Step Compliance

When you spot any vehicle stopped on the shoulder or roadside ahead with emergency lights, flashing strobes, or 4-way amber hazard lights activated, you must execute the following sequence:

- **Step 1: Move Over Safely (The Primary Goal):** If you are traveling on a highway with at least two lanes moving in your direction (such as an interstate or divided highway), you must perform a safe lane change to vacate the lane immediately next to the stopped vehicle. This leaves a full empty buffer lane between your bus and the workers or motorists.
- **Step 2: The Mandatory Speed Drop (If You Cannot Clear the Lane):** If heavy traffic gridlock makes it unsafe to switch lanes, or if you are operating on a narrow, two-lane road with only one lane in each direction, you are legally required to significantly lower your speed as you pass:
    - On roads with a posted speed limit under 45 mph, you must slow down to a maximum of 25 mph.
    - On roads with a posted speed limit of 45 mph or higher, you must drop your speed by at least 20 mph below the posted limit. *(For example, in a 65 mph zone, you must pass the scene at 45 mph or slower).*

Statutory Penalties and Driver Accountability

Failing to slow down or move over is a serious traffic offense in Colorado. Because you are operating a large student transportation vehicle, you are held to the highest standard of accountability:

- **Standard Non-Compliance:** A standard ticket for failing to move over or slow down is a Class 2 misdemeanor traffic infraction, carrying a minimum $150 fine and a 3-point deduction against your commercial or standard driver's license.
- **Bodily Injury Escalation:** If an operator fails to comply with the Move Over law and causes bodily injury to someone on the roadside, the charge upgrades to a Class 1 misdemeanor, punishable by fines up to $5,000 and 6 to 18 months in jail.
- **Fatal Escalation:** If non-compliance results in a roadside fatality, the operator faces a Class 6 Felony prosecution, bringing mandatory prison sentences and catastrophic personal liability.

Defensive Rule: Never panic or swerve blindly into an adjacent lane when seeing roadside hazard lights. Scan your mirrors early, activate your turn signal to warn trailing

traffic of your intent to shift over, and begin reducing your speed smoothly ahead of time if the adjacent lane is blocked.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-705 Operation of a Vehicle Approached by an Emergency Vehicle or the Operation of a Vehicle Approaching a Stationary Vehicle

(1) Upon the immediate approach of an authorized emergency vehicle making use of audible or visual signals meeting the requirements of section 42-4-213 or 42-4-222, the driver of every other vehicle shall yield the right-of-way and where possible shall immediately clear the farthest left-hand lane lawfully available to through traffic and shall drive to a position parallel to, and as close as possible to, the right-hand edge or curb of a roadway clear of any intersection and shall stop and remain in that position until the authorized emergency vehicle has passed, except when otherwise directed by a police officer.

(2)

(a) A driver in a motor vehicle shall exhibit due care and caution and proceed as described in subsections (2)(b) and (2)(c) of this section when approaching or passing:

(I) A stationary authorized emergency vehicle, including a port of entry vehicle, that is giving a visual signal by means of flashing, rotating, or oscillating red, blue, or white lights as permitted by section 42-4-213 or 42-4-222;

(II) A stationary towing carrier vehicle that is giving a visual signal by means of flashing, rotating, or oscillating yellow lights;

(III) A stationary public utility service vehicle that is operated by a public utility, as defined in section 39-4-101 or 40-1-103, or an authorized contractor of the public utility and that is giving a visual signal by means of flashing, rotating, or oscillating amber lights; or

(IV) A stationary motor vehicle giving a hazard signal by displaying alternately flashing lights or displaying warning lights.

(b) On a highway with at least two adjacent lanes proceeding in the same direction on the same side of the highway where a stationary vehicle described in subsection (2)(a) of this section is located, the driver of an approaching or passing vehicle shall proceed with due care and caution and yield the right-of-way by moving into a lane at least one moving lane apart from the stationary vehicle described in subsection (2)(a) of this section unless directed otherwise by a peace officer or other authorized

emergency personnel. If movement to an adjacent moving lane is not possible due to weather, road conditions, or the immediate presence of vehicular or pedestrian traffic, the driver of the approaching motor vehicle shall proceed in the manner described in subsection (2)(c) of this section.

(c)

(I) On a highway that does not have at least two adjacent lanes proceeding in the same direction on the same side of the highway where a stationary vehicle described in subsection (2)(a) of this section is located, or if movement by the driver of the approaching motor vehicle into an adjacent moving lane, as described in subsection (2)(b) of this section, is not possible, the driver of an approaching motor vehicle shall reduce and maintain a safe speed with regard to the location of the stationary vehicle described in subsection (2)(a) of this section; weather conditions; road conditions; and vehicular or pedestrian traffic and proceed with due care and caution, or as directed by a peace officer or other authorized emergency personnel.

(II) For the purposes of this subsection (2)(c), the following speeds are presumed to be safe unless the speeds are unsafe for the conditions as provided in section 42-4-1101 (1) and (3):

(A) If the speed limit is less than forty-five miles per hour, twenty-five miles per hour or less; or

(B) If the speed limit is forty-five miles per hour or more, twenty miles per hour less than the speed limit.

(2.5)

(a) A driver in a vehicle that is approaching or passing a maintenance, repair, or construction vehicle that is moving at less than twenty miles per hour shall exhibit due care and caution and proceed as described in paragraphs (b) and (c) of this subsection (2.5).

(b) On a highway with at least two adjacent lanes proceeding in the same direction on the same side of the highway where a stationary or slow-moving maintenance, repair, or construction vehicle is located, the driver of an approaching or passing vehicle shall proceed with due care and caution and yield the right-of-way by moving into a lane at least one moving lane apart from the vehicle, unless directed otherwise by a peace officer or other authorized emergency personnel. If movement to an

adjacent moving lane is not possible due to weather, road conditions, or the immediate presence of vehicular or pedestrian traffic, the driver of the approaching vehicle shall proceed in the manner described in paragraph (c) of this subsection (2.5).

(c) On a highway that does not have at least two adjacent lanes proceeding in the same direction on the same side of the highway where a stationary or slow-moving maintenance, repair, or construction vehicle is located, or if movement by the driver of the approaching vehicle into an adjacent moving lane, as described in paragraph (b) of this subsection (2.5), is not possible, the driver of an approaching vehicle shall reduce and maintain a safe speed with regard to the location of the stationary or slow-moving maintenance, repair, or construction vehicle, weather conditions, road conditions, and vehicular or pedestrian traffic, and shall proceed with due care and caution, or as directed by a peace officer or other authorized emergency personnel.

(2.6) A driver in a vehicle that is approaching or passing a motor vehicle where the tires are being equipped with chains on the side of the highway shall exhibit due care and caution and proceed as described in subsection (2) of this section. The driver of a motor vehicle that is being equipped with chains shall give a hazard signal by displaying alternately flashing lights or displaying warning lights.

(3)

(a) Any person who violates subsection (1) of this section commits a class A traffic infraction.

(b)

(I) Except as otherwise provided in subsections (3)(b)(II) and (3)(b)(III) of this section, any person who violates subsection (2), (2.5), or (2.6) of this section commits careless driving as described in section 42-4-1402.

(II) If the person violates subsection (2) of this section and the person's actions are the proximate cause of bodily injury to another person, the person commits a class 1 traffic misdemeanor.

(III) If the person violates subsection (2) of this section and the person's actions are the proximate cause of the death of another person, the person commits a class 6 felony and shall be punished as described in section 18-1.3-401.

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Unit Six – Adverse Weather and Mountain Driving

This unit covers driving techniques for navigating Colorado's mountain terrain and handling severe weather in a small-capacity or Type A-1 vehicle. Understanding how these elements affect a smaller bus allows you to make safe operational decisions, whether that means reducing speed, pulling over, or postponing a route or trip.

Safety isn't just a rule; it's your primary responsibility. Let's make sure you're prepared for whatever the Colorado sky throws at you.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-1902 School vehicle drivers – special training required

On and after July 1, 1992, the driver of a school vehicle as defined in section 42-1-102 (88.5) owned or operated by or for a school district in this state shall have successfully completed training concerning driving on mountainous terrain, as defined in section 42-4-1901 (3)(a), and driving in adverse weather conditions.

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING WEATHER WATCHES AND WARNINGS

The National Weather Service issues specific alerts to help you manage your routes. Because Type A-1 and small-capacity vehicles are lighter than standard buses, they are more susceptible to high winds, sudden icing, and changing mountain conditions.

Weather Watch: Be Prepared

A watch means hazardous weather is possible, but the exact timing, location, or severity is still uncertain.

- **When it’s issued:** Usually 12 to 48 hours in advance to give you time to set plans in motion.
- **What you should do:** Monitor local radar and dispatch alerts. Review your route for potential problem areas (like high-wind bridges or flood-prone canyons) and ensure your vehicle’s emergency kit is fully stocked.

Weather Advisory: Be Aware

An advisory means hazardous weather is occurring, imminent, or highly likely. These conditions cause significant inconvenience and require extra caution, but they are not immediately life-threatening if you adjust your driving.

- **When it's issued:** When weather starts impacting road conditions (e.g., light freezing drizzle, blowing snow, or minor flooding).
- **What you should do:** Slow down, increase your following distance, and turn on your headlights. Alert dispatch if road conditions begin deteriorating on your route.

Weather Warning: Take Action

A warning means severe, hazardous weather is occurring or imminent. These conditions pose an immediate threat to life and property.

- **When it's issued:** When there is an 80% or greater probability of severe weather.
- **What you should do:** Take immediate protective action. If you are on a route, look for a safe place to pull over, delay departure from the school, or coordinate with dispatch to alter or cancel the run. Do not drive a small-capacity vehicle into a warning area.

PART 2: DRIVING IN HIGH WINDS AND TORNADOES

Wind

Intense winds pose a severe hazard to school vehicles. Because Type A-1 buses are lighter and have a shorter wheelbase than standard buses, they can be easily buffeted, pushed off course, or destabilized by sudden gusts.

- **Sideways Thrust:** Strong crosswinds exert intense lateral pressure on the flat sides of the vehicle, making steering difficult and threatening to push the bus or vehicle out of its lane. Overcompensating with aggressive steering adjustments can cause vehicles to roll over or lose traction.
- **Flying Debris:** High winds can launch tree branches, rocks, and debris into your travel path, risking windshield damage or passenger injury.
- **High-Risk Zones:** Winds often spike dramatically along open plains, straightaways, and right before a major weather front shifts. Always exercise extreme caution when:
    - Crossing bridges and overpasses.
    - Navigating between deep mountain cuts or hills.

- Exiting tunnels.
- Passing high-profile vehicles, which can create a sudden vacuum or blast of air.

Tips for Driving in Intense Winds

- **Grip:** Maintain a firm, two-handed grip on the steering wheel at all times to counter sudden pushes. Anticipate gusts when emerging from wind blocks
- **Reduce Speed:** Immediately slow down to reduce the aerodynamic lifting forces on the vehicle and improve steering control.
- **Pull Over:** If the vehicle becomes difficult to keep in its lane, find a safe, solid shoulder, parking lot, or side road away from trees and power lines, and wait out the storm.
- **Communication:** Contact your dispatch or school administration immediately to report your location and the conditions and to receive further instructions.
- **Monitor Surroundings:** Watch for downed power lines and sudden drops in visibility caused by blowing dust, sand, rain, or snow.
- **Prepare:** Always be prepared for the unexpected.

Tornadoes

A tornado is a violently rotating column of air. In the northern hemisphere, tornadoes rotate counterclockwise. They develop in warm, moist air before an eastward-moving cold front. Most tornadoes move from southwest to northeast. The average forward speed of a tornado is 30 mph, but it can be up to 70 mph.

When the temperature is between 65 and 84 degrees and the dew point is above 50, the dangers of a tornado are at their highest. Tornadoes often accompany severe thunderstorms.

Tornadoes are common in eastern Colorado. Though rare, tornadoes are possible in the mountains, foothills, and western valleys.

Tornado Signs

- Dark, greenish-colored sky
- Sudden, large hail

- Wall cloud or funnel cloud

Many say a tornado sounds like a freight train approaching. If it does not appear to be moving, a tornado may be coming toward you. If you spot a tornado while operating a route, your primary objective is passenger safety:

- **Seek Permanent Shelter:** If a sturdy building is nearby, safely park the vehicle, evacuate the passengers inside, and move to an interior room or basement away from windows. Instruct passengers to sit, curl up, and cover their heads with their hands.

- **Evacuate to Low Ground (If trapped):** If you are in the direct path of a tornado and no building shelter is available, evacuate the vehicle immediately if ordered or if impact is imminent. Escort passengers to a nearby ditch, culvert, or ground depression.

- **Position Safely:** Direct all passengers to lie face down on the ground with their hands covering their heads. Ensure the evacuation zone is far enough away from the bus so the vehicle cannot topple onto the group.

- **Hazards to Avoid:** Stay clear of areas prone to flash flooding. Never seek shelter under a highway bridge or overpass as these structures act as natural wind tunnels, accelerating wind speeds and collecting flying debris.

Downbursts - Micro and Macro

Downbursts

These are also known as straight-line winds and are intense winds formed when air falls quickly to the ground and then disperses outward from the point of impact. The term downburst encompasses both macro and microbursts. The key distinction between microbursts and macrobursts is their size and duration. However, both types can unleash winds exceeding 100 mph, causing significant damage.

Microbursts

A microburst is a small, focused downburst that releases a sudden burst of intense winds at or near the ground. Microbursts are compact, measuring less than 2.5 miles across, and typically last only five to ten minutes. There are two types of microbursts: wet and dry. A wet microburst occurs alongside heavy rainfall at the surface, whereas dry microbursts, often found in areas like the High Plains and the Intermountain West, happen with minimal to no precipitation reaching the ground.

Macrobursts

A macroburst is a sudden outflow of intense winds at or near the ground, spanning horizontal distances greater than 2.5 miles, which occurs when a powerful downdraft hits the surface. Initially, macroburst winds may start in a small region and then expand into a broader area, sometimes causing damage similar to that of a tornado. While they are typically linked to thunderstorms, macrobursts can also happen with light showers that lack sufficient strength to generate thunder.

They are hard to detect, so be careful when thunderstorms and high winds are in the area.

Other types of High Wind Weather

Gust Front

A gust front refers to the leading edge of cool air generated by rain, which collides with the inflowing warmer air of a thunderstorm. These gust fronts are distinguished by changes in wind direction, a drop in temperature, and gusty winds that precede a thunderstorm. Occasionally, these winds can elevate air above them, resulting in the formation of a shelf cloud or a detached roll cloud.

Derecho

A derecho is a common, long-lasting windstorm linked to a swiftly advancing band of showers or thunderstorms. Typically, a derecho includes many microbursts, downbursts, and clusters of downbursts. According to the definition, an event can be categorized as a derecho if the damage path extends over 240 miles and features wind gusts of 58 mph or higher for most of its length.

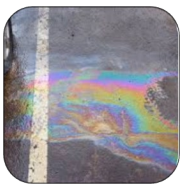
PART 3: RAIN, WATER HAZARDS, AND HYDROPLANING

Rain

While snow and ice naturally command caution, federal highway data reveal that rain is the most dangerous weather threat on public roads, accounting for nearly 50% of all weather-related crashes. Standing water on the roadway may lead to additional challenges, such as hydroplaning or hiding obstacles such as potholes.

For small-capacity vehicles, wet pavement significantly compromises tire traction, increases stopping distances, and can interfere with modern driver assistance features such as Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB) or Lane-Keeping Assist. Professional drivers must master three primary threats during a rain event:

The Three Threats of Rain



Slick Film
- First 10 minutes are the most dangerous
- Oil mixes with light water
- Severe at intersections



Hydroplaning
- Tires float on a sheet of water
- Occurs most typically at speeds above 35 mph
- Steer straight; do not brake!



Refraction Glare
- Water scatters light beams
- Blurs road lines and signs
- Blind spots are magnified

The First Rain (10-Minute Rule)

During dry periods, oil, grease, and rubber dust build up on the asphalt. When it first begins to rain, this light moisture mixes with the residue to create an incredibly slick, greasy film.

- **The Threat:** The first 10 minutes of rainfall are the most hazardous. Traction drops instantly, particularly at high-traffic intersections where idling vehicles frequently drip fluids.
- **Small-Vehicle Impact:** Because Type A-1 vehicles are lighter than full-sized buses, they have less downward force to pierce through this slick surface film. Do not assume the road is safe just because the rain is light; treat the initial onset of rain with extreme caution.

Visual Distortions and Spray

Rain severely impairs your ability to see and be seen:

- **Refraction:** Raindrops on windows bend and scatter light beams, creating a gray haze that blurs road signs and lane boundaries.

- **Nighttime Glare:** At night, wet roads act like giant mirrors, reflecting oncoming headlights and streetlights into an intense glare.
- **Road Spray:** The massive tires of passing commercial trucks throw off a heavy, blinding spray of dirty water. This can instantly coat a small-capacity vehicle's windshield and mirrors, completely blocking your view.
- **Countermeasures:** Ensure your windshield wipers are in perfect condition. Activate your low-beam headlights (never high beams, which reflect directly back into your eyes), and run the window defroster to prevent the smaller cabin from fogging up.

Thunderstorms

A thunderstorm is a rain event accompanied by thunder and lightning. It is classified as severe if it includes hail, 1 inch or greater, wind gusts exceeding 57.5 mph, or a tornado.

Thunderstorms typically occur in spring and summer, primarily in the afternoon and evening, though they can happen at any time of year. They are often associated with hazardous weather events. When conditions are favorable, the rainfall from thunderstorms can lead to flash flooding.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch

The NOAA Storm Prediction Center meteorologists issue a severe thunderstorm WATCH when weather conditions are favorable for severe thunderstorms. A watch can cover parts of a state or several states.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning

A Severe Thunderstorm WARNING is issued by the NOAA National Weather Service Forecast Office meteorologists when severe weather is reported by spotters or detected by radar. Warnings indicate a serious threat to life and property for those in the storm's path. A warning may encompass parts of one or more counties at risk.

Lightning

Sudden storms can produce lightning. If a severe storm produces lightning, the safest place is in the vehicle; roll the windows up, and avoid contact with any conductive paths leading to the outside of the vehicle (e.g., radios, CBs, ignition, etc.). Avoid touching metal objects or pulling over in high-risk areas (such as canyons, near power lines, or near tall trees).

If a vehicle is struck by lightning, the metal shell acts as a Faraday cage, protecting passengers inside and making the vehicle relatively safe during a lightning storm. The

electrical current from lightning mainly travels through the metal frame and tires, bypassing the passengers. Despite this protection, the vehicle may still sustain damage, particularly to the antenna, electrical system, rear windshield, and tires.

After a lightning strike, it's recommended to remain inside the car for at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder before exiting.

Water on Roadways

Driving through deep puddles, floods, or excessively wet conditions can introduce water into the brake drums, leading to a dangerous condition known as "water brake fade." This creates a spongy pedal feeling, severely delays your stopping time, and can cause the vehicle to pull violently to one side.

Key Complications

- **Lost Friction & Delayed Bite:** Trapped water acts as a lubricant between the brake linings and the drums or rotors, preventing them from gripping effectively.
- **Water Fade (Steam Barrier):** When the brake pedal is pressed, the resulting friction heats the trapped water, turning it into steam. This steam creates a physical cushion or barrier between the shoe and the drum, causing a temporary but severe drop in stopping power.
- **Mud and Debris Trapping:** Flooding often washes mud, dirt, and road grit directly into the brake components. Once dry, this abrasive grit accelerates mechanical wear and scores the braking surfaces.

How to Restore Braking Power

⚠️ **Safety Note:** Always check your mirrors and ensure it is safe to do so before performing this maneuver. Never do this with traffic riding closely behind you.

To dry out the system and restore normal performance after passing through standing water:

- **Apply Light Pressure:** Gently drag or tap the brakes while maintaining a safe, slow driving speed.
- **Generate Controlled Heat:** This light friction creates just enough heat to evaporate the trapped moisture without overheating the system.
- **Confirm Responsiveness:** Continue applying light pressure for a short distance until the spongy pedal feeling disappears and normal braking bite returns.

Hydroplaning

Hydroplaning occurs when water on the road is deeper than your tire tread can displace. Water pressure forces a thin sheet of liquid directly underneath the rubber, lifting the wheels completely off the pavement. The vehicle is now literally floating, resulting in a complete loss of steering and braking control. Traction is everything. Let's make sure you know how to keep your wheels firmly on the asphalt.

- **Risk Factors:** The risk escalates dramatically at speeds above **35 mph**, when tires have worn tread, or when driving through standing water.
- **Warning Signs:** If the steering wheel suddenly feels abnormally "loose," light, or unresponsive, your vehicle is likely hydroplaning.
- **Emergency Response:** Do not slam on the brakes and do not jerk the steering wheel**.** Jerking the wheel or locking the brakes will cause a violent spin the moment the tires regain contact with the asphalt. Instead, ease off the accelerator pedal, keep the tires pointed straight, and allow the vehicle to slow down naturally until the weight of the vehicle returns the tires to the pavement.

How to Prevent Hydroplaning

- **Reduce Speed:** Slow down significantly whenever the pavement is wet. The faster you travel, the harder it is for the tire tread to channel water away**.**
- **Avoid Standing Water:** Steer clear of visible puddles, ruts, and trough-like depressions in the asphalt where water pools**.**
- **Deactivate Cruise Control:** Never use cruise control on wet roads. If the vehicle hydroplanes, the system may automatically accelerate to maintain speed, triggering a dangerous loss of control.
- **Drive in a Lower Gear:** Utilizing a lower gear provides better engine braking and smoother speed management.
- **Smooth Inputs:** Avoid hard, sudden braking and sharp, abrupt turns.

🛑 Critical Rule: Never drive into flowing or moving water. The depth and force of the current are impossible to judge accurately from the driver's seat. Moving water can mask washed-out roadways, downed power lines, and hidden debris that can easily trap or sweep away a small-capacity vehicle.

PART 4: SLIPPERY SURFACES AND SKIDS

Vehicle braking and steering rely entirely on tire traction. On slippery surfaces, stopping distances can more than double, and steering control drops significantly. Because Type

A-1 buses and small-capacity vehicles are lighter than full-sized buses, they have less downward weight to cut through slick surfaces, making careful speed management essential.

Slippery surfaces can more than double stopping distances.

Common Slippery Surfaces

- **Shaded Areas:** Parts of the road shielded by trees, buildings, or mountain walls can remain icy and slick long after open areas have melted and dried.
- **Bridges and Overpasses:** When temperatures drop, bridges freeze before the surrounding roadway because cold air circulates underneath them. Exercise extreme caution when the ambient temperature is at or near freezing (**32°F**).
- **Snow:** Traction varies by snow type. Dry, granular, or deeply frozen snow offers more traction than wet, packed snow. The most dangerous driving conditions occur when snow or ice begins to melt at or near 32°F, creating an incredibly slick layer of water on top of the ice.
- **Black Ice:** When temperatures are below freezing but the road simply looks wet, it may be covered in black ice—a thin, transparent layer of ice that reveals the dark asphalt underneath. It is highly prevalent in the early morning hours when daytime snowmelt refreezes overnight, and it frequently forms at high-traffic intersections and wind-exposed corridors.
- **Hail:** Accumulations of hail create an uneven, exceptionally slippery surface that acts like a layer of loose marbles. Heavy hail can also shatter windshields and side windows. If caught in a severe hail storm, seek a sheltered, low-risk parking spot and wait it out to prevent vehicle damage and passenger injury.
- **Mud and Mudslides:** Excessive mud on mountain or rural roads acts as a severe lubricant, stripping away tire traction and making steering nearly impossible.
- **Wet Leaves:** In the fall, wet leaves pack down on the asphalt and create a slick, organic mat. They act exactly like ice, blinding you to underlying lane markings or potholes while completely stripping away tire friction.
- **Roadway Bleeding (Heat):** In extreme summer heat, the asphalt tar can rise to the surface ("bleed"), creating shiny, soft spots that reduce tire grip.

- **Fresh Asphalt Sealant:** Roads or parking lots that have been recently resealed or freshly paved are slicker than aged, weathered asphalt, especially when wet. The oils in the new mix take time to cure and wash out.
- **Painted Road Markings and Metal Strips:** Crosswalk lines, lane arrows, metal construction plates, and expansion joints become exceptionally slick when wet. This is a massive hazard for two-wheeled vehicles (motorcycles and bicycles), which can easily lose front-tire grip when passing over them.
- **Agricultural Runoff and Debris:** In rural areas, tractors transferring from fields to paved roads leave behind clumps of wet clay, manure, or crushed crop debris. This acts like grease on the road surface.
- **Sand and Gravel Overlays:** Often left behind after winter snow management or construction, loose sand and gravel on dry asphalt act like microscopic ball bearings under your tires, drastically increasing braking distances and causing sudden slides during turns.
- **De-icing Chemicals:** Anti-icing agents like magnesium chloride and salt enhance traction by melting snow during the day. However, as temperatures plummet at night, this chemical-and-water mixture can refreeze into a slick glaze that catches drivers off guard.

Understanding and Managing Skids

A skid occurs when a vehicle's tires lose their grip on the road. Skidding is almost always caused by one of four driver inputs:

1. **Over-braking:** Braking too hard and locking up the wheels.
2. **Over-steering:** Turning the wheels more sharply than the vehicle can actually turn at that speed.
3. **Over-acceleration:** Supplying too much engine power, causing the drive wheels to spin.
4. **Driving Too Fast:** Traveling at speeds that exceed the physical limits of the road surface and tire tread.

💡 **General Skid Recovery Rule:** If your vehicle begins to skid, avoid sudden steering, braking, or accelerating, as these can worsen the loss of control. Keep your eyes up and focus on your intended path; look exactly where you want the vehicle to go, rather than at the hazard you are sliding toward.

Operators who adjust their driving to the conditions do not over-accelerate and do not have to over-brake or over-steer to avoid gaining too much speed. Learning to stay off the brake and react quickly during a skid takes a lot of practice. The best place to practice this is on a large driving range or "skid pad."

Drive-wheel Skids (Rear Wheel)

This is the most common type of skid. It occurs when the rear wheels lose traction due to excessive acceleration or hard braking on a slick surface. When the rear wheels lock up or spin out of control, they lose their directional stability and try to "catch up" with the rolling front wheels, causing the back of the bus to slide sideways into a spin.

To correct a drive-wheel skid:

- **Stop accelerating:** Immediately ease off the gas pedal.
- **Stop braking:** Release the brake pedal completely to allow the rear wheels to roll again and regain directional traction.
- **Steer into the skid:** Turn the steering wheel in the exact direction that the rear of the vehicle is sliding. For example, if the rear end swings out to the right, steer to the right.
- **Counter-steer smoothly:** As the vehicle starts to straighten out, gently turn the wheel back to your desired direction of travel. Do not over-correct, or the vehicle may whip back in the opposite direction.

Important Considerations:

- Front-wheel drive (FWD) and all-wheel drive (AWD) vehicles
    - Lifting your foot off the accelerator and steering in the direction of the slide will best help to correct the skid.
- Rear-wheel drive (RWD) vehicles
    - Steering to the skid is particularly important in RWD vehicles, as the rear wheels are the ones losing traction.

Front-wheel Skids

Front-wheel skids are typically caused by driving too fast for road conditions or having inadequate tire tread on the steering axle. In a front-wheel skid, the front tires lose their ability to grip and guide the vehicle; the bus continues moving forward in a straight line

regardless of how far you turn the steering wheel, making it impossible to navigate a curve or corner.

To correct a front-wheel skid:

- **Release the accelerator:** Ease off the gas pedal to shift the vehicle's weight forward onto the front tires.
- **Do NOT brake:** Applying the brakes will keep the front tires locked up or sliding, preventing them from regaining traction.
- **Maintain steering angle:** Do not jerk or turn the wheel further. Keep the steering wheel in the position it was in before the skid started. As the vehicle slows down, rolling friction will naturally return to the front tires, and the vehicle will begin to steer again.

PART 5: SNOW, AVALANCHES, COLD WEATHER, AND OTHER WINTER DRIVING

Navigating Colorado’s winter roads requires extreme caution. On slick surfaces, your stopping distance can more than double. Always scan the road ahead; be aware that some Colorado bridges are equipped with automated de-icing sprayers, which can cause sudden, unexpected changes in traction.

Snow Driving

You must completely clear all snow, ice, and frost from every window, mirror, and exterior light lens before driving. Driving with a "snow cap" on the roof of a vehicle is highly illegal in Colorado, as it can slide forward during braking or blow back onto other motorists. Verify that the windshield washer fluid reservoir is completely full with a winter-grade de-icing mix and that the air brake moisture ejectors are functioning properly to prevent frozen airlines.

Pre-Tripping for Winter Driving

To ensure your vehicle and your body are ready for sub-freezing temperatures, snow, and decreased visibility, standard pre-trip inspections need to shift from basic functional checks to a deeper evaluation of cold-weather weak points. Here is what needs hyper-focused inspection before hitting winter roads:

The Vehicle Pre-Trip

- **Battery Cold Cranking Amps (CCA):** Battery capacity drops by roughly 20% in freezing weather and up to 50% when temperatures hit 0°F. Check for terminal

corrosion and listen for a sluggish crank. If the battery is over 3–4 years old, it needs a load test.

- **The Tire "Triple Check" (Pressure, Depth, and Compound):**
    - *Pressure:* Air contracts in the cold; tires lose roughly 1–2 PSI for every 10°F drop in temperature. Underinflated tires degrade handling and fuel economy.
    - *Tread:* You need a minimum of 4/32” of tread depth for snow (more than the legal summer limit of 2/32”).
    - *Sidewalls:* Inspect for cracks or bulging caused by hitting hidden potholes or frozen slush chunks.
- **Wiper Blade Integrity and Fluid Volatility:** Standard wiper fluid freezes at 32°F, which will ruin the pump and blind you if sprayed onto a freezing windshield. Flush and replace it with a winter-grade formula rated down to -20°F or -40°F. Check that the wiper rubber isn't torn or frozen solid to the glass.
- **Defroster and HVAC Actuators:** Verify that air actually blows hard out of the defroster vents at the base of the windshield. A failing blend door actuator might blow hot air at your feet but leave your windshield completely fogged or iced over.
- **Fluids and Mechanicals:** Ensure your windshield washer fluid reservoir is completely full with washer fluid or a winter-grade de-icing mixture.
- **Lighting and Lenses (Clearing the "Snow Crust"):** Halogen bulbs are used to generate enough heat to melt snow off headlights. Modern, highly efficient LED headlights do not. You must physically clear packed snow and ice from all headlights, taillights, and turn signals so you remain visible to others.

The Driver Pre-Trip

- **Visibility Clear-Out Execution:** Drivers often rush this, creating a dangerous "tunnel vision" effect. You must completely clear all snow and ice from *every* window, side mirror, and the roof. Leaving snow on the roof is illegal in many states because it can slide down onto your own windshield during braking or fly off and smash the windshield of the vehicle behind you.
- **Footwear Grip and Pedal Tactility:** Heavy, wet snow clinging to the soles of insulated boots makes them incredibly slick on rubber accelerator and brake pedals. Always kick or scrape the snow off your boots before starting the engine to prevent your foot from slipping off the brake in an emergency.

- **Survival and Recovery Gear Verification:** Ensure your cabin contains a winter survival kit. Do not skip checking the contents before you leave:
    - A heavy blanket or sleeping bag.
    - A sturdy ice scraper and snow brush.
    - A small shovel and a bag of sand or cat litter for traction.
    - High-energy, non-perishable snacks and water (kept inside the cabin so it doesn't freeze solid in the trunk).
    - A fully charged external phone battery bank.

Speed Management and Vehicle Control

The golden rule of winter driving is that posted speed limits are meant for ideal dry conditions, not snow**.**

- **Reduce Speed Significantly:** Cut your speed by at least one-third to one-half on snow-covered roads.
- **Increase Following Distance:** Expand your following distance from the standard 4 seconds to a minimum of 8 to 10 seconds. You need ample space to react without slamming on the brakes.
- **Smooth Inputs:** Avoid sudden, jerky movements. Accelerate gradually, steer smoothly, and brake gently. Abrupt inputs will break the delicate traction between your tires and the snow, inducing a skid.
- **Deactivate Driver Assists: T**urn off cruise control immediately on wet or frozen surfaces. If your vehicle features an auxiliary engine brake or retarder system, disable it. If a retarder engages automatically on a slippery surface, it can lock the drive wheels and cause your vehicle to enter an unrecoverable spin.

Recognizing Variable Road Surface Hazards

Snow conditions in Colorado change rapidly based on altitude, sun exposure, and temperature.

- **Pack Snow vs. Slush:** Packed snow often provides more predictable traction than melting, rutted slush. Slush can grab the steering tires of a lighter vehicle, pulling it violently toward the shoulder or into oncoming traffic.
- **The Temperature Danger Zone:** Traction is actually *lowest* when the temperature is right around the freezing mark (30°F to 34°F). At this threshold, a

thin, highly lubricated film of water forms on top of the snow and ice, creating the slickest possible driving surface.

- **Slick Tracks and Track Width:** As passenger traffic travels over snow, it compresses the snow into narrow, icy ruts ("slick tracks"). While a full-size school bus has a vastly wider stance, a Type A-1 cutaway bus has a track width similar to that of a heavy-duty pickup truck, but with wide, dual rear wheels. Trying to force your dual-rear wheels directly into narrow ruts can cause the vehicle's rear to sway violently. Slightly shift your lane position so your tires ride on the untracked, fresh snow in your lane, which provides better mechanical traction.

Avalanche Hazard Management and Winter Survival

Before departing on any route through Colorado's mountain corridors, drivers should consult specialized state tracking tools.

- **The CAIC Forecast:** Check the Colorado Avalanche Information Center's (avalanche.state.co.us) daily threat matrix. Do not rely solely on standard weather apps; look specifically for backcountry and highway slide warnings.
- **COtrip.org & 511:** Monitor real-time electronic road signs for active Avalanche Control Road Closures. The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) frequently closes passes to intentionally trigger controlled slides using remote exploders and artillery.
- **Colorado Traction Law:** Ensure your vehicle complies with state law, which requires a minimum 3/16-inch tread depth alongside mountain-snowflake (3PMSF) or Mud and Snow (M+S) rated tires, or active traction chains/AutoSocks.

Identifying Active Avalanche Conditions

Be highly alert for rapid changes in mountain topography and climate. Avalanche risk skyrockets during or immediately following:

- **Heavy, Wet Snowstorms:** Common in Colorado's late winter and spring seasons.
- **High-Wind Events:** Winds exceeding 30 mph rapidly transport snow across ridges, creating unstable, heavy overhanging drifts (cornices).
- **Rapid Thaws:** A sharp, sudden increase in temperature can cause the snowpack to lose structural integrity.

- **Visual Warning Signs:** If you observe natural "sluffing" (minor snow slides), shooting cracks in roadside snowbanks, or hear hollow "womphing" sounds, the surrounding slopes are highly unstable.

Immediate Action Plan: If Caught in an Avalanche

If a snow slide or powder cloud begins descending toward your vehicle, you have only seconds to react. Never attempt to outrun an avalanche; the speed of the slide will easily overtake you.

Step 1: Secure the Vehicle: Immediately

Bring the vehicle to a stop away from the direct center of the slide path if possible. **Stay inside the vehicle.** The structural steel cage of your vehicle is your primary defense against heavy snow debris and flying debris.

Step 2: Engine Shutdown & Air Containment: Within 5 Seconds

Turn off the engine immediately. If the vehicle is buried or surrounded by snow, running the engine will cause lethal carbon monoxide (CO) to seep directly into the cabin. Ensure all windows, passenger doors, and climate vents are completely closed to block out suffocating snow dust.

Step 3: Passenger Safety & Positioning: Within 10 Seconds

Instruct all passengers to clear out of the aisle, sit low in their seats with their backs away from the side windows, and cover their heads. Brace yourself firmly in your driver's seat.

Step 4: Communication & Survival: Post Impact

Use your fleet two-way radio or cell phone to notify dispatch or emergency services of your exact location (mile marker or landmark). **Do not leave the vehicle** to dig yourself out unless the slide has completely stopped and you can safely verify that a secondary "echo" slide is not imminent.

Wait for CDOT emergency crews or search-and-rescue teams to clear the roadway centerline and locate your vehicle.

Identifying Invisible Road Hazards

- **Shaded Areas:** Stretches of road hidden by trees, mountains, or buildings can remain packed with ice long after open, sunny areas have melted and dried.
- **Bridges:** When temperatures drop, bridges and overpasses freeze before standard roadways because cold air flows beneath them as well as above them.

Some Colorado bridges feature automatic de-icing chemical sprayers, which can cause an instant, unexpected change in traction.

- **Black Ice:** If the temperature is below freezing but the road looks wet, it is likely covered in black ice. This is a paper-thin, completely transparent layer of ice that blends in with the asphalt, usually forming in high-traffic intersections or wind-exposed zones in the early morning.
- **The Melting Hazard:** Ice and snow are actually at their most dangerous and slippery right when the temperature hits 32°F, and the surface begins to melt into water.

Additional Hints and Reminders for Winter Driving

- **Respect False Shoulders:** Snowbanks plowed onto the side of the road create "false shoulders." They look solid but consist of loose snow over empty space. Driving onto a false shoulder will cause your vehicle to sink and tip.
- **Test Traction Safely:** When beginning your route, test your braking response and tire grip in a safe, flat location free from traffic to gauge how the day's weather is affecting the asphalt.
- **Know Your Limits:** If visibility is heavily compromised by fog, blowing snow, dust, smoke, or blinding sun glare, do not force your way through. Slow down to a speed that matches your sightline, or pull off to a safe parking area until conditions improve.

Three Key Elements to Safe Winter Driving

- Stay alert
- Slow down
- Stay in control

PART 6: MOUNTAIN DRIVING

Mountain driving demands heightened concentration, precise vehicle control, and a deep respect for the landscape. Driving a school vehicle on winding, narrow mountain passes leaves no room for error. Colorado law (C.R.S. § 42-4-1902) strictly mandates that any school vehicle driver operating in the State of Colorado must successfully complete specialized mountain and adverse-weather training before transporting students.

Because mountain routes often feature steep grades, sharp switchbacks, falling rock hazards, unpredictable weather, and spotty cellular service, meticulous preparation is vital.

It demands a variety of driving skills to ensure safety in such environments. Given the steep or fluctuating grades, sharp or blind curves, potential rockfalls, traffic, wildlife, and unpredictable weather, it's clear that extensive practice and unwavering focus are vital during operation. Equally crucial is being PREPARED to drive in these regions. Because the margin for error is significantly reduced, even small mistakes can lead to serious issues. Mountain driving necessitates heightened concentration and a strong respect for the landscape. Additionally, these areas often lack a reliable cellular signal, and in some instances, there might not be a house for miles.

This section focuses on maintaining control, transmission use, braking, pitch and grade, chains, and other skills for safe operation of school transportation vehicles in the mountains. Here are some things to remember when preparing to drive in mountainous and/or hilly locations.

CDE advises regular skill refresher courses for mountain drivers.

Climbing the Pass: Traction and Chaining

Chains

Chaining is crucial to mountain driving in adverse weather. The Department of Transportation requires chains on commercial motor vehicles on all mountain passes. The two most common types of chains are automatic and conventional. There are several installation methods. Below are some commonly used methods and tips for safely chaining a vehicle.

Automatic Chains

Automatic chains are permanently mounted to the vehicle's rear suspension. They are activated by a dashboard switch that uses an electric-over-air solenoid to lower chain wheels until they contact the inner tire sidewall. The friction rotates the chain wheel, using centrifugal force to swing lengths of chain directly under the tire footprint, instantly improving traction and shortening stopping distances.

- **Operational Range:** Automatic chains perform best in up to 4 to 6 inches of snow and ice. They are not designed for deep, drifted snow or off-road conditions.
- **Speed Limits:** You can engage or disengage automatic chains while moving, but only at speeds under 30 mph.

- **Pro Tip:** To prevent severe mechanical damage to the arm mechanisms and air cylinders, never raise or lower the automatic chains while the vehicle is at a complete stop**.**

- **Maintenance:** Because these systems sit under the chassis exposed to road salt and gravel, engage them at least once a month, even during the summer, to keep the bearings lubricated.

Conventional Chains

Conventional chains must be manually installed and removed by the driver. If you suspect you will lose traction, chain up *before* you get stuck.

- **Safety First:** Always choose a safe, level chaining location well off the active roadway. Keep passengers inside the vehicle, shut off the engine, and set the parking brake firmly. If working on a slope, always stand on the uphill side of the tire while fastening the chains.

- **Installation Layout:** Lay the chains out flat on the ground with the cross-link hooks facing upward (so they face outward away from the rubber once wrapped). Ensure all tensioners are open. Brush away any packed snow from the chains before applying them to the tire.

- **Chaining Methods:**

    - *In-Place Method:* Drape the chain over the top of the tire so it hangs evenly. Use a chain tightener or wire guide to pull the inner links between the dual rear tires (if equipped) and secure the inside hook. Pull the chain as tight as possible over the tire face, secure the outside clasp, and snap on the rubber tighteners/stretchers.

    - *Draping (Roll-Over) Method:* Drape the chains evenly over the tires, ensuring hooks face outward and cross-links run perpendicular to the tread. Roll the vehicle forward or backward slightly into the open space of the chain, avoiding rolling directly over the hook or clasp ends. Fasten the inside hooks first, then the matching outer clasps, and apply the tighteners.

- **Post-Installation Check**: After driving 50 to 100 yards out of the chain-up area, safely pull over, remove the stretchers, retighten the chain links tightly, and reattach the stretchers.

- **Speed Cap**: Never exceed 30 mph with conventional chains installed.

- **Removal:** Remove chains as soon as you reach bare pavement where safe traction is restored. Always unhook the inner hook first to prevent the chain from dropping into the tight space between the dual wheels or suspension components. Inspect the chains for broken or worn links before bundling them for storage.

Colorado Passenger Traction and Chain Laws

https://www.codot.gov/travel/winter-driving/tractionlaw

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) implements specific traction codes on state highways during winter storms. Because Type A-1 and small-capacity vehicles fall under passenger vehicle classifications rather than heavy commercial truck metrics, you must strictly comply with the following codes:

Passenger Vehicle Traction Law (Code 15)

When Code 15 is active, all vehicles must have one of the following to proceed:

- An **AWD or 4WD** system engaged, paired with a minimum tire tread depth of **3/16-inch**.
- Tires with a **Mud and Snow (M+S)** designation stamped on the sidewall and a minimum tread depth of **3/16-inch**. Tires with tread designs that meet the definition may be branded with the letters "M" and "S" in several ways (e.g., M&S, M+S, M/S, MS, etc.) at the tire manufacturer's discretion.



- Winter or all-weather tires bearing the **Three-Peak Mountain Snowflake (3PMSF)** symbol and a minimum tread depth of **3/16-inch**.



- Standard tires equipped with tire chains or an approved Alternative Traction Device (such as an AutoSock).

Passenger Vehicle Chain Law (Code 16): Chain Up or Stay Off

Code 16 is the final safety measure implemented before a highway is closed completely. Under Code 16, all vehicles must use chains or approved alternative traction devices on two or more drive tires, regardless of whether the vehicle is 2WD, 4WD, or AWD.

⚠️ **Fines and Penalties:** Operating with inadequate equipment when a Traction or Chain Law is active results in a fine of more than $130. If your vehicle loses traction and blocks the roadway due to improper equipment, the fine increases to more than $650.

Verifying Your Tread Depth

While the legal minimum tread depth for standard operations is 2/32-inch (measured when the top of Lincoln's head is visible during a standard upside-down penny test), Colorado's winter Traction Law mandates a minimum of 3/16-inch (6/32-inch).

- Because a penny test only flags absolute baldness at 2/32-inch, you should use a professional tread depth gauge during your pre-trip inspection to verify your tires meet the 3/16-inch standard before entering mountain corridors.

Lane Positioning, Curves, and Speed on Mountain Grades

Utilizing Pull-Out Locations

If traffic begins to back up behind your slower-moving vehicle, utilize designated mountain pull-outs to let motorists pass safely.

- **Reentry Protocol:** If the pull-out area is large enough, position the front of your vehicle at an angle ("square off") before reentering the highway. This allows you to look directly over your shoulder to check your blind spot for oncoming traffic, rather than relying solely on your side mirrors.

Lane Position: Managing Position, Curves, and Switchbacks

Observing lane position can prevent head-on collisions. Pay attention to tail swing on tight curves, especially switchbacks. Keep centered in your lane to maintain safe clearance around the vehicle.

- **Slow Down Early:** Brake and reduce your speed to a safe level *before* entering any mountain curve. Braking while actively turning is highly dangerous; it shifts the vehicle’s weight unevenly and can easily trigger a skid.

- **Curve Speed Rule:** Posted speed limits on mountain curves are calculated for standard passenger cars. Because Type A-1 vehicles are taller and have a higher center of gravity, you should navigate curves 5 to 10 mph below the posted advisory speed**.**

- **Maintain Gear Control:** Enter the curve in a gear that allows you to maintain slight, smooth acceleration through the arc, which stabilizes the chassis.

- **Watch Your Tail Swing and Mirrors:** On tight curves and switchbacks, maintain a centered lane position. Hugging the outside edge risks dropping a tire off the road onto a soft shoulder or a steep drop-off. Hugging the inside line risks swinging your mirrors into the oncoming lane. On right-hand curves, be highly alert for oncoming drivers who often cross over the yellow center line.

Clearances and Overhangs

- **Rock and Tunnel Clearance:** Be acutely aware of overhanging rock faces on narrow mountain cuts. Off-tracking (where the rear wheels follow a shorter path than the front wheels during a turn) can bring your vehicle's upper body dangerously close to rock walls.

- **Tunnels:** When entering arched mountain tunnels, remember that while your vehicle height may clear the center of the tunnel, it may strike the stone if you are forced toward the outer edges.

PART 7: DESCENDING THE PASS

Descending a steep mountain pass is one of the most mechanically demanding tasks a school vehicle operator will face. Gravity continuously pulls the vehicle down the slope, accelerating its speed. As cargo and passenger weight increase, this gravitational pull intensifies. To maintain absolute control, you must rely heavily on engine compression and transmission gearing rather than the service brakes.

The Pre-Descent “Pass Check”

Before crossing the apex (top) of a mountain pass to begin a long descent, it is highly recommended to perform a "Pass Check." Look for wide turnouts or chain-up areas near the summit to safely execute these steps:

- **Brake Feel Test:** As you pull into the turnout, apply firm, steady pressure on the brake pedal. Note the pedal stiffness and ensure the vehicle stops smoothly without pulling or veering to one side.

- **Walk-Around Inspection:** Secure the vehicle (park, set emergency brake), step outside, and do a quick lap. Verify all exterior lights are functioning and cleanly visible.
- **Hub and Tire Check:** Stop briefly at each wheel. Carefully place your hand near the wheel hub to check for excessive radiant heat, which may indicate a sticking brake caliper or a dragging pad. Visually inspect all tires for sudden damage or underinflation.
- **Gear Selection:** Return to the driver's seat, select the appropriate low gear for the descent, and exit the turnout.

⚠️ **If a Full Stop is Impossible:** If there is no safe turnout before the descent begins, perform a rolling brake test *before* reaching the summit. Firmly apply the brakes to confirm positive pedal response, then manually downshift your automatic transmission to the proper gear before the vehicle tips over the crest of the hill.

Pitch and Grade

The physical layout of mountain roads continuously changes how your vehicle handles weight distribution and cornering traction.

Pitch and grade affect how mountain drivers maneuver through curves. Long, wide curves in the mountains may remain slippery for extended periods due to the road's pitch or the sun's position. Gravity will naturally accelerate your vehicle mid-turn on a descent. Never brake while actively turning**.** Doing so shifts the vehicle's weight drastically to the front outside tire, which can easily break traction and trigger a severe skid. Instead, scrub off your speed *before* the curve, let the vehicle stabilize through the turn, and gradually accelerate only after you pass the apex (sharpest point) of the curve.

Pay close attention to the bank (camber) of the roadway. An on-camber turn naturally supports the vehicle through the curve. A flat or off-camber turn tilts away from the direction of the curve, pulling the vehicle toward the outside edge. Reduce your entry speed significantly more for flat or off-camber curves to prevent your higher-profile Type A bus from leaning excessively or skidding.

Terrain

One of the hardest techniques to learn may be reading terrain. Maintain a safe scanning distance and scan the entire area for changes in grade, upcoming curves, wildlife, and traffic. When possible, look through the trees beyond the curve before entering.

Tips for Reading Terrain

- **Whitewater rapids** in adjacent streams indicate a sudden, steep drop in the terrain grade.
- **Roadside objects (signs, trees)** that grow in size rapidly indicate a steep approaching downgrade.
- **Canyon walls narrowing** ahead signal that the roadway is likely about to become tighter, darker, or more restrictive.
- **Do not blindly follow the speed of traffic ahead**. Smaller passenger vehicles can corner and brake much faster than a school vehicle; drive your own drive.

Maintaining Control

To stay in control on a steep downgrade, prioritize engine braking (engine compression) by shifting to a lower gear before beginning the descent, and refrain from excessive braking. Combine engine braking with light, intermittent braking to manage speed and prevent brake overheating. Additionally, be aware of both your and your vehicle's capabilities.

Engine Compression and Gearing

Engine compression is your primary braking force. When descending a steep hill, your transmission should generally be in the same gear (or one gear lower) as the gear required to climb that exact same hill.

- **Pre-Select Your Gear:** Manually shift your automatic transmission into a lower range (e.g., Row "3", "2", or manual mode "M" on the shifter column) *before* starting down the grade. Keep it locked in that gear until you reach the bottom.
- **The Transmission Upshift Trap:** Modern automatic transmissions in Type A buses are programmed to protect the engine from over-revving. If you allow the vehicle to gain too much speed and the engine hits its maximum RPM line, the transmission may automatically upshift to a higher gear, even if you have it manually locked in a lower gear. This completely eliminates your engine braking power and can lead to a runaway vehicle. Monitor your tachometer closely.
- **Never Coast in Neutral:** Coasting down a hill in neutral or with the clutch disengaged is illegal and exceptionally dangerous. It disconnects the powertrain, strips away all engine compression braking, and forces you to rely entirely on your service brakes.

Service Brake Use

When driving in mountainous areas, gravity significantly influences your vehicle's behavior. Gravity accelerates the vehicle as you descend steep slopes, and a heavier load increases speed. It's crucial to drive slowly enough to avoid relying on the service brakes, which helps maintain a safe speed.

Unlike larger school buses that utilize air brakes, most Type A minibuses and MFSABs use automotive-style hydraulic disc brakes. Continuous, light riding of the brake pedal down a mountain pass generates extreme, concentrated friction heat between the brake pads and rotors.

This leads to brake fade, a hazardous condition where the brake fluid can boil and the brake linings glaze over, drastically reducing or completely destroying your stopping power. In severe scenarios, this localized heat can ignite tire or wheel-end fires.

Target Speed

To prevent brake fade, use the Target Speed Method (also known as snub braking). This technique uses short, purposeful brake applications to control speed while allowing the rotors and pads time to cool down between uses.

- **Establish Your Target Speed: Pre-Descent**. Determine your maximum safe speed for the current grade and weather conditions. This target speed must always be at or below the posted speed limit.

- **Allow Speed to Rise: Descent Phase**. Let the vehicle descend using engine compression. Monitor your speedometer as gravity pulls the vehicle up toward your established target speed.

- **Apply Firm Service Brakes: Snub Phase.** When your speedometer hits your target speed, apply firm, steady pressure to the service brake pedal. Reduce your speed purposefully until you are exactly 5 mph below your target speed. This application should only take a few seconds.

- **Release completely and Cool: Cooling Phase.** Completely release the brake pedal. Do not lightly drag your foot. Allow the vehicle's speed to naturally drift back up toward the target speed. This open window gives your hydraulic pads and rotors crucial airflow to shed heat.

💡 **The Low Gear Diagnostic:** If you find yourself executing this Target Speed braking cycle constantly or back-to-back, your vehicle is not in a low enough gear. Safely scrub

off your speed, downshift the transmission by one more gear, and let the tighter engine compression hold the vehicle steady.

PART 8: EMERGENCIES

While modern school transportation vehicles are highly reliable, mechanical and hydraulic systems can fail. As a Type A-1 operator, you must memorize and practice emergency stopping maneuvers so your muscle memory can take over during a crisis.

Emergency Stops

These simulations will prepare the operator for situations in which any or all braking systems fail. Except where noted, use a road or highway with minimal traffic and good visibility for the simulations.

Every Which Way Simulation

- **The Scenario:** Complete, sudden failure of the hydraulic service brake pedal (pedal goes to the floor with zero braking response).
- **The Action:** You must combine engine compression and your mechanical parking brake simultaneously. Pull the shifter down into its lowest available manual gear setting (e.g., "1" or "L"). While holding the steering wheel firmly with your left hand, use your right hand (or left foot, depending on configuration) to apply the independent parking brake.
- **The Mechanics:** As the vehicle slows, the automatic transmission will forcibly downshift through its lower gear ratios, using the engine's internal friction to help the parking brake bring the small bus to a halt.

Four-Wheel Lock Simulation

- **The Scenario:** High-speed emergency stop where service brakes are functioning, but you must experience extreme deceleration and potential skid forces.
- **The Action:** Accelerate to exactly 25 mph. Relax your grip slightly on the steering wheel (do not let go of the wheel) and stomp the brake pedal down with maximum force.
- **What to Observe:** Note if the vehicle pulls violently to the left or right, which indicates uneven brake caliper pressure or suspension wear. Feel the rapid pulsing in the pedal—this is your **Anti-lock Braking System (ABS)** cycling to prevent the tires from locking up and sliding.

Park Brake Simulation

- **The Scenario:** Service brakes are entirely inoperable, and your road speed is too high for a sudden downshift without blowing the engine.
- **The Action:** Select a flat, straight section of road with a full-width shoulder. At highway speed, activate your hazard lights, completely release the accelerator, and gradually apply the mechanical parking brake.
- **Type A Precaution:** Unlike air-braked buses, your parking brake is connected via a mechanical cable directly to the rear wheels (or transmission output shaft). Applying it too aggressively at high speeds can lock the rear wheels instantly and cause a spin. Apply it smoothly and progressively while steering straight into the shoulder.

Ride-It-Out Simulation

- **The Scenario:** Total worst-case event: your service brakes have completely faded out, your mechanical parking brake cable has snapped, the engine is running, and you are trapped on a downgrade.
- **The Action:** Shift your automatic gear selector into its lowest setting ("1" or "L") at the crest of the hill to force the maximum amount of engine compression braking possible. Let the vehicle ride out the descent at the engine's maximum safe RPM.
- **The Stop:** Once the road levels out and speed drops below 25 mph, activate your hazards. Steer your right-side tires off the asphalt and into the soft dirt or gravel of the roadside shoulder. Shift the transmission into Neutral (N). The rolling resistance of the soft dirt against the tires will safely drag the vehicle to a complete stop.

Escape Ramps

If your hydraulic fluid boils or your pads glaze over completely while descending a steep mountain pass, your primary lifesaver is a runaway truck ramp (escape ramp). Because a Type A bus has significantly less mass than a 30,000-pound commercial freight truck, the deceleration forces inside a ramp will be incredibly violent.

Types of Runaway Ramps

- **Gravity Ramps:** Built tracking up a steep, built-in hillside. The ramp forces the vehicle to travel upward against gravity to slow it down. Once stopped, the bus will roll backward into a soft retaining zone.

- **Arrester Beds:** Flat or slightly uphill lanes filled with a deep, loose layer of specialized pea gravel or sand (12 to 36 inches deep). Tires instantly sink into the gravel, creating massive mechanical resistance.

- **Combination Ramps:** Utilize both systems, a steep uphill climb combined with a deep bed of loose gravel, providing maximum stopping power.

Step-by-Step Emergency Mountain Descent Protocol

If your hydraulic brakes fail completely on a Colorado mountain pass, you must execute these steps instantly and systematically:

- **Drop to Low Gear:** Force your automatic shifter down into its lowest manual gate. Do not shift into Neutral. Let the engine compression drag down your speed.

- **Communicate the Crisis**: Flip your hazard lights on, sound your horn continuously to warn vehicles ahead, and immediately grab your two-way radio. Alert your dispatch or emergency services of your exact mile marker, speed, and runaway status.

- **Scan for Emergency Signage:** Look far ahead for CDOT signs indicating the distance to the next escape ramp (e.g., "Runaway Truck Ramp 1 Mile").

- **Brace Your Passengers:** Loudly command all students to brace themselves firmly against the seatback in front of them, tighten their seatbelts (if equipped), and tuck their heads down.

- **Commit and Center:** As you reach the ramp entrance, steer directly down the center of the lane. Keep your hands locked tightly on the wheel at the 9 and 3 o'clock positions. Do not attempt to swerve or steer out of the gravel bed once you cross the threshold.

What Happens Inside the Arrester Bed

The moment your front tires plow into the deep gravel, the bus will feel like it hit a wall of thick mud. The steering wheel will jerk violently left and right as the stones swallow the tires. You must hold the steering wheel with absolute, locked physical force to keep the lightweight Type A chassis from pivoting or sliding sideways.

The stones will quickly bring the vehicle to a complete, stable stop. The gravel packs so tightly around the wheels and frame that the bus is securely anchored and cannot roll backward or tip over.

Post-Incident Safety Requirements

🛑 CRITICAL SAFETY WARNING: Keep Passengers Onboard

Never allow students to step off the bus into a gravel arrester bed. Walking on 24 inches of loose pea gravel is incredibly unstable, creating a severe risk of broken or twisted ankles. Furthermore, your exhaust system and catalytic converters will be hot enough to instantly ignite fires if dried brush or clothing touches them under the chassis. Keep everyone inside the protected passenger cage until emergency rescue units arrive.

- **Mandatory Heavy Towing**: A Type A bus cannot drive out of an arrester bed under its own power. The wheels are locked in place by the gravel. A commercial tow rig must winch the vehicle out backward.
- **Post-Ramp Structural Tear-Down:** Under CDE and federal safety rules, any school vehicle that enters a runaway ramp is strictly prohibited from carrying passengers again until it has been towed to a certified fleet shop for a complete structural inspection. Mechanics must inspect and replace the failed hydraulic components and verify that the extreme forces of the gravel bed did not bend the front suspension axle, tear away brake lines, destroy ABS wheel speed sensors, or crack the steering linkages.

PART 9: MOUNTAIN ROADWAY OBSTACLES (TOURISTS AND BICYCLISTS)

Colorado's scenic mountain corridors attract a wide variety of road users whose behavior can be highly erratic, slow, or unpredictable. While a Type A minibus or MFSAB is smaller than a standard 40-foot coach, it is still significantly larger and wider than standard passenger cars. You must actively anticipate unique behavioral hazards from tourists and cyclists to safely share narrow pass lanes.

Navigating Around Sightseeing Motorists and Tourists

Many drivers on Colorado mountain passes are tourists who are completely unfamiliar with high-altitude driving, sharp curves, and steep drop-offs.

- **The Lane-Crowding Hazard:** Drivers who are afraid of heights or steep cliffs will often look away from the drop-off side of the road and subconsciously steer toward the mountain wall. This anxiety causes them to hug or cross the yellow center line, crowding directly into your lane.
- **The "Tire-to-Ground" Scan:** Do not look at the body or windshield of an oncoming car to guess where it is going. Instead, train your eyes directly on their

front driver-side tire where it touches the asphalt. The tire-to-ground contact gives you the immediate, true position of their vehicle, warning you if they are drifting into your lane long before the car's body appears to move.

- **Blind Shoulder Parking:** Tourists frequently pull over unexpectedly around blind curves to take photos, view wildlife, or check maps. Expect to find passenger vehicles parked half on and half off narrow mountain shoulders with zero warning. Watch closely for pedestrians who may suddenly step backward into the traffic lane to get the perfect picture.

Sharing Mountain Lanes with Bicyclists

Mountain biking and road cycling are incredibly popular on Colorado passes. Because many mountain roads lack a paved shoulder, cyclists are legally permitted to ride directly inside the main traffic lane.

- **The Hill Climbing Delay:** Cyclists moving uphill travel at a very slow pace. This bottleneck can tempt frustrated motorists trailing behind them to make highly illegal, dangerous passing maneuvers around blind curves—putting them directly in your path. Scan ahead for vehicles pulling out into your lane to pass slow cyclists.
- **The Downhill Wobble:** Cyclists descending a mountain can easily reach speeds exceeding 40 mph. At high speeds, a patch of loose road gravel, a strong crosswind, or a minor pothole can cause a cyclist to wobble violently, lose control, or crash into the center of the lane.
- **The Passing Rule:** When passing a bicycle in your lane, you must wait until you have a completely clear view of the road ahead with zero oncoming traffic. Give the cyclist a minimum of 3 to 4 feet of side clearance as you pass. If you encounter a child riding a bicycle, double your safety cushion; children lack advanced balance skills and can steer unpredictably into your path.

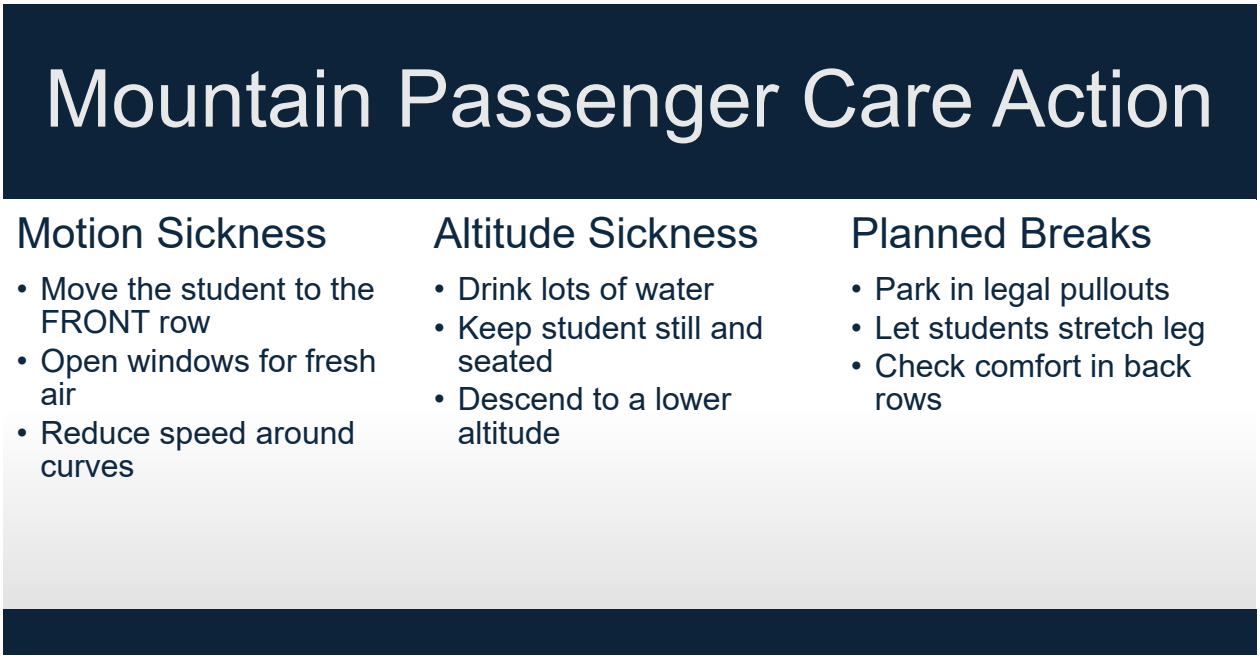
The Golden Rule of Mountain Visibility

Never outdrive your ability to stop within the distance you can see.

If you are approaching a sharp, blind curve flanked by a solid mountain wall, your sightline is severely restricted. You must reduce your speed *before* entering the curve. If a vehicle is stopped dead in the lane, a pedestrian is standing in the asphalt, or a boulder has fallen onto the roadway, your speed must be low enough to allow a complete, controlled stop before hitting the obstacle.

PART 10: MANAGING DRIVER AND PASSENGER WELL-BEING IN THE MOUNTAINS

The unique physics of mountain driving, including rapid altitude shifts, thin, high-elevation air, and continuous side-to-side cornering forces, places severe physical stress on you and your passengers. Managing the cabin environment and monitoring physical health are core safety duties on any high-altitude route.



Preventing and Managing Motion Sickness

The continuous swaying of a vehicle rounding tight switchbacks frequently triggers motion sickness. While a Type A minibus or MFSAB has a shorter wheelbase than a standard 40-foot bus, it is lighter and built on a commercial truck or van chassis, meaning road bumps and lateral forces are felt sharply in the cabin.

- **Proactive Speed Management:** Take mountain curves slower than the posted advisory speed limits. A cornering speed that feels completely stable to you in the driver's seat can feel like a violent, swaying rollercoaster to a child sitting over or behind the rear axle. Regularly check your interior rearview mirror to spot early signs of passenger discomfort.
- **Immediate Interventions:** If a passenger begins to feel nauseous:
    - **Relocate:** Move them immediately to the front row of the bus, where the vehicle's pivot and pitch motions are the most stable.

- **Fresh Air:** Open their side window slightly to provide a continuous stream of cool, moving air.
- **Visual Target:** Instruct the student to keep their head up and stare straight ahead at the stable, distant horizon line. Tell them to avoid looking down at a phone screen, book, or tablet, which rapidly worsens nausea.

Identifying and Treating Altitude Sickness

Altitude sickness occurs when a passenger's body struggles to adjust to the lower oxygen levels found at high elevations (typically anywhere above 8,000 feet). It can affect anyone unexpectedly, regardless of how healthy or physically fit they are.

- **Recognizing the Symptoms:** Monitor your cabin for students complaining of a throbbing headache, sudden dizziness, nausea, unexplained fatigue, shortness of breath, or a pale face.
- **Immediate Care Protocol:** If a passenger shows signs of altitude sickness, take the following actions immediately:
  - Have the student sit completely still or lie down on a seat to lower their oxygen demand.
  - Force them to drink clear fluids, preferably water. Dehydration rapidly worsens altitude sickness.
  - **The Ultimate Cure:** The only true cure for altitude sickness is a physical change in location. You must safely complete your mountain descent and bring the passenger down to a lower altitude as soon as possible, where the air pressure is higher and oxygen is more abundant.

Organizing Mandatory Rest and Stretch Breaks

Sitting buckled into a seat on a long, winding mountain trip can cause passenger restlessness, cramping, and behavioral problems. You must plan ahead to manage their physical needs.

- **Utilizing Safe Pullout Zones:** Map out your route ahead of time to identify official, designated highway rest areas, wide scenic overlooks, or legal pullout zones that are completely separated from active traffic. Never pull over on a narrow highway shoulder or near a blind curve to let students step off.
- **The Leaving-the-Vehicle Safety Rule:** When parking for a stretch break, apply your parking brake, shift into Neutral (N) or Park (P), and turn off the engine. If students exit the vehicle, you or an adult chaperone must maintain a strict

security perimeter. Ensure no children wander toward the active roadway or approach steep, unfenced mountain drop-offs. Use this intermission to do a quick walk-around inspection of your vehicle's tires and cargo tie-downs.

Driver Care

Driving a Type A minibus or MFSAB through winding mountain passes requires a much higher volume of continuous steering adjustments, micro-corrections for crosswinds, and firm pedal pressure than flat, highway driving. Because these vehicles are built on commercial cutaway van or truck chassis, they lack the air-ride suspension of full-sized coaches, transmitting road vibrations and lateral shocks directly into the driver's seat.

Proactive ergonomic adjustments are essential to prevent physical fatigue, muscle strain, and the loss of fine motor control during long mountain shifts.

The Anatomy of the Ideal Driving Position

To minimize physical stress on your spine, joints, and tendons, you must configure your driver's cockpit systematically before turning the key.

1. Spine and Lumbar Alignment

- **The Problem:** Slouching or leaning forward causes your lower spine to curve outward into a C-shape, placing extreme pressure on your lumbar discs and restricting deep breathing.
- **The Fix:** Slide your hips all the way back until your tailbone and lower back are completely flush against the seatback. If your seat lacks an adjustable lumbar support dial, place a commercial lumbar roll or a tightly rolled towel horizontally behind your lower back, right above the beltline. This preserves the spine's natural inward curve.

2. Hip, Knee, and Pedal Relationship

- **The Problem:** Sitting too close to the dash forces your knees to bend at a sharp angle, pinching the popliteal artery behind the knee and cutting off circulation to the lower leg. Sitting too far back forces you to stretch your toes to reach the brakes, causing rapid calf cramping.
- **The Fix:** Adjust the seat height so that your hips rest slightly higher than your knees. Move the seat forward or backward until your knee retains a comfortable 20-to-30-degree bend when you press the brake pedal completely to the floor. Your right heel should rest firmly on the floorboard, using the ball of your foot to pivot smoothly between the accelerator and the brake.

3. Shoulder and Arm Reach

- **The Problem:** Having to lean forward or twist your shoulders to steer places severe tension on your upper traps, neck, and rotator cuffs, leading to tension headaches.
- **The Fix:** Adjust the steering wheel tilt and the seatback incline so that your arms maintain roughly a 120-degree bend at the elbows when holding the wheel at the 9 and 3 o'clock positions. You should be able to rest the undersides of your wrists comfortably on the top of the steering wheel without your shoulders lifting off the seatback.

4. Ergonomic Mirror Calibration

- **The Problem:** Drivers frequently lean their entire torso forward, backward, or sideways to see into their blind spots, repeating this motion hundreds of times a day.
- **The Fix:** Sit in your perfect, upright driving posture *before* adjusting your mirrors. Move the flat and convex side mirrors so you can see your blind spots and the rear tires without moving your eyes or neck. If you have to twist your torso or lean out of the seat to check a mirror, the mirror is poorly positioned.

Combatting Mountain Driver Fatigue

Mountain driving requires intense cognitive processing, which accelerates physical exhaustion. Use these strategies to stay sharp:

- **Micro-Breaks at Red Lights:** When stopped safely at a traffic light or a construction delay, perform a 5-second shoulder shrug—roll your shoulders up toward your ears, hold for three seconds, and drop them completely down to release built-up tension.
- **Hydration Control:** The thin, dry air of Colorado elevations above 8,000 feet rapidly dehydrates the human body, causing early-onset brain fog, slower reaction times, and muscle cramps. Keep a sealable container of water within arm's reach. Sip constantly—do not wait until you feel thirsty, as thirst is a late sign of dehydration.
- **Visual Fatigue Management:** Glare from high-altitude sunlight and white mountain snow can cause intense eye strain and headaches. Always wear high-quality, polarized sunglasses during daytime mountain routes to neutralize glare and preserve your contrast vision for spotting road hazards.

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Unit Seven – Crashes and Emergency Procedures

PART 1: HANDLING A VEHICLE CRASH

Encountering or being involved in a vehicle crash requires instant, calm execution of safety protocols. Under Colorado law, your primary goals are to protect your passengers, secure the scene, and avoid secondary collisions.

En route Passing of an Independent Crash Scene

If you are driving your route or activity trip and encounter a traffic crash that does not involve your bus, practice extreme caution:

- **Keep Moving:** Do not stop completely unless emergency responders explicitly direct you to do so or you are the absolute first vehicle on the scene. Stopping or slowing down excessively to stare ("rubbernecking") creates a high risk of a rear-end collision for the traffic behind you.
- **Brake Early and Smoothly:** Tap your brakes early as you approach the scene to flash your brake lights and warn trailing motorists to slow down.

Mandatory Protocol if Your Vehicle is Involved in a Crash

If your school transportation vehicle is involved in a collision, you must execute the following actions immediately, in accordance with state law and Educational Entity safety policies:

- **Stop and Secure:** Stop the vehicle immediately. Turn off the engine, set the parking brake, and remove the ignition key. Never leave the scene of a crash**.** Conviction for hit-and-run carries severe criminal penalties under Colorado statutes.
- **Activate Hazards:** Turn on your four-way amber hazard flashers immediately to maximize visibility.
- **Assess Passenger Safety:** Check all passengers immediately for injuries. Render reasonable first aid assistance if necessary, but never perform medical procedures beyond your specific level of training.
- **Notify Dispatch and Authorities:** Contact your transportation base terminal or school administrator immediately via two-way radio or phone. Report your exact

location, the number of passengers on board, whether injuries are present, and if emergency medical services (EMS) or law enforcement are required.

- **Evaluate Fire Hazards:** Actively check the vehicle for fire or immediate fire risks. Look for and smell for ruptured fuel tanks/lines, electrical wiring short circuits, or hot tires that may ignite due to bent metal rubbing against the rubber post-impact.
- **Do Not Move the Vehicle:** Leave the bus exactly where it came to a rest. Do not move it unless actively instructed to do so by a law enforcement officer or fire department personnel, or as legally required by local highway postings.
- **Exchange Information and Cooperate:** Cooperate fully with the investigating law enforcement officer. Write down the names, license numbers, vehicle registrations, insurance details, and contact info of all drivers and witnesses involved. Never admit fault or liability at the scene.

PART 2: EMERGENCY DOCUMENTS AND PLANNING

Required On-Board Documentation

If you are involved in a crash, law enforcement investigators and school administration will require you to produce specific legal documents. You must ensure these are present in your driver's compartment during your daily pre-trip inspection:

- Valid driver's license
- Proof of valid vehicle insurance
- Valid vehicle registration card
- Completed, current-day Pre-Trip Inspection documentation
- Current CDE Affidavit of Annual Inspection
- The vehicle's official Emergency Packet (including seating charts, witness information forms, and exchange-of-information cards)

Written Emergency Operations Plans

Under 1 CCR 301-26, Educational Entities are legally required to maintain written emergency procedures and contingency plans. These plans must clearly outline the step-by-step procedures operators must follow during a traffic crash, a sudden

mechanical breakdown, an unexpected school closure, an unforeseen route change, or the emergency relocation of a student stop.

PART 3: STAKING OUT THE VEHICLE (EMERGENCY TRIANGLES)

If your vehicle is disabled or stopped due to a crash on a public roadway, you must place your three emergency reflective triangles within 10 minutes to alert oncoming traffic. When positioning triangles, assemble the triangle, pick it up, and walk towards the placement location, keeping the triangle away from the body and out towards traffic.

Two-Lane Roadway or Undivided Highway Placement

If you are stopped on a standard two-lane road or an undivided highway, place the triangles in this exact sequence:



1. **Triangle 1 (Traffic Warning):** Place it on the traffic side of the vehicle, **10 feet behind** the rear bumper, directly in line with the side of the bus.
2. **Triangle 2 (Rear Warning):** Place it **100 feet behind** the vehicle, centered in the middle of your driving lane.
3. **Triangle 3 (Front Warning):** Walk to the front of the vehicle and place it **100 feet ahead** of the front bumper, centered in the middle of your driving lane, to warn oncoming traffic from the opposite direction.

Divided Highway or One-Way Roadway Placement

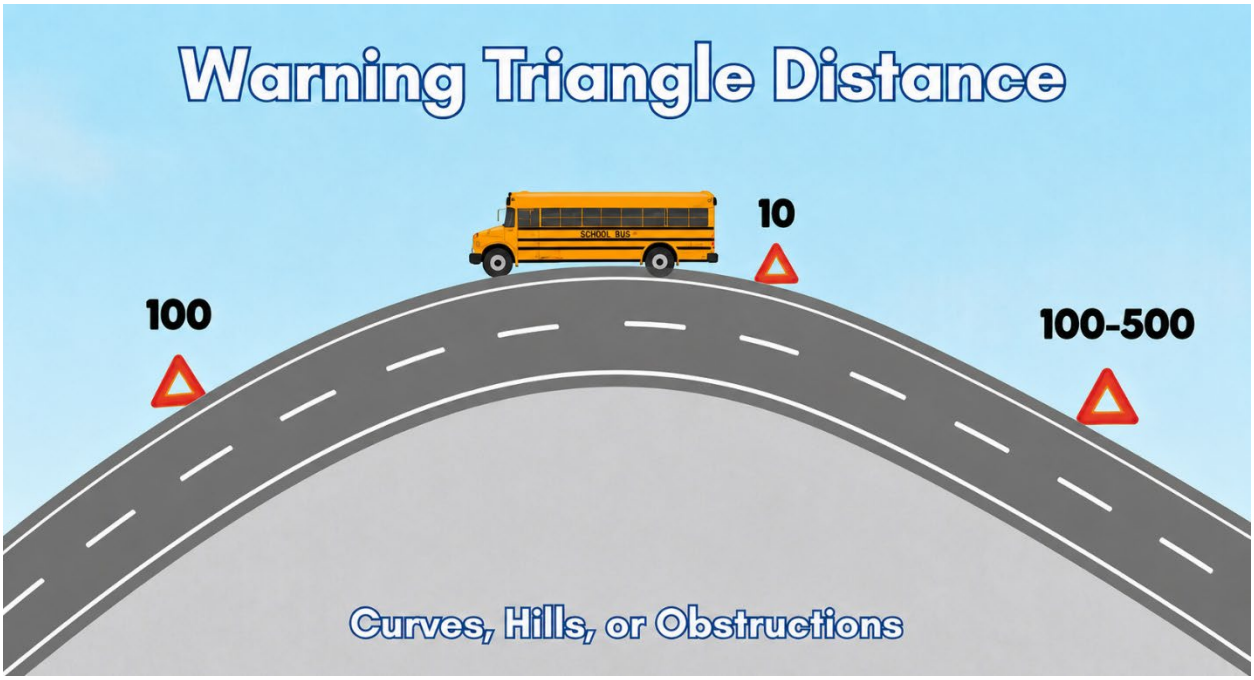
If you are stopped on a multi-lane divided highway or a one-way road where traffic can only approach you from behind, all three triangles must go behind the bus:



- **Triangle 1:** Place it **10 feet behind** the rear bumper on the traffic side.
- **Triangle 2:** Place it **100 feet behind** the vehicle on the traffic side.
- **Triangle 3:** Place it **200 feet behind** the vehicle on the traffic side.

Obstruction (Hills and Curves) Placement

If a sharp curve or a hilltop blocks the view of your stopped vehicle, traffic cannot see you until they clear the obstruction. You must adjust your furthest triangle:



- **Triangle 1:** Place it **100 feet ahead** of the front bumper on the traffic side.

- **Triangle 2:** Place it **10 feet behind** the vehicle on the traffic side.
- **Triangle 3:** Place it **100-500 feet behind** the vehicle on the traffic side.
    - Move the rear-most triangle further back—up to 500 feet if necessary—so that it sits safely *before* the crest of the hill or the entry point of the curve. This gives drivers ample time to react and slow down before they see your vehicle.

1 CCR 301-25 Minimum Standards, 10.14 Emergency Equipment

10.14.4 Emergency Reflectors:

(A) All School Transportation Vehicles shall carry three bidirectional emergency triangle reflectors in compliance with C.R.S. 42-4-230, and with FMVSS 125 - Warning Devices, contained in a securely mounted case which shall be in full view of the driver, or within a location plainly indicated by appropriate markings.

PART 4: OPERATING THE SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Professional drivers must be proficient in operating the onboard safety equipment before an emergency occurs.

1 CCR 301-25 Minimum Standards, 10.14 Emergency Equipment

10.14.1 All School Transportation Vehicles, except for Small-Capacity Vehicles, shall be equipped with at least one pressurized, 5-pound, dry-chemical fire extinguisher, with a total rating of not less than 2A10BC. The operating mechanism shall be sealed with a type of seal that will not interfere with the use of the fire extinguisher.

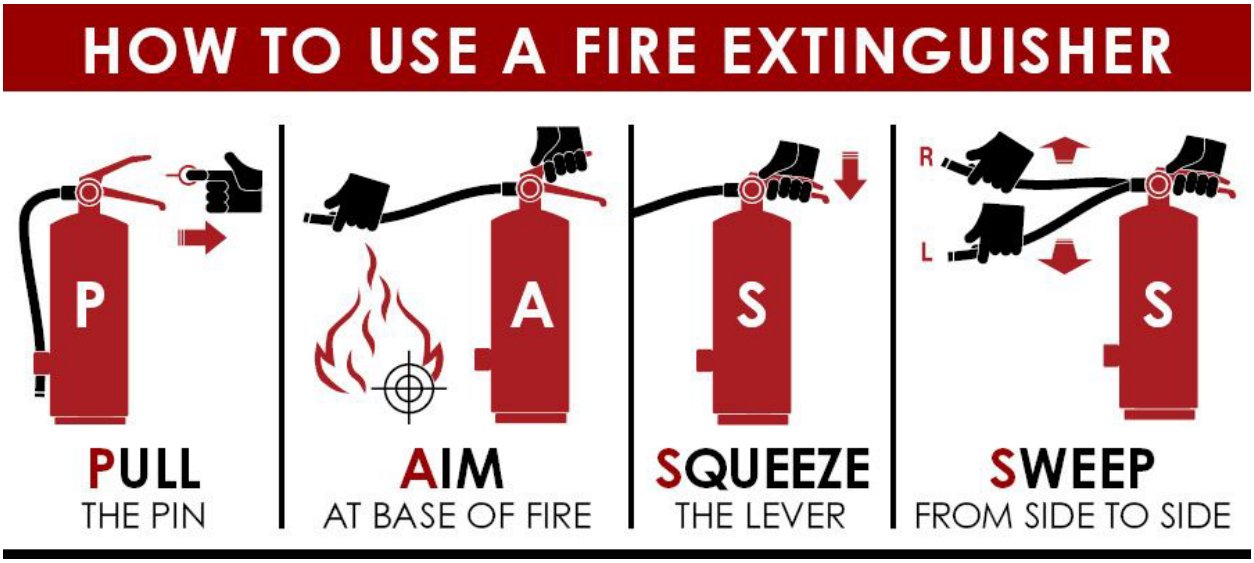
(A) The fire extinguisher shall be securely mounted in an extinguisher bracket (automatic type) and located in full view of and readily accessible to the driver within the cab, or in a location plainly indicated by appropriate signage. A pressure gauge shall be mounted on the extinguisher to be easily read without removing the extinguisher from its mounted position.

(B) Fire extinguishers shall be inspected annually for charging and certification to standards by a certified fire extinguisher technician.

Utilizing the Fire Extinguisher (The P.A.S.S. Method)

Every school transportation vehicle must be equipped with a securely mounted, fully charged dry chemical fire extinguisher. If a fire breaks out, retrieve the extinguisher, hold it upright, and use the **P.A.S.S.** sequence:

- **P - Pull the Pin:** Pull the safety pin out from the handle to unlock the trigger mechanism.
- **A - Aim Low:** Aim the nozzle or hose directly at the *base* of the fire, not at the flames brushing upward.
- **S - Squeeze the Lever:** Squeeze the handle lever firmly to release the dry chemical extinguishing agent.
- **S - Sweep Side-to-Side:** Sweep the nozzle back and forth across the base of the fire until the flames are completely extinguished.



Medical Kits and Universal Precautions

- **First Aid Kit:** Used for treating minor lacerations, burns, or scrapes. Items used must be replenished immediately upon returning to the terminal.
- **Body Fluid Clean-Up Kit:** Contains specialized barriers, liquid-absorbing powders, scrapers, and disinfectants designed to handle blood, vomit, or other bodily fluids safely.
- **The 36-Month Replacement Rule:** Under 1 CCR 301-26, consideration must be given to replacing the contents of the First Aid Kit and Body Fluid Clean-Up Kit every 36 months, as the protective materials and chemical agents break down over time.

1 CCR 301-25 Minimum Standards, 10.14 Emergency Equipment

10.14.2 First Aid Kit:

(A) All School Transportation Vehicles shall carry one 24-Unit First Aid Kit, which shall be securely mounted in full view of the driver or with the location plainly indicated by appropriate signage. Additional kits may be installed. All first aid kits shall be mounted for easy removal.

(1) The kit shall be sealed, moisture and dustproof, and be of sufficient capacity to store the required items.

(2) The seal verifies the integrity of the contents without opening the kit. The seal shall be designed to allow easy access to the kit's contents. If zip ties are used to seal the kit, they shall be breakaway.

(3) All first aid kit components shall be inspected annually by the Educational Entity. Any items found to be expired, damaged, or previously opened shall be replaced immediately to ensure kit integrity.

(B) The required contents of the 24-Unit First Aid kit are listed in Table 1.

Contents of the 24-Unit First Aid Kit:	
Item	**Unit(s)**
Adhesive tape	1
1-inch bandage compress	2
2-inch bandage compress	1
3-inch bandage compress	1
4-inch bandage compress	1
4-inch x 3-inch plain gauze pads	1
Gauze roller bandage 2-inch wide	2
Plain absorbent gauze – ½ square yard	4
Plain absorbent gauze - 24-inch by 72 inches	3
Triangular bandages	3
Scissors	1
Tweezers	1
Space rescue blanket	1
Non-latex disposable pair of gloves	1
CPR mask or mouth-to-mouth airway	1

Table 1. 24-Unit First Aid Kit

10.14.3 Body Fluid Cleanup Kit:

(A) All School Transportation Vehicles shall have a body fluid cleanup kit, securely mounted in full view of the driver or with the location plainly indicated by appropriate signage. Additional kits may be installed. All bodily fluid cleanup kits shall be mounted for easy removal.

(1) The kit shall be sealed, moisture and dustproof, and be of sufficient capacity to store the required items.

(2) The seal verifies the integrity of the contents without opening the kit. The seal shall be designed to allow easy access to the kit's contents. If zip ties are used to seal the kit, they shall be breakaway.

(B) All bodily fluid kit components shall be inspected annually by the Educational Entity. Any items found to be expired, damaged, or previously opened shall be replaced as soon as possible to ensure kit integrity.

(C) The required contents of the bodily fluid kit are listed in Table 2.

Contents of the Bodily Fluid Kit:	
Item	**Unit(s)**
Antiseptic BKZ Towelette	1
Disinfectant towelette	1
Absorbing powder (capable of ½ gallon absorption)	1
Non-latex disposable gloves, pair	1
Disposable towels (paper, microfiber, etc.)	2
Disposable biohazard scoop bag with a closure mechanism and scraper	1

Table 2. Bodily Fluid Kit

10.14.5 Seat Belt Cutter:

(A) All School Transportation Vehicles shall be equipped with one durable seat belt cutter having a full-width handgrip and a protected blade. The cutter shall be mounted in a location accessible to and within immediate view of the seated driver.

(B) Seat belt cutters shall be replaced per the manufacturer's recommendation or if there is any sign of rust or corrosion on the blade.

PART 5: FIRST AID, CPR, AND UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS

As a transportation operator, you must be prepared to respond to medical emergencies calmly and safely. Unless you are physically disabled from doing so, you should administer first aid whenever it is apparent that death or severe, permanent injury to others may follow.

Crucial Legal and Safety Limit: Scope of Practice

As a school transportation operator, you must **never attempt any medical intervention that goes beyond your specific level of training and scope of practice**. Trying to perform advanced medical procedures without certification can worsen injuries and expose you and your district to liability. Furthermore, you must adhere strictly to the rule that when providing first aid, no medication of any kind (prescription or over-the-counter) may be administered without a physician's directive**.** Your job is to provide basic, immediate stabilization and life support until professional medical responders arrive.

The information provided here is basic and fundamental and is not intended to replace any official first aid/CPR/Universal Precautions training provided by a certified or registered party. For more detailed information regarding advanced medical procedures, contact your local School Nurse.

Legal Protections: The Colorado Good Samaritan Law

Many operators hesitate to act during a sudden medical crisis due to a fear of being sued if the outcome is not perfect. In Colorado, you are protected by a specific legal shield designed to encourage immediate, life-saving action.

- **Statutory Protection (C.R.S. 13-21-108):** Colorado's Good Samaritan Law explicitly states that any person who, in good faith, renders emergency care or assistance at the scene of an accident or emergency without compensation is exempt from civil liability for damages.
- **What is Covered:** The law protects you against ordinary mistakes made during the high-stress chaos of a rescue effort. For example, if you perform high-quality chest compressions during CPR and accidentally crack a student's rib, that is an accepted risk of the procedure; you are legally protected from civil damages because your actions were performed in good faith to save a life.
- **Employer Protection:** Under C.R.S. 13-21-108(5), this civil liability immunity extends directly to your school district or employer when you render emergency care in the course of your employment, provided your actions meet the good-faith standard.

- **The Exclusions (When the Shield Fails):** You lose Good Samaritan protection only if your actions constitute gross negligence or willful and wanton conduct. This means acting with reckless, conscious disregard for the student's safety, or intentionally performing an action that no reasonable person with your level of training would attempt (such as attempting a surgical procedure).
- **AED Protection (C.R.S. 13-21-108.1):** If your vehicle or terminal is equipped with an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), separate statutory language protects any bystander who uses it in good faith to rescue someone in cardiac arrest.

The legal takeaway is clear: as long as you act reasonably, stay within your scope of training, and work in good faith to preserve life, Colorado law firmly protects both you and your school district.

Basic First Aid: Managing Immediate Threats

When addressing a medical emergency on a Type A bus or small-capacity vehicle, your immediate priority is to stabilize the student while emergency medical services (EMS) are en route. Focus on the core life-saving measures below:

1. Severe Bleeding Control

Uncontrolled bleeding can become life-threatening in a matter of minutes.

- **Apply Direct Pressure:** Place a clean, sterile gauze pad from your 24-unit first aid kit directly over the wound. Press firmly with both hands.
- **Maintain Constant Pressure:** Do not remove the gauze to "check" if the bleeding has stopped, as this tears away forming clots. If blood seeps through, place additional gauze directly over the first layer and continue applying firm pressure.
- **Elevate:** If the injury is on an arm or leg, elevate the limb above the level of the heart while maintaining direct pressure, provided there are no signs of a fractured bone.

2. Shock Management

Shock occurs when the cardiovascular system fails to circulate enough blood to vital organs. It often follows severe injuries, bleeding, or emotional trauma.

- **Recognize the Signs:** Look for pale, cold, or clammy skin, rapid breathing, a weak pulse, nausea, or changes in mental status (such as confusion or restlessness).

- **Position the Student:** Lay the student flat on their back if it is safe to do so. If no spinal injury is suspected, elevate their feet approximately 8 to 12 inches to encourage blood flow to the core.
- **Regulate Body Temperature:** Use the **space rescue blanket** from your first aid kit to keep the student warm. Protect them from both the cold ground and chilling drafts, but avoid overheating them.
- **Reassure Them:** Keep the student calm and quiet. Do not give them anything to eat or drink, as this can create a severe choking or vomiting hazard.

3. Broken Bones and Dislocations

Fractures (broken bones) and dislocations require immediate immobilization to prevent further soft-tissue, nerve, or vascular damage.

- **Do Not Move or Align the Limb:** Never attempt to push a bone back into place, straighten a deformed limb, or force a dislocated joint back into its socket. Leave the limb in the exact position you found it.
- **Examine for Open Wounds:** If a bone has pierced the skin, do not attempt to push it back in. Control any bleeding by applying pressure around the edges of the wound, not directly on the exposed bone, and cover it loosely with a sterile gauze pad.
- **Immobilize the Injury:** Use the **triangular bandages** from your 24-unit first aid kit to create a supportive sling and swathe for upper extremity injuries (arms or shoulders). This binds the arm securely against the chest to prevent movement. For lower extremities, roll up thick jackets, blankets, or cardboard to create improvised rigid splints along the sides of the leg, tying them loosely in place above and below the injury site.
- **Check Circulation:** Regularly check the student's fingers or toes below the injury. If their skin turns blue, turns cold, or loses sensation, the splint or bandage is tied too tightly and must be loosened immediately.

4. The Priority of Noise: Screaming vs. Silence

In a mass-casualty or multi-injury incident, your triage instinct must be razor-sharp. A common trap for untrained operators is running to the student who is screaming the loudest. You must understand why **a silent child is always your highest priority and most concerning hazard**:

- **Screaming Proves Function:** If a child is screaming, crying, or complaining loudly, they have a functional, open airway, and their lungs are receiving enough oxygen to produce sound. Their neurological status is sufficiently responsive to

register and express pain. While they may have painful injuries (like a broken bone), they are currently breathing.

- **Silence Indicates a Critical Threat:** A silent child after a crash or hard brake suggests that their primary life-support mechanisms are failing. Silence frequently points to a completely blocked airway (severe choking), unconsciousness, profound neurological trauma (concussion/coma), severe shock, or cardiac/respiratory arrest.
- **The Golden Rule of Triage:** Always pass the screaming children first to assess and stabilize the silent, motionless passengers. They are the ones closest to death or permanent injury.

Basic Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) Protocol

If your assessment reveals a silent, unresponsive student who is not breathing or is only gasping, you must initiate CPR immediately. Follow this standard operational sequence:

1. Check Responsiveness and Shout for Help

- Tap the student firmly on the shoulder and shout loudly, "Are you okay?"
- If there is no response, immediately call dispatch or 911 (or point to a specific student leader or adult chaperone and command: "Call 911 now!").

2. Position the Victim

- To perform effective CPR, the student must be lying flat on their back on a firm, flat surface.
- On a vehicle, this means carefully moving the student out of the passenger seat and onto the flat center aisle floor.

3. Open the Airway and Check for Breathing

- Perform the head-tilt/chin-lift maneuver. Place one hand on the student's forehead and two fingers under their chin, gently tilting the head back to move the tongue away from the back of the throat.
- Look, listen, and feel for normal breathing for no more than 10 seconds. Ignore agonal gasps (occasional, irregular snorting or gasping sounds), as they are not normal breathing and indicate cardiac arrest.

4. Deliver High-Quality Chest Compressions

- Put on your non-latex disposable gloves. Kneel beside the student’s chest.

- Place the heel of one hand in the center of the chest (on the lower half of the breastbone) and place your other hand directly on top, interlocking your fingers.
- Position your shoulders directly over your hands, keep your elbows locked, and push straight down.
- **Compression Depth:** Compress the chest at least 2 inches for a child or adult (or approximately one-third the depth of the chest for an infant, using two fingers).
- **Compression Rate:** Push hard and fast at a rate of 100 to 120 compressions per minute (to the beat of the song "Staying Alive"). Allow the chest to fully recoil between each compression.

5. Provide Rescue Breaths (Using the CPR Mask)

- Retrieve the mandatory CPR mask or mouth-to-mouth airway from your 24-unit first aid kit. Do not perform rescue breaths without this protective barrier.
- Secure the mask firmly over the student's nose and mouth to create an airtight seal.
- With the airway open (head-tilt/chin-lift), pinch the nose if required by your specific mask type, and deliver rescue breaths. Each breath should last about 1 second and cause the student’s chest to visibly rise.
- **The Cycle Ratio:** Maintain a strict ratio of 30 chest compressions followed by 2 rescue breaths.
- Continue this cycle uninterrupted until emergency medical personnel arrive and take over, an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) becomes available, or the student shows obvious signs of life (such as breathing or moving).

Bloodborne Pathogen Protection & Universal Precautions

It is natural to feel concerned about contracting a disease when assisting an injured person. To protect yourself from bloodborne pathogens, including infectious diseases, bacteria, or viruses found in body fluids, you must implement universal precautions.

A simple rule of thumb to remember is: **If a fluid is wet, warm, and NOT yours, use universal precautions.**

Your employer is required by law to provide you with detailed, comprehensive training in bloodborne pathogen procedures.

Basic Guidelines to Reduce Disease Transmission

Following these core safety guidelines will drastically reduce the risk of disease transmission while you provide first aid on your vehicle:

- **Be Prepared:** Always ensure your vehicle's first aid kit and body fluid cleanup kit are fully stocked with protective equipment and supplies, such as non-latex disposable gloves and biohazard bags, before leaving the terminal.
- **Use Protective Barriers:** Before providing care, place a barrier between the victim's body fluids and yourself. Utilize your kit's face mask, eye protection, non-latex disposable gloves, or even a clean, dry cloth.
- **Protect Your Own Skin:** Keep any cuts, sores, scrapes, or active skin conditions on your own hands and arms completely covered.
- **Avoid Direct Contact:** Minimize direct contact with blood or body fluids whenever possible. Do not touch objects that appear soiled with blood or body fluids.
- **Maintain Personal Hygiene During Care:** Do not eat, drink, or touch your mouth, nose, or eyes while administering first aid.
- **Follow Disposal Policies:** Dispose of all materials contaminated with blood or body fluids strictly as directed by your employer's specific bloodborne pathogen and hazardous waste policy.
- **Wash Thoroughly:** Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm running water immediately after you finish giving first aid, even if you wore disposable gloves.
- **Report and Evaluate Immediately:** If you experience an exposure incident (such as blood or potentially infectious material contacting your broken skin, eyes, mouth, or mucous membranes), you must report it to dispatch or your supervisor immediately upon securing the scene. Follow your Educational Entity’s policy to obtain an immediate, confidential medical evaluation.

PART 6: EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS

Evacuating a school transportation vehicle is an absolute last resort. In a crash or breakdown, the inside of the vehicle is generally the safest place for students because it protects them from high-speed traffic on the roadway.

The Three Mandatory Reasons to Evacuate

You are permitted to order an emergency evacuation *only* if one of these three catastrophic conditions exists:

1. **Fire or Threat of Fire:** The vehicle is actively on fire, or you smell fuel leaks or burning electrical insulation.
2. **Unsafe Vehicle Position:** The vehicle is stalled or stopped in a position where a secondary collision is highly likely (such as being stuck across a railroad track, or stopped just past the crest of a blind hill in heavy fog).
3. **Hazardous Environmental Location:** The vehicle is at risk of being swept away or submerged by an active natural hazard (such as a flash flood, a mudslide, or an avalanche path).

General Procedures for a Safe Evacuation

If an evacuation is deemed mandatory, you must maintain total command of the cabin:

- **Maintain Order:** Remain calm and use a clear, commanding voice. Students will mirror your behavior; if you panic, they will panic.
- **Assign Student Leaders:** If you are driving a Type A-1 bus, appoint two mature student leaders to assist at the evacuation door. One leader will exit first to help students down, and the second leader will assist students in getting to the safe assembly zone.
- **Leave Belongings Behind:** Instruct students to leave all backpacks, books, coats, and personal items inside the bus. Taking belongings slows down the evacuation and creates tripping hazards in the aisle.
- **The Safe Assembly Zone:** Move all evacuated students to a designated safe zone completely away from the roadway and at least 100 feet or more away from the bus. Ensure they are grouped together and supervised so no child wanders back toward traffic or the vehicle.
- **Final Cabin Sweep:** Take your first aid kit, body fluid kit, and passenger manifest. If you are driving a Type A-1 bus, walk to the very back row of the bus and check under every seat to ensure no injured, frightened, or unconscious children are left behind.

Choosing Your Evacuation Exit Routes

Type A buses feature multiple emergency exit paths that you can utilize depending on how the vehicle is positioned post-crash:

Emergency Exit Options

Front Door

- Primary option
- Fastest clearance
- Use if clear

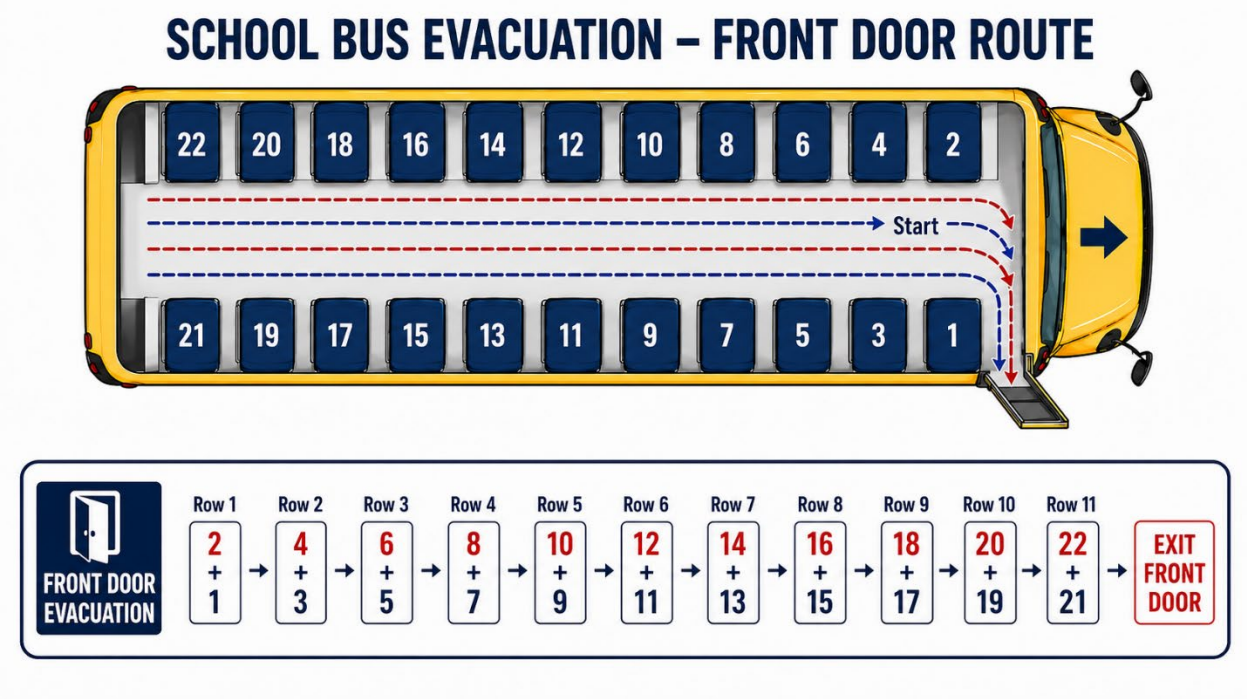
Rear Door

- Secondary option
- Essential if front is blocked

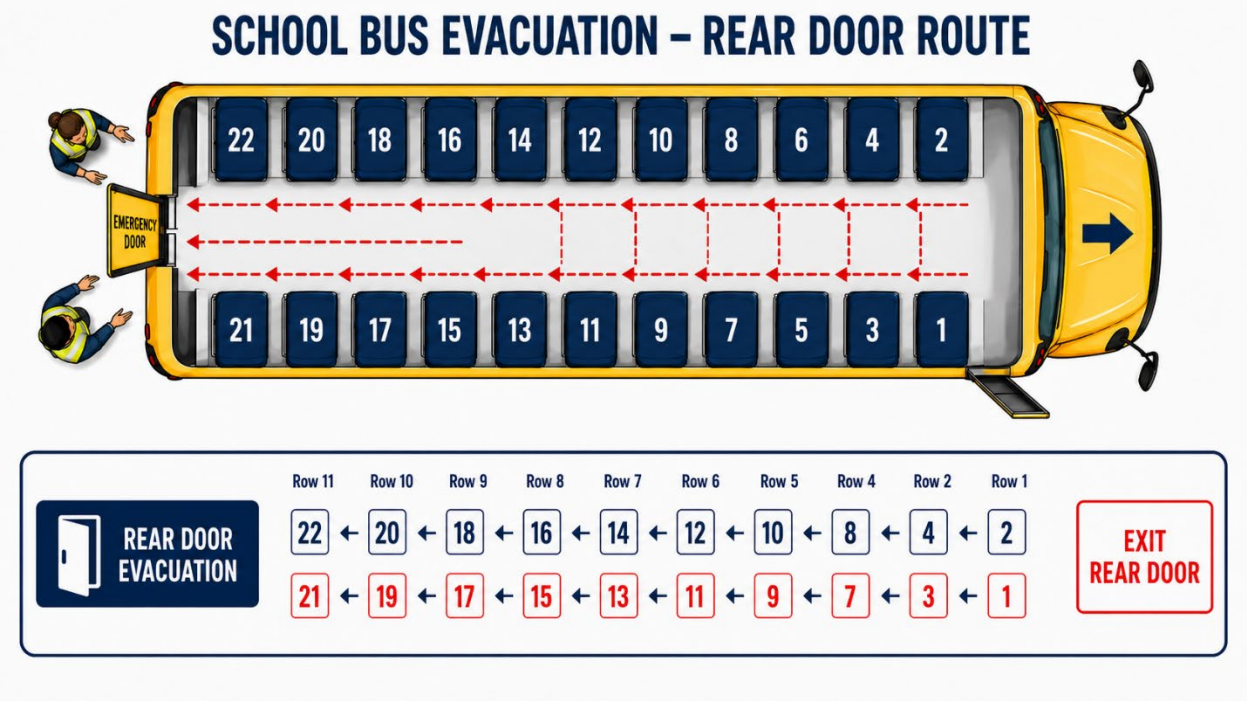
Windows and Hatches

- Use ONLY if doors are jammed, blocked, or if the bus is rolled over

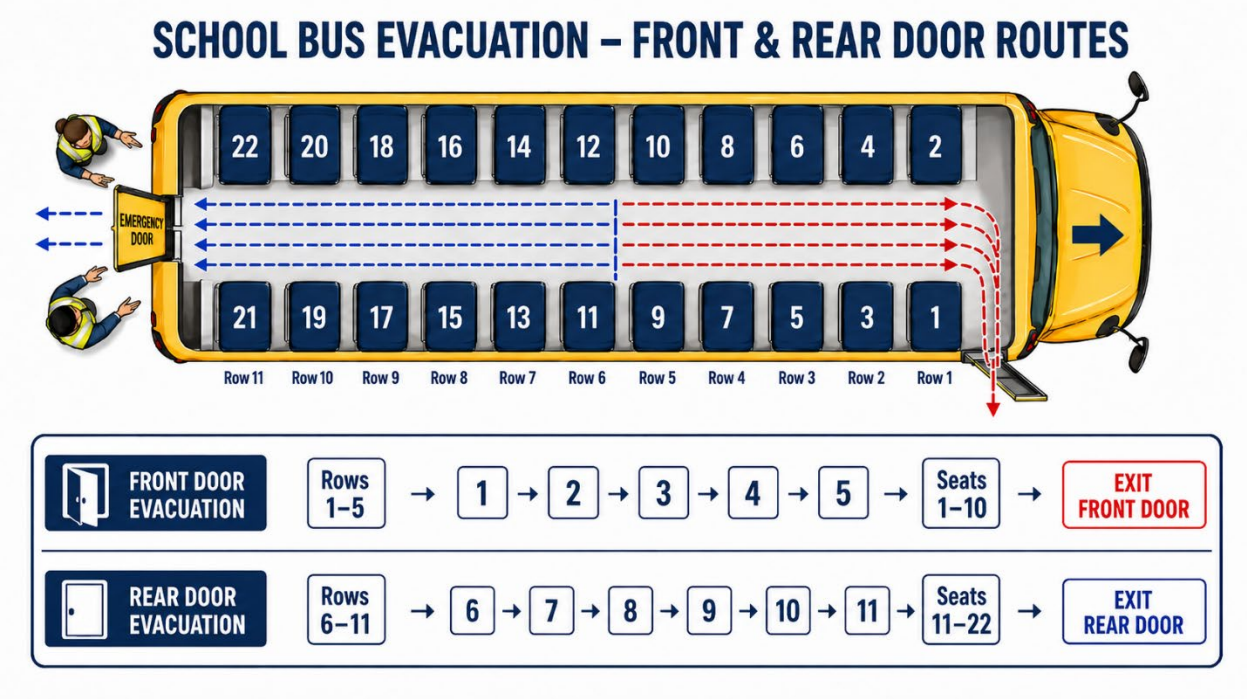
- **Front Door Evacuation:** This is your primary, fastest route under normal circumstances. Students exit row by row, alternating between the left and right sides of the aisle, starting at the front of the bus.



- **Rear Emergency Door Evacuation:** Utilized if the front door is jammed or blocked by fire/debris. Open the door fully until it locks in the wide-open position. Assign your helper leaders outside. Students exit row by row, alternating between the left and right sides of the aisle, starting at the rear of the bus. Instruct students to walk down the aisle, crouch at the rear door sill, and drop safely with assistance from the outside student leaders. **Do not let students jump out wildly**, as this causes severe ankle and leg injuries.



- **Combined Front and Rear Evacuation:** If the threat is urgent and both doors are completely clear, split the cabin. Rows 1 through 2 exit out the front door, while rows 3 and 4 exit through the rear door.



- **Emergency Windows and Roof Hatches:** These are restricted exit routes. They should **only be used if all structural doors are completely jammed or blocked, or if the bus has rolled onto its side**. Roof hatches are excellent for ventilation or exit if a vehicle is partially submerged in water.

Evacuating Students with Functional or Special Needs

Evacuating a bus carrying students with physical disabilities or functional needs requires specialized prep and coordination:

- **Know Your Roster:** You must know exactly which students are non-ambulatory (cannot walk) and which have cognitive or sensory sensitivities.
- **Wheelchair Lift Failure:** In an emergency evacuation, do not waste time attempting to operate the electric wheelchair lift. It moves too slowly, and a loss of engine power will disable it completely.
- **The Manual Carry Technique:** You must manually unbuckle or cut the wheelchair securement straps. Carefully lift the student out of their wheelchair using proper body mechanics (bending your knees) or a specialized evacuation blanket/sling. Carry them down the aisle to the nearest functioning emergency exit door, and carefully hand them off to your adult chaperones or emergency responders outside. Follow your Educational Entity policies.

16.0 Emergency Evacuation Drills

16.1 Mandatory Route Operator Evacuation Drills

16.1.1 Small-Capacity Vehicle Operators, as defined in these rules, are exempt from this requirement.

16.1.2 All School Transportation Vehicle Route Operators and School Transportation Bus Attendants shall conduct emergency evacuation drills with students at least twice during each school year.

(A) One drill shall be conducted in the fall, and the second drill shall be conducted in the spring.

(B) Substitute and Multifunction bus operators shall be trained on how to conduct emergency evacuation drills.

16.1.3 Special Needs Provisions

(A) Physical evacuation drills are not required to be conducted for students with functional or special needs.

(1) For these students, at a minimum, a detailed written emergency evacuation plan shall be maintained on file by the transportation department. This plan shall be reviewed by Transportation Personnel at least twice per school year to ensure accuracy and safety.

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Unit Eight – Transporting Students for Route and Activity Trips

PART 1: THE DANGER ZONES AND MIRROR SCANNING

The physical act of loading and unloading students is the single most hazardous phase of school transportation operations. Statistically, more students are injured or killed outside the bus by passing motorists or by the bus itself than while riding inside the vehicle.

Mapping the "Danger Zone"

The "Danger Zone" is the entire perimeter extending 10 feet completely around the school bus. Because of the bus's high ground clearance and large structural frame, a child standing in these areas can be completely invisible to the operator without proper use of the mirrors.

- **The Front Danger Zone:** Extends up to 30 feet from the front bumper, with the first 10 feet being the most blind.
- **The Side Danger Zones:** The areas immediately in front of the left and right rear wheels are highly critical, as students can easily trip or fall under the tires.
- **The Rear Danger Zone:** Extends 10 feet directly behind the rear bumper. The driver has zero direct rear visibility; backing up at a student stop is strictly controlled.

Note on Danger Zone Management: For more comprehensive information, diagrams, and defensive driving strategies regarding the physical boundaries of these high-risk areas, please refer back to Unit Three - Part 5.

Standardized Mirror Scanning Matrix

Operators must maintain a continuous, rapid mirror-scanning habit throughout the entire loading and unloading cycle.

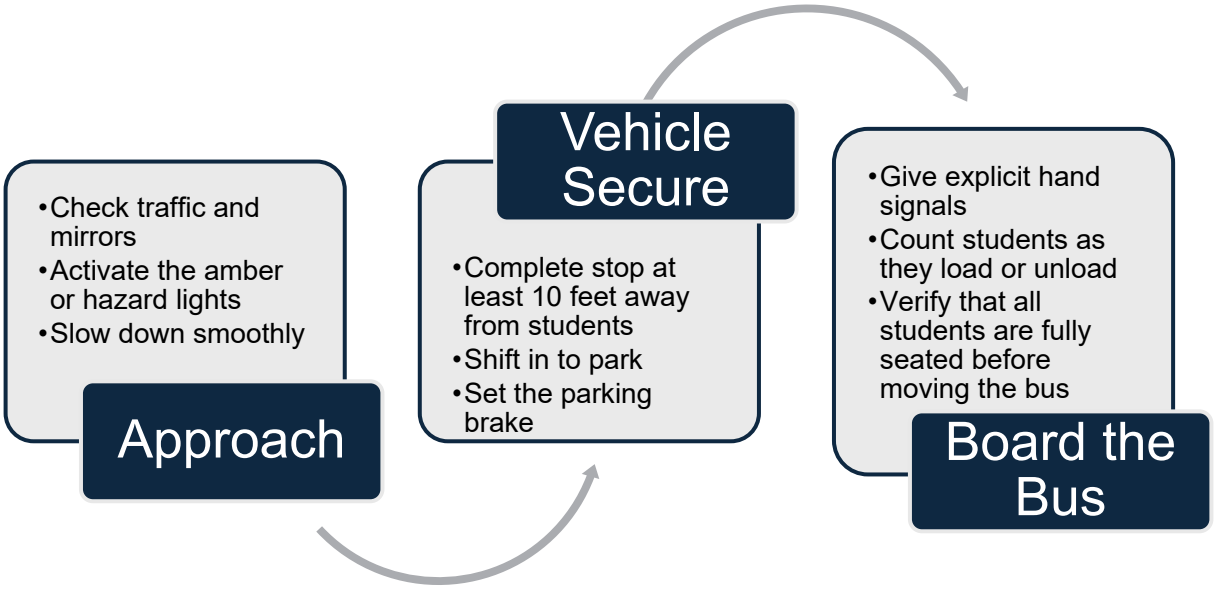
- **Crossover Mirrors:** Used to monitor the entire front bumper area at ground level up to the point where direct vision is possible. Drivers must verify that the front tires are completely clear of children before moving.
- **Side Convex Mirrors:** Positioned to eliminate the blind spots immediately along the left and right sides of the bus frame, displaying the entry door area and the ground leading to both rear tire sets.

- **Flat Mirrors:** Used to monitor long-distance traffic trailing behind the bus or passing along the left side.

Note on Mirror Adjustment: For more comprehensive instructions regarding the precise physical adjustment, target grids, and regulatory setups for these specific mirror systems, please refer back to Unit Three - Part 6.

PART 2: PROCEDURAL STEPS FOR LOADING STUDENTS

To establish absolute behavioral consistency and maximize passenger safety, operators must perform the loading sequence in the exact order detailed below.



The Approach Phase

1. **Scan Ahead:** Look far ahead to locate the waiting students and scan for conflicting traffic hazards. Instruct your passengers to wait at their designated location, face the vehicle as it approaches, and arrive at the stop at least 5 minutes early.

2. **Signal Intent – Type A school bus:** Activate your 8-way amber warning lights at least 200 feet before the stop to alert traffic.
3. **Signal Intent – Type A multifunction school activity bus:** Activate hazard warning lights at least 200 feet before the stop to alert traffic.
4. **Signal Intent – Small-Capacity Vehicle:** Activate your hazard warning lights at least 200 feet before the stop to alert traffic.
5. **Smooth Braking:** Apply light brake pressure to slow the vehicle down smoothly, signaling trailing motorists with your brake lights.

Securing the Vehicle at the Stop

1. **The 10-Foot Cushion:** Bring the vehicle to a complete stop 10 feet away from the waiting students. Never pull the vehicle directly up to or alongside the children, as a slip or a push in line could send a child under the wheels. Each student stop should have a location where the students can safely wait for the school transportation vehicle at least 10 feet off the roadway.
2. **Lock the Controls:** Once stopped, keep your foot firmly on the service brake pedal, apply the parking brake, and shift the transmission into **Park**. This prevents the bus from rolling if your foot accidentally slips off the brake pedal while assisting students.

   Remember that the parking brake is always the first thing on and the last thing off at each stop.

Boarding and Seating Protocol

1. **Signal the Students:** Look directly at the students and give them an approved, pre-arranged hand signal to board.
2. **The Entry Count:** Count the students as they walk up to the vehicle to ensure your passenger manifest matches exactly.
3. **Enforce Seating Rules:** If driving a Type A-1 bus, instruct students to immediately move to a seat, sit completely upright, and face forward with their backs against the seat cushion while the vehicle is in motion. Operators must consider passenger size when determining how many students can safely occupy a single bus seat.

   If driving a small-capacity vehicle, instruct students or help them put their safety belts on and direct them to face forward with their backs against the seat cushion while the vehicle is in motion.

Returning to Traffic

1. **Danger Zone Clearance:** Verify through all mirrors and direct observation that all there are no students or pedestrians near the vehicle, at least 10 feet away, and clear of all Danger Zones.
2. **Deactivate Warning Signals:** Close the service door (deactivating 8-way red lights/stop arm on Type A school buses) or turn off hazard flashers.
3. **Final Traffic Check & Re-entry:** Depress the service brake, release the parking brake, shift into Drive, conduct a final mirror check for traffic, signal, and smoothly pull back into the flow of traffic.

12.5 Passenger Management and Capacity

12.5.2 Seating and Capacity

(A) Occupancy on any School Transportation Vehicle shall not exceed the manufacturer-specified maximum seating capacity of the vehicle.

(1) Small vehicle capacity shall not exceed the number of factory-installed safety belts.

(B) Passengers shall not be permitted to stand in any School Transportation Vehicle while the vehicle is in motion.

(1) This does not preclude authorized persons (such as School Transportation Bus Attendants) from completing their duties as required.

(C) Educational Entities shall consider the size of the passengers when determining the number of passengers that can safely occupy a School Transportation Vehicle seat.

PART 3: STEPS FOR UNLOADING & CROSSING

Unloading poses a heightened risk because students are moving away from the vehicle and into uncontrolled environments.

Unloading Mechanics (No Crossing Required)

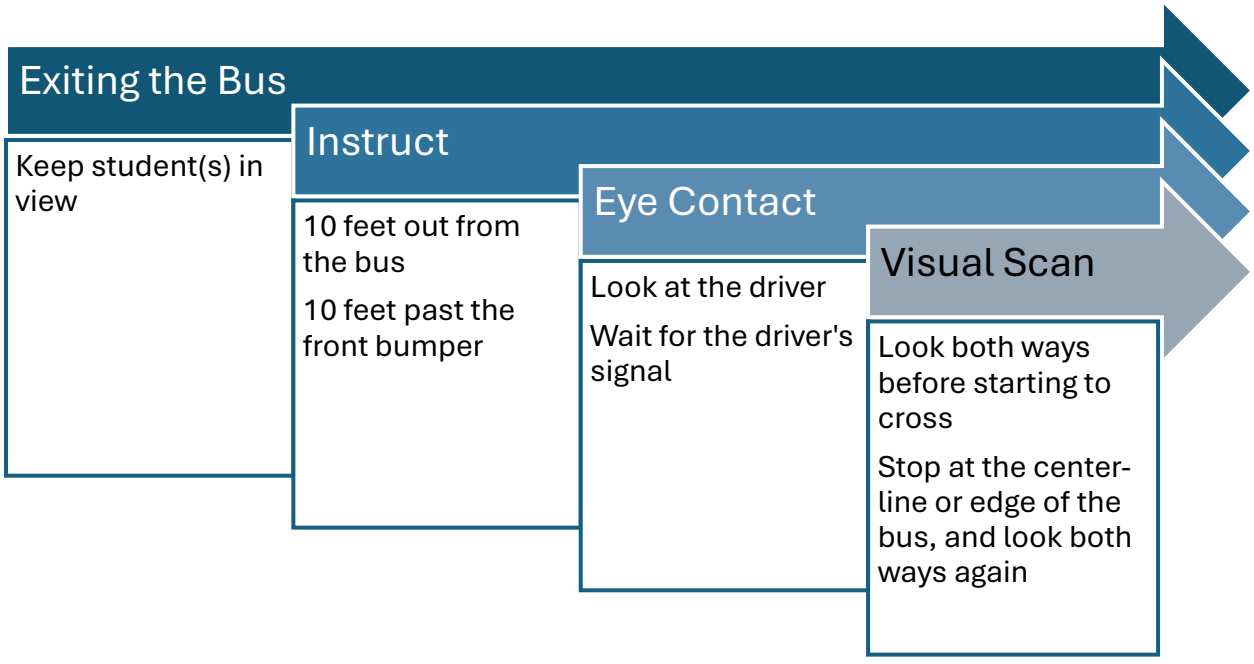
1. **Secure the Vehicle:** Bring the vehicle to a full stop at the designated stop location, apply the parking brake, and shift to Park.

2. For Type A school buses, open the service door to deploy the stop arm and activate 8-way red crossing lights (if equipped). For MFSABs and Small-Capacity Vehicles, ensure hazard lights remain active before opening doors.
3. **Orderly Discharge:** Count students as they exit the vehicle. Verify that the number of exiting students matches your passenger manifest before anyone steps away from the vehicle.
4. **Instructing Exiting Students:** Ensure students use handrails or door handles when exiting. Remind them to step immediately out of the 10-foot Danger Zone surrounding the vehicle.

High-Risk Passenger Crossing Sequences

All Type A-1 MFSAB and Small-Capacity Vehicles are prohibited from allowing students to cross any roadway to access their stop, as these vehicles cannot control traffic. The following procedures are for Type A-1 school buses that are black and yellow, and are equipped with the student crossing lights/arm.

Under Colorado law, if a student must cross the street to reach their destination after disembarking, specific crossing safeguards must be rigidly executed:



4. **Walk 10 Feet Forward:** Instruct crossing students to walk along the sidewalk or shoulder to a point at least 10 feet in front of the vehicle, where they can maintain clear eye contact with the driver. Students must NEVER cross behind the vehicle.
5. Perform a thorough mirror check (left, right, and crossview/convex) to ensure all surrounding traffic has stopped and no vehicles are attempting to pass.
6. **Establish Eye Contact:** Establish direct eye contact with waiting students. Give a distinct, pre-arranged hand signal (e.g., pointing across the road with an open hand) indicating it is safe to cross.
7. **The Center-Line Stop:** Maintain continuous visual contact with crossing students as they traverse the roadway. Count students again as they reach the safe zone on the opposite side of the road.
8. **Alert if Traffic Doesn't Stop:** If the school bus operator observes that oncoming or following traffic isn't slowing down for the red lights, they should honk the horn to alert students and guide them safely back to the correct side of the road.
    a. If you are unloading students and a vehicle passes your red lights, your primary responsibility is to the safety of the students. Honk your horn to warn the students of the oncoming hazard and direct them back to safety.
9. **Absolute Prohibition:** Students are strictly prohibited from crossing any lanes of traffic behind the bus or crossing any multi-lane highway where traffic is not legally required to stop.
10. **No Unauthorized Relocation:** School transportation operators are strictly prohibited from changing or relocating a student stop without formal, written administrative approval from the district or service provider.
11. **Danger Zone Clearance:** Verify through all mirrors and direct observation that all discharged students are at least 10 feet away from the vehicle and clear of all Danger Zones.
12. **Deactivate Warning Signals:** Close the service door (deactivating 8-way red lights/stop arm on Type A school buses) or turn off hazard flashers.
13. **Final Traffic Check & Re-entry:** Depress the service brake, release the parking brake, shift into Drive, conduct a final mirror check for traffic, signal, and smoothly pull back into the flow of traffic.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-1903 School buses – stops – signs – passing – penalty – definition

(1)

(a) The driver of a motor vehicle upon any highway, road, or street, upon meeting or overtaking from either direction any school bus that has stopped, shall stop the vehicle at least twenty feet before reaching the school bus if visual signal lights as specified in subsection (2) of this section have been actuated on the school bus. The driver shall not proceed until the visual signal lights are no longer being actuated.

(b)

(I) A driver of any school bus who observes a violation of paragraph (a) of this subsection (1) shall notify the driver' s school district transportation dispatcher. The school bus driver shall provide the school district transportation dispatcher with the color, basic description, and license plate number of the vehicle involved in the violation, information pertaining to the identity of the alleged violator, and the time and the approximate location at which the violation occurred. Any school district transportation dispatcher who has received information by a school bus driver concerning a violation of paragraph (a) of this subsection (1) shall provide such information to the appropriate law enforcement agency or agencies.

(II) A law enforcement agency may issue a citation on the basis of the information supplied to it pursuant to subparagraph (I) of this paragraph (b) to the driver of the vehicle involved in the violation.

(2)

(a) Every school bus as defined in section 42-1-102 (88), other than a small passenger-type vehicle having a seating capacity of not more than twelve, used for the transportation of schoolchildren, must:

(I) Bear upon the front and rear of such school bus plainly visible and legible signs containing the words "SCHOOL BUS" in letters not less than eight inches in height; and

(II) Display eight visual signal lights meeting the requirements of 49 CFR 571.108 or its successor regulation.

(a.5) Every multifunction school activity bus as defined in section 42-1-102 (60.1) must bear on the front and rear of the bus the words "ACTIVITY BUS" in black letters not less than eight inches in height.

(b)

(I) The red visual signal lights shall be actuated by the driver of the school bus whenever the school bus is stopped for the purpose of receiving or discharging schoolchildren, is stopped because it is behind another school bus that is receiving or discharging passengers, or, except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, is stopped because it has met a school bus traveling in a different direction that is receiving or discharging passengers and at no other time; but such lights need not be actuated when a school bus is stopped at locations where the local traffic regulatory authority has by prior written designation declared such actuation unnecessary.

(II) A school bus shall be exempt from the provisions of subparagraph (I) of this paragraph (b) when stopped for the purpose of discharging or loading passengers who require the assistance of a lift device only when no passenger is required to cross the roadway. Such buses shall stop as far to the right off the roadway as possible to reduce obstruction to traffic.

(c) The alternating flashing yellow lights shall be actuated at least two hundred feet prior to the point where the bus is to be stopped for the purpose of receiving or discharging schoolchildren, and the red lights shall be actuated only at the time the bus is actually stopped.

(3) Every school bus used for the transportation of schoolchildren, except those small passenger-type vehicles described in subsection (1) of this section and multifunction school activity buses, must be equipped with school bus pedestrian safety devices that comply with 49 CFR 571.131 or its successor regulation.

(4) The driver of a vehicle upon a highway with separate roadways need not stop upon meeting or passing a school bus that is on a different roadway. As used in this section, “highway with separate roadways” means a highway that is divided into two or more roadways by a depressed or raised median, physical barriers, or other intervening space serving as a clearly indicated section or island that physically divides the roadways.

(5) Every school bus shall stop as far to the right of the roadway as possible before discharging or loading passengers; except that the school bus may block the lane of traffic when a passenger being received or discharged is required to cross the roadway. When possible, a school bus shall not stop where the visibility is obscured for a distance of two hundred feet either way from the bus. The driver of a school bus that has stopped shall allow time for any vehicles that have

stopped behind the school bus to pass the school bus, if such passing is legally permissible where the school bus is stopped, after the visual signal lights, if any, are no longer being displayed or actuated and after all children who have embarked or disembarked from the bus are safe from traffic.

(6)

(a) Except as provided in paragraph (b) of this subsection (6), any person who violates any provision of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of this section commits a class 2 misdemeanor traffic offense.

(b) Any person who violates the provisions of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of this section commits a class 1 misdemeanor traffic offense if such person has been convicted within the previous five years of a violation of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of this section.

(7) The provisions of this section shall not apply in the case of public transportation programs for pupil transportation under section 22-51-104 (1)(c), C.R.S.

Colorado Revised Statutes 42-4-1904 Regulations for school buses – regulations on discharge of passengers – penalty – exception – definition

(1) The state board of education, by and with the advice of the executive director of the department, shall adopt and enforce regulations not inconsistent with this article to govern the operation of all school buses used for the transportation of schoolchildren and to govern the discharge of passengers from such school buses. Such regulations shall prohibit the driver of any school bus used for the transportation of schoolchildren from discharging any passenger from the school bus which will result in the passenger's immediately crossing a major thoroughfare, except for two-lane highways when such crossing can be done in a safe manner, as determined by the local school board in consultation with the local traffic regulatory authority, and shall prohibit the discharging or loading of passengers from the school bus onto the side of any major thoroughfare whenever access to the destination of the passenger is possible by the use of a road or street which is adjacent to the major thoroughfare. For the purposes of this section, a "major thoroughfare" means a freeway, any U.S. highway outside any incorporated limit, interstate highway, or highway with four or more lanes, or a highway or road with a median separating multiple lanes of traffic. Every person operating a school bus or responsible for or in control of the operation of school buses shall be subject to said regulations.

(2) Any person operating a school bus under contract with a school district who fails to comply with any of said regulations is guilty of breach of contract, and such contract shall be canceled after notice and hearing by the responsible officers of such district.

(3) Any person who violates any provision of this section commits a petty offense.

(4) The provisions of this section shall not apply in the case of public transportation programs for pupil transportation under section 22-51-104 (1)(c), C.R.S.

14.3 Route Prohibitions and Constraints

14.3.2 Operational Constraints and Exceptions

(D) School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall not relocate a student stop without the approval of the Educational Entity.

14.4 Loading and Unloading Procedures

14.4.1 School Bus 8-way System Student Stop Procedure

(A) School Transportation Vehicle Operators of School Transportation Vehicles equipped with flashing amber/red systems shall adhere to the following sequence:

(1) Approach cautiously at a slow rate of speed.

(2) Continuously check all mirrors.

(3) Activate alternating flashing amber warning lights at least 200 feet before the school bus stop.

(4) Turn on the right turn signal indicator about 100-300 feet before pulling over.

(5) Continuously check mirrors to monitor the danger zones for students, traffic, and other objects.

(6) The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall stop as far to the right of the roadway, highway, or private road as possible before discharging or loading passengers - allowing sufficient area to the right and front of the vehicle but close enough to the right to prevent traffic from passing on the right - so that students may clear the vehicle safely while in sight of the School Transportation Vehicle Operator.

(a) Exception: The School Transportation Vehicle Operator may block the lane of traffic when passengers being received or discharged are required to cross the roadway.

(7) School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall bring the bus to a complete stop with the front bumper positioned not less than ten (10) feet from students at each designated stop to ensure that students approach the vehicle within the School Transportation Operator's line of sight and to enhance visibility of student movement.

(8) The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall keep their foot on the service brake, apply the parking brake, and shift the vehicle into neutral prior to opening the service door of a bus.

(9) Activate the alternating 8-way red lights warning lights system when traffic is a safe distance from the school bus and ensure the stop arm is extended.

(10) Make a final check to see that all traffic has stopped before completely opening the door and signaling students to approach or allowing them to disembark.

(11) After all students have loaded or disembarked:

(a) If the students have disembarked, the School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall verify that all students have crossed or are away from the vehicle, and are counted, prior to moving the vehicle.

(b) Close the service or passenger door.

(c) Shift from neutral, engage the transmission, and release the parking brake.

(d) Turn on the left turn signal and deactivate the eight-way system.

(e) Check all mirrors, allow congested traffic to disperse, and enter the flow of traffic when it is safe to do so.

14.4.2 Small-Capacity and Type A-1 Multifunction Bus Student Stop Procedure

(A) When a Type A-1 Multifunction Bus or Small-Capacity Vehicle is used for Route transportation, students shall be prohibited from crossing any roadway, highway, or private road to board or exit the vehicle.

(B) When using a Type A-1 Multifunction bus or small-capacity vehicle for Route:

(1) The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall stop as far to the right of the roadway, and/or off the roadway when possible, to reduce obstruction to traffic.

(2) Activate the right turn signal prior to turning on the four-way hazard warning lamps a minimum of 200 feet prior to the student stop.

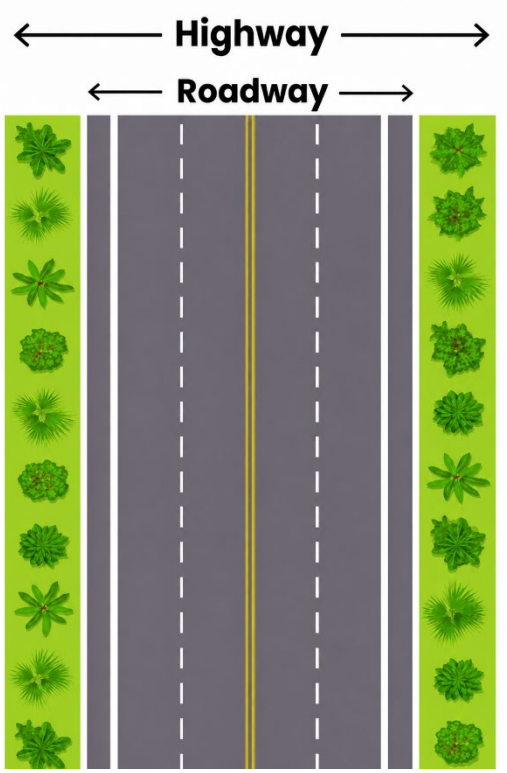
(a) School Transportation Vehicle Operators of Small-Capacity Vehicles shall place the vehicle into park prior to opening the passenger door(s) of a Small-Capacity Vehicle.

(3) Continue to display the four-way hazard warning lamps until the process of discharging or loading passengers has been completed.

(4) Deactivate the four-way hazard lamps before resuming motion, activate the left turn signal, allow congested traffic to disperse, and enter the flow of traffic when it is safe to do so.

PART 4: STUDENT STOPS

Highway and Roadway



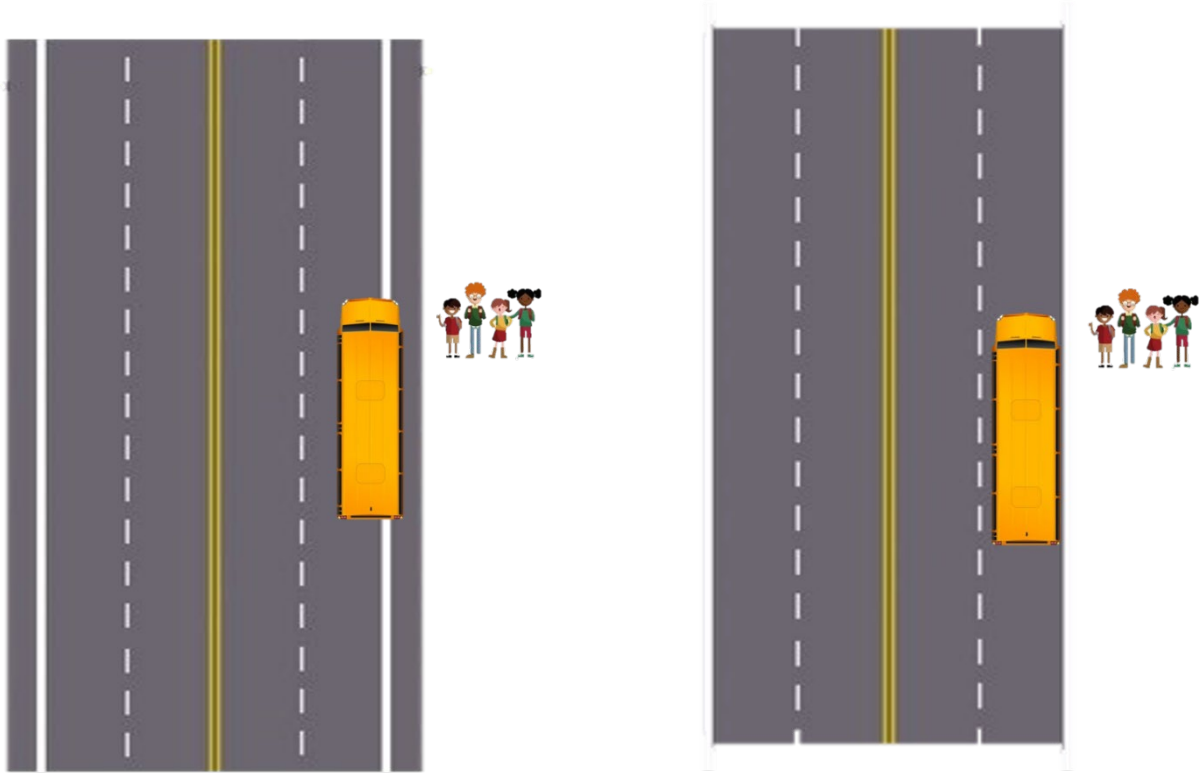
Highway

“Highway” means the entire width between the boundary lines of every way publicly maintained when any part thereof is open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel or the entire width of every way declared to be a public highway by any law of this state. [§42-1-102(43), C.R.S.] “Highway” includes bridges on the roadway and culverts, sluices, drains, ditches, waterways, embankments, retaining walls, trees, shrubs, and fences along or upon the same and within the right-of-way. [§ 43-1-203(1), C.R.S.]

Roadway

"Roadway" means that portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular travel, exclusive of the sidewalk, berm, or shoulder even though such sidewalk, berm, or shoulder is used by persons riding bicycles or other human-powered vehicles and exclusive of that portion of a highway designated for exclusive use as a bicycle path or reserved for the exclusive use of bicycles, human-powered vehicles, or pedestrians. In the event that a highway includes two or more separate roadways, "roadway" refers to any such roadway separately but not to all such roadways collectively.

School Bus Stop – Students Not Crossing Paved Road

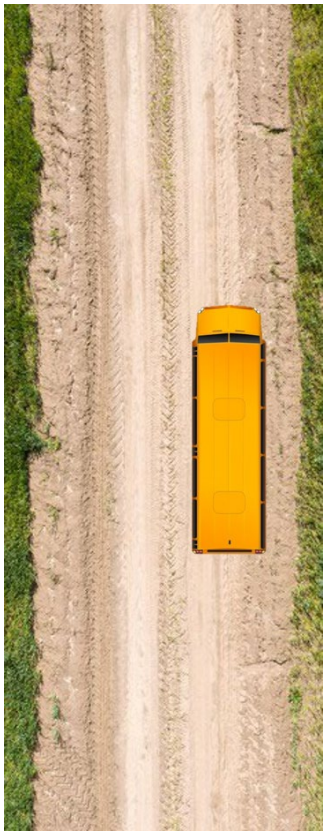


14.4 Loading and Unloading Procedures

14.4.1 School Bus 8-way System Student Stop Procedure

(6) The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall stop as far to the right of the roadway, highway, or private road as possible before discharging or loading passengers - allowing sufficient area to the right and front of the vehicle but close enough to the right to prevent traffic from passing on the right - so that students may clear the vehicle safely while in sight of the School Transportation Vehicle Operator.

School Bus Stop – Students Not Crossing Unpaved Road



14.4 Loading and Unloading Procedures

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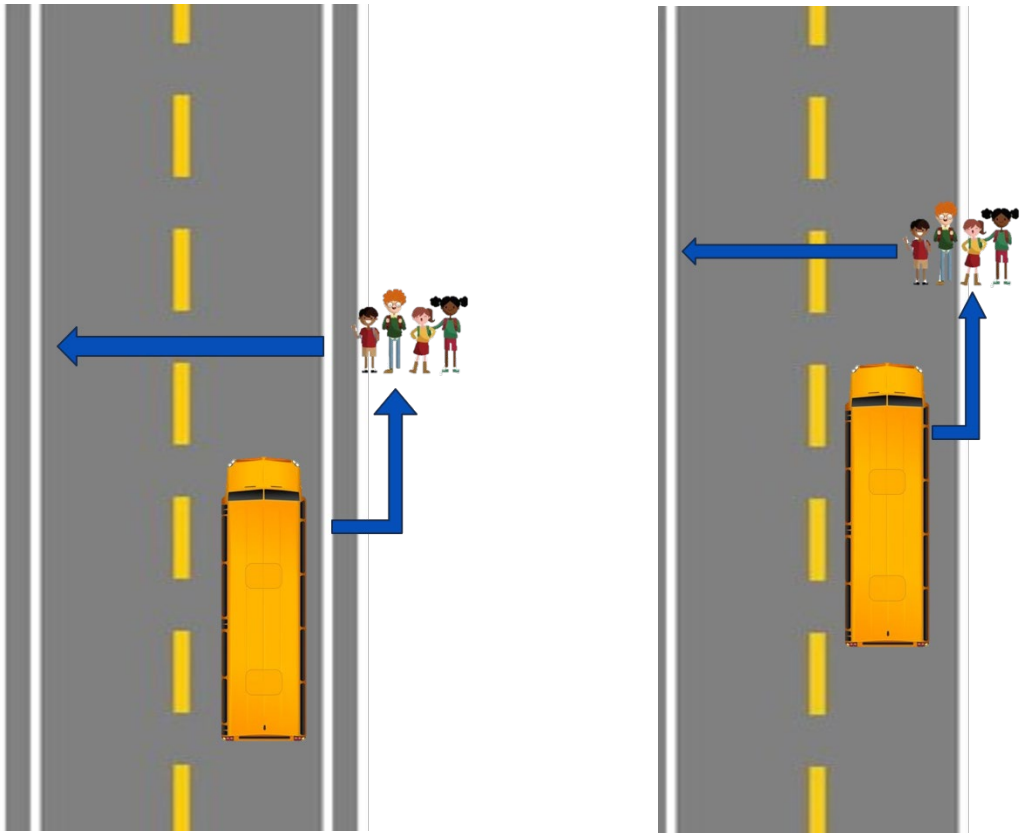
School Bus Stop – Students Crossing



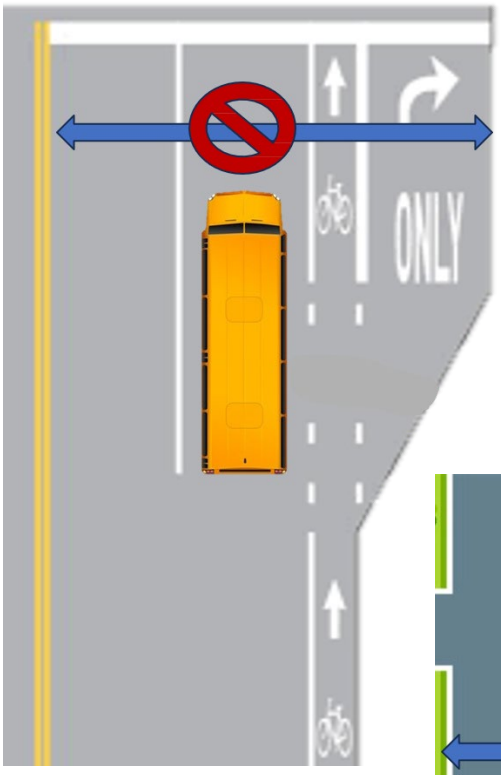
14.4 Loading and Unloading Procedures

14.4.1 School Bus 8-way System Student Stop Procedure

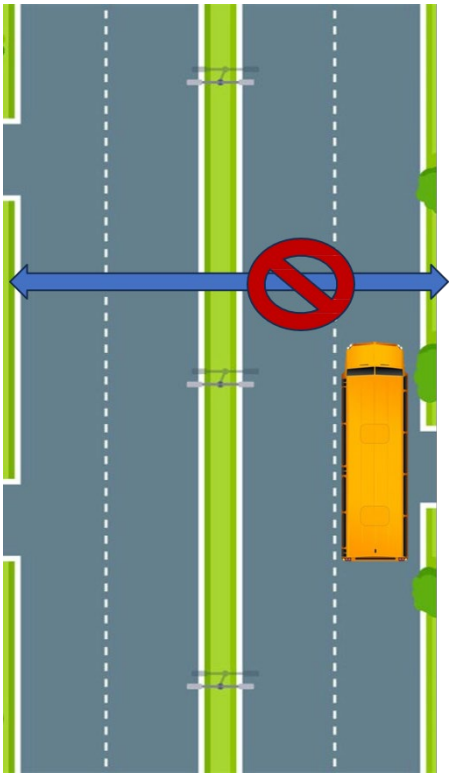
(6)

(a) Exception: The School Transportation Vehicle Operator may block the lane of traffic when passengers being received or discharged are required to cross the roadway.

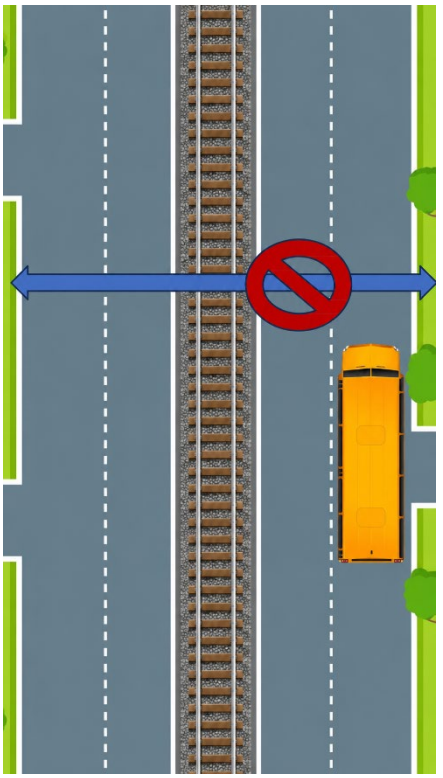
School Bus Stop – PROHIBITED Students Crossing



Multiple Lanes of Traffic



Median



Railroad Tracks

14.3 Route Prohibitions and Constraints

14.3.1 Crossing Prohibitions

(A) Educational Entities shall ensure that if students are required to cross a roadway, highway, or private road to access the student stop, the student(s) are prohibited from the following:

(1) Crossing any roadway constructed or designed to permit three or more separate lanes of vehicular traffic in either direction, including turn lanes;

(2) Crossing any roadway constructed with a median (raised, depressed, or painted) separating multiple lanes of traffic.

(3) Crossing any railroad crossings not designated for pedestrian crossings.

PART 5: COMPLIANCE ON FIELD AND ACTIVITY TRIPS

Field and activity trips require operating in unfamiliar territories, managing irregular schedules, and transporting specialized gear.

1. Chaperone and Sponsor Duties

- **The Chain of Command:** The school transportation vehicle operator maintains absolute authority over the vehicle at all times. While coaches, teachers, or chaperones manage student discipline and assist with student management during rest stops, the driver retains sole authority over vehicle safety, seating configurations, load capacities, and emergency maneuvers.
- **Evacuation Instructions:** Prior to departure on any school-related event (field trips, athletic events, etc.), passengers must receive a verbal emergency evacuation instruction. This instruction must identify all emergency exit locations, demonstrate their operation, explain behavioral expectations, and assign adult chaperones to positions adjacent to emergency exits.

16.0 Emergency Evacuation Drills

16.2 School-Related Event Instructions

16.2.1 For all School-Related Events (field trips, athletics, etc.), passengers must receive a verbal emergency evacuation briefing prior to the initial departure of every trip. This briefing must include the location and operation of emergency exits.

16.2.2 Educational Entities shall maintain records documenting that the required evacuation drills were conducted and/or evacuation instruction was given.

2. Cargo and Equipment Rules

The transportation of sports gear, luggage, and miscellaneous cargo with students is heavily regulated under Colorado state safety standards to prevent internal projectile hazards during a crash.

- **Aisle Clearance:** All passenger aisles, step-wells, and emergency exit access paths must remain 100% free of baggage, sports equipment, or gear at all times..
- **Oversized Gear Storage:** All luggage, athletic equipment, musical instruments, and miscellaneous articles must be secured to protect occupants against injury from falling or shifting cargo. Items not held by individual passengers must be stored in under-floor cargo bays or anchored with approved tie-downs.
- **Medically Necessary Supplies:** Oxygen cylinders required by passengers are permitted if securely attached to a wheelchair or otherwise firmly secured in the vehicle without blocking access to any exit.
- **Chemical and Cleaning Supplies Rules:**
    - Containers must be non-breakable, labeled with contents, and no larger than 32 ounces in size.
    - Containers must be secured in a bracket or closed compartment in the driver's area or an exterior vehicle compartment.
    - Pressurized aerosols are strictly prohibited inside the vehicle**.**
- **Window Decor & Obstructions:**
    - Interior/exterior decorations are strictly prohibited in the driver area, the first two passenger windows on both sides, and all rear windows.
    - Decorations must not cover required safety lettering, hang from ceilings/walls, or impede exits.
    - Vehicle windows must not be obstructed by advertising, decorations, or vehicle wraps (factory-applied tinting and authorized route IDs excepted).

12.7 Transportation of Miscellaneous Items

12.7.1 General Cargo and Medical Supplies

(A) School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall ensure that all carry-on items are properly handled to minimize the danger to all others.

(B) All baggage, articles, equipment, or medical supplies (except those held by individual passengers) shall be secured in a manner that assures unrestricted access to all exits by occupants, does not restrict the driver's ability to operate the bus, and/or protects all occupants against injury resulting from falling or displacement of any baggage, article, or equipment.

(1) Oxygen cylinders that are medically necessary meet this standard if they are securely attached to a wheelchair or otherwise secured in the vehicle and do not impede access to any exit. Educational Entities shall use reasonable care in determining the number of cylinders that may be safely transported at one time.

12.7.2 Chemicals and Cleaning Supplies

(A) All chemicals and cleaning supplies carried on a School Transportation Vehicle shall meet the following precautions:

(1) The container is non-breakable;

(2) The container is labeled with contents;

(3) The container is secured in a bracket, or in a closed compartment in the driver’s area, or a compartment on the exterior of the bus; and

(4) The containers and/or quantities of products are no more than 32 ounces in size.

(B) Pressurized aerosols are prohibited.

12.7.3 Interior and Exterior Decorations

(A) Interior decorations shall not be located within the driver’s area (including the space in front of the front barriers, the step-well, dash, walls and ceiling, the windshield, the entry door, the driver’s side window, and all windows in front of the front barrier), the first

two passenger windows on both sides of the vehicle or all windows on the rear of the School Transportation Vehicle.

(B) Other decorations within the passenger compartment shall not:

(1) Cover any required lettering;

(2) Impede the aisle or any emergency exit;

(3) Hang from the walls and/or ceiling.

(C) Per the effective date of these rules, School Transportation Vehicles owned or leased by the Educational Entity that are used for student transportation shall not have the windows obstructed in any way by advertising, decorations, or vehicle wraps.

(1) Exception: Tint applied by the vehicle manufacturer to industry standards, as permitted in 1 CCR 301-25.

(2) Exception: Route identification is permitted per 1 CCR 301-25.

3. Federal & State Hours of Service (HOS) Mandates

To combat driver fatigue, Colorado rules (1 CCR 301-26, Rule 18.0) dictate strict operating limits for **all** school transportation vehicle operators:

- **The 10-Hour Driving Limit:** An operator is legally prohibited from driving a school vehicle for more than 10 cumulative hours without taking a mandatory break.
- **The 14-Hour On-Duty Limit:** An operator cannot drive after being "on-duty" for 14 consecutive hours. On-duty time encompasses all work performed for any employer, including pre-trip inspections, route driving, mandatory waiting time, and clerical work.
- **The 10-Hour Off-Duty Reset:** Once either limit is hit, the driver must complete 10 consecutive hours off-duty before they are permitted to operate a student transportation vehicle again.
- **Off-Duty Criteria at Events:** Waiting time at a school sport or special event can only be legally logged as "off-duty" if the driver is entirely relieved of all custody, care, and responsibility for the students and the vehicle, and is completely free to leave the premises to pursue personal activities.

13.0 Hours of Service for School Transportation Vehicle Operators

13.1 Maximum Driving and On-Duty Time

13.1.1 School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall not drive, and an Educational Entity shall not require or permit a School Transportation Vehicle Operator to drive, in violation of the hours-of-service limits established in this Section.

13.1.2 All School Transportation Vehicle Operators shall document that they are in compliance with this Section.

(A) A School Transportation Vehicle Operator's daily log, or equivalent, shall be completed for the trip in the School Transportation Vehicle Operator's own handwriting when the trip requires a scheduled or unscheduled overnight stay away from the work reporting location.

13.1.3 Definitions

(A) "Day" means any consecutive 24-hour period beginning at a time designated by the Educational Entity.

(B) "On-Duty Time" means all time worked for all employers, including all driving and non-driving duties.

(1) "On-Duty Not-Driving" means all time spent for pre-trip/post-trip inspections, loading and unloading students, cleaning the bus, administrative paperwork, or if the School Transportation Vehicle Operator is not free to leave the location of a School-Related Event.

(2) "On-Duty Driving" means the period during which the School Transportation Vehicle Operator is at the controls of a School Transportation Vehicle while it is in motion.

(C) "Off-Duty Time (Rest/Waiting)" means the time spent by School Transportation Vehicle Operators of School Transportation Vehicles during special events, meal stops, and School-Related Events—regardless of compensation—as off-duty, provided that the subsequent criteria are satisfied.

(1) The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall be relieved of all duty and responsibility for the care and custody of the students, and

(2) The School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall be at liberty to pursue activities of their choice, including leaving the premises on which the School-Related Event is located.

13.1.4 Daily Limits

(A) A School Transportation Vehicle Operator shall not drive after accumulating 10 hours of driving time or after 14 consecutive hours of on-duty time until the required off-duty period is completed.

(1) The required 10 hours off-duty shall consist of:

(a) One period of at least six consecutive hours; and

(b) The remaining off-duty time accumulated in no more than two additional periods.

(2) This would include on-duty time for all employers.

13.1.5 Weekly Limits

(A) School Transportation Vehicle Operators are prohibited from driving after being on duty for more than 70 hours in any seven consecutive days.

13.1.6 Emergency Exception

(A) In case of an emergency, an operator may complete the trip without being in violation if such a trip reasonably could have been completed absent the emergency.

13.1.7 Federal Compliance Option

(A) In lieu of section 13.0 of these rules, an Educational Entity may comply with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, 49 C.F.R. § 395.

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Unit Nine – Student Management

The ultimate objective of student management is to ensure a safe ride by keeping student passengers under control. When order is maintained in the vehicle, the school transportation vehicle operator can dedicate 100% of their visual and mental attention to safely executing defensive driving techniques.

PART 1: THE EXTENSION OF THE CLASSROOM

A school transportation vehicle must be universally looked upon as a literal extension of the classroom. The same behavioral boundaries, codes of conduct, and parameters of respect mandated within a school building apply to the school transportation vehicle.

The Dynamics of the Vehicle vs. The Classroom

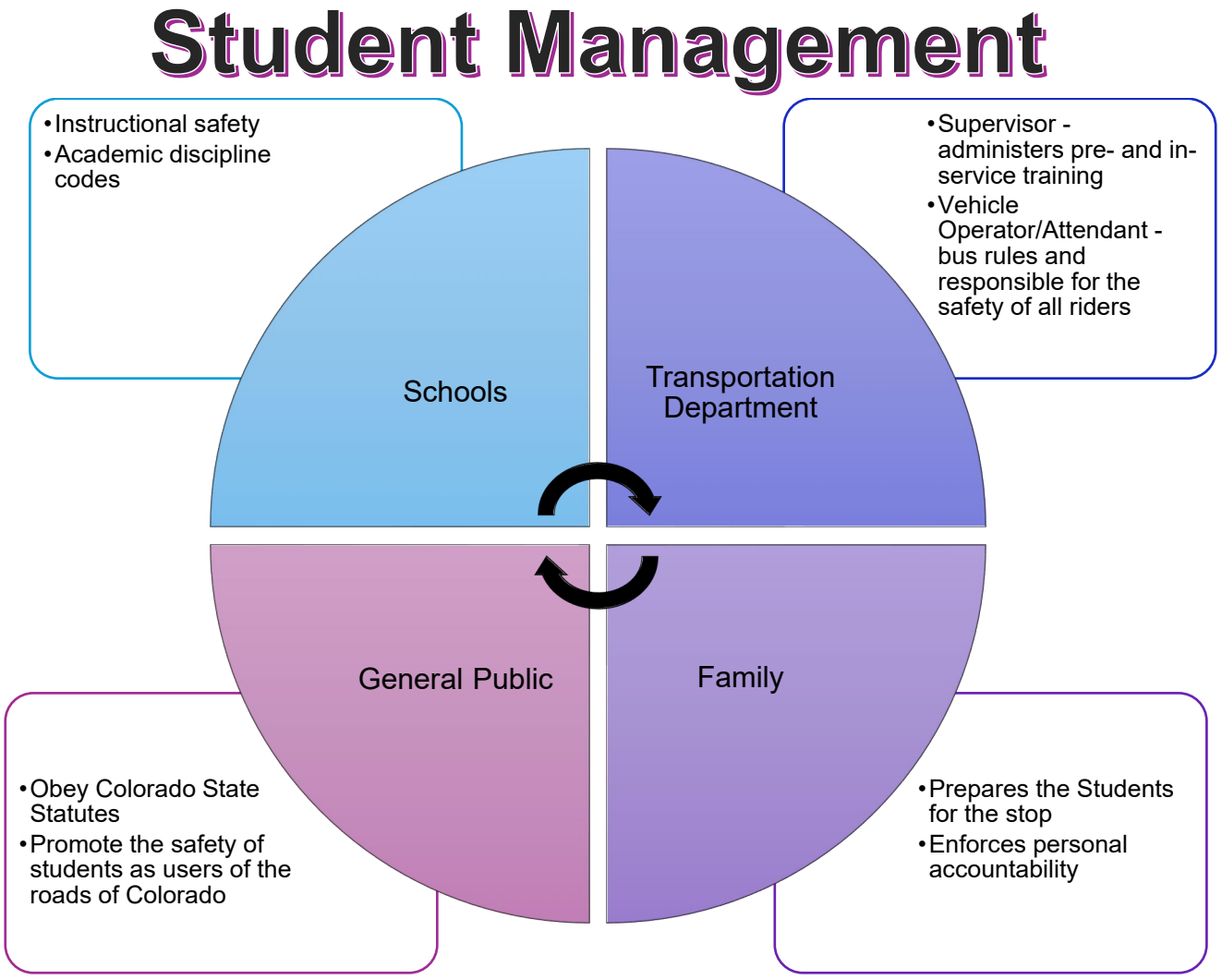
Managing student behavior on a vehicle presents distinct challenges that standard classroom teachers do not face:

- **The Multigenerational Ride:** Unlike a standard school classroom that isolates one specific age group, a school transportation vehicle operator frequently transports a highly diverse mix of elementary, junior high, and high school students simultaneously.
    - **Type A-1 Bus - Young Riders:** Small children can easily be overwhelmed. To maintain their safety and your peace of mind, assign the youngest riders to the front seats of a Type A bus, so that they remain visible.
- **The Mirror Barrier:** A teacher stands facing their class with full direct vision. A school transportation vehicle operator must control up to 14 students seated completely behind them, relying primarily on a single interior rear-view mirror.
    - **Behavior Issues:** Space to address behavioral issues on a school transportation vehicle is limited. A proactive solution for a Type A-1 bus is to seat students with known behavioral challenges in the front seats where they remain visible either in the rearview mirror or with a quick turn of the head.
- **The Divided Objective:** A driver cannot compromise vehicle safety to break up behavioral escalation. The operator's main focus must always remain on managing traffic, curves, and split-second roadway hazards.
    - Clearly convey behavioral expectations and vehicle rules at the beginning of the year or during the very first opportunity.

- These should be restated and reinforced before every activity trip to remind sponsors, chaperones, and students of the expectations.

Stakeholder Interdependence and Jurisdictions

Maintaining safety requires active communication and cooperative problem-solving across four foundational segments of the educational ecosystem:



- **The Role of the School Administrators:** Principals and building staff manage actual disciplinary actions when behavioral issues arise. Administrators must also verify that all legally required IEP, §504, medical, and behavioral information is provided to operators prior to departure.
- **The Role of the Transportation Supervisor:** Supervisors must establish clear, standardized behavior guidelines that are administered uniformly. They must

provide robust training programs centered on student management, de-escalation, and proper safety rules.

- **The Role of the Professional Operator:** The driver sets the psychological tone for the ride. Drivers are responsible for the health, safety, and welfare of all passengers and must practice unshakeable consistency by remembering the "3 Fs":
    - **Firm:** Be prepared to follow through. Avoid giving a directive that you cannot enforce.
    - **Friendly:** Be approachable to the students while keeping in mind that you, the driver, are in charge.
    - **Fair:** Be consistent in disciplining students.
- **The Role of the Parents/Guardians:** Families bear the primary responsibility for ensuring their children are prepared, arrive at the bus stop 5 minutes early, and understand that appropriate conduct is non-negotiable.
- **The Role of the General Public:** The public must obey Colorado State Statutes and promote the safety of school-age children as pedestrians and road users.

5.3 Required Training and Documentation

5.3.1 Transportation Documentation and Personnel Training

(A) Educational Entities shall present all School Transportation Vehicle Operators and School Transportation Bus Attendants with the applicable CDE School Transportation Vehicle Operator or School Transportation Bus Attendant Guide prior to transporting students.

5.3.2 Transporting Students with Special Needs

(A) Educational Entities shall provide School Transportation Vehicle Operators and School Transportation Bus Attendants with all documentation necessary to safely transport assigned students, including Child Safety Restraint System requirements and other relevant medical or behavioral information, prior to the initiation of transportation services.

(1) When an Educational Entity enrolls, transfers, or assumes responsibility for a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that includes transportation services, the Educational Entity shall ensure that all documentation

applicable to transportation is provided to the appropriate transportation personnel or provider prior to the initiation of services, and as soon as practicable following any determination or revision of the student's transportation needs, to support safe and appropriate transportation.

(B) Any School Transportation Vehicle Operator and School Transportation Bus Attendant assigned to students eligible under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) shall receive documented training on the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). Per 34 C.F.R. § 300.156, this training shall include, but is not limited to:

(1) Behavioral intervention strategies;

(2) Personalized Learning Systems (PLS) protocols;

(3) Individualized health care plan implementation.

PART 2: THE 3-PILLAR THEORY OF VEHICLE DISCIPLINE

Discipline on school transportation vehicles is historically classified as a primary stressor for professional operators. Success rests on a driver's commitment to treating a safe ride as a fundamental right for all passengers.

Pillar 1: Proactive Environment Management

- **The Clean Vehicle:** Data shows that an operator who keeps their vehicle swept, sanitized, and structurally immaculate experiences significantly fewer discipline problems. Students subconsciously recognize that the driver takes great pride in the vehicle and adjust their behavior to reflect that respect.
- **The Seating Chart Strategy:** Do not wait for a behavioral problem to emerge. Proactively assign seats based on age groups, behavioral concerns, or individual student needs. Operators must carefully gauge passenger size when pairing students to ensure seating capacity limitations are never compromised.
- **The Positive Greeting:** Establish command the second a student boards the vehicle. Greeting students by name establishes immediate professional rapport, which significantly lowers the likelihood of subsequent defiance.

Pillar 2: The Core Rules of Driver Self-Control

When a student triggers a behavioral breakdown, the operator must strictly adhere to the following behavioral boundaries:

- **Never Argue or Yell:** Raising your voice displays a loss of control and escalates cabin tension. Use a clear, firm, and calm tone that carries authority without carrying anger.
- **Never Threaten Empty Consequences:** Only state actions that you are legally able to perform.
- **Removal of a Student:** An operator is strictly prohibited from putting a student off the vehicle on the side of the road as a disciplinary measure. A student can only be legally discharged at their designated home stop, directly at their school building, or at an authorized transportation facility under administrator supervision.

Pillar 3: On-Route Escalation Protocol

If an immediate behavioral emergency occurs while the vehicle is in motion, execute the following actions in strict sequence:

1. **Prioritize the Roadway:** Keep your eyes on the road. Do not try to lock eyes with the disruptive student in your overhead mirror while navigating traffic.
2. **Locate a Safe Haven:** Find a secure, legal location to pull completely off the roadway (such as a wide shoulder or a parking lot).
3. **Secure the Vehicle:** Set the parking brake, shift the transmission into Park, and turn off the ignition.
4. **Address the Vehicle:** Turn to face the passengers completely, and deal with the situation using a calm, objective demeanor. Once order is re-established, restart the engine and resume the route.

If left unaddressed, undisciplined riders will quickly set a negative tone for the majority of the passengers. Firm, proactive enforcement preserves a safe environment for everyone.

PART 3: REPORTING UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

When verbal corrections and seat changes fail to correct structural misbehavior, the operator must immediately move the issue into the formal administrative tracking system.

1. Documenting with the Bus Conduct/Disciplinary Report – “Write-Ups”

School Transportation Vehicle Operators must be ready to prepare and submit formal bus conduct/student discipline reports to the transportation supervisor or designated building principal. This document must be completed with pure, data-driven objectivity:

- **State the Facts:** Record the exact date, time, route number, and specific rule violated. Avoid using emotional or subjective language (e.g., state "Student stood up and walked down the aisle while the vehicle was moving at 35 mph" instead of "Student was acting wild and being dangerous").
- **Detail Prior Strategies and Approaches:** Clearly document all corrective actions taken prior to writing the referral, such as verbal warnings given, direct conversations held, or assigned seat changes.
- **Timely Submission:** Turn the report in immediately upon finishing your route or trip to ensure administrators can act before the student returns to the vehicle/student stop the following morning.

2. High-Priority/Zero-Tolerance Violations

Certain infractions pose an immediate threat to life safety and require immediate administrative intervention, temporary suspension of riding privileges, and/or potential law enforcement notification:

- Physical assault or fighting inside the vehicle or at the bus stop.
- Possession of weapons, firearms, knives, or explosive devices.
- Possession, consumption, or distribution of controlled substances, tobacco, or alcohol.
- Tampering with emergency exits, roof hatches, or the rear door interlock systems.

PART 4: IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is an illegal form of discrimination that directly compromises the psychological and physical safety of the transportation environment. School transportation vehicle operators are legally mandated to identify, document, and report these incidents immediately.

1. Understanding the Forms of Harassment

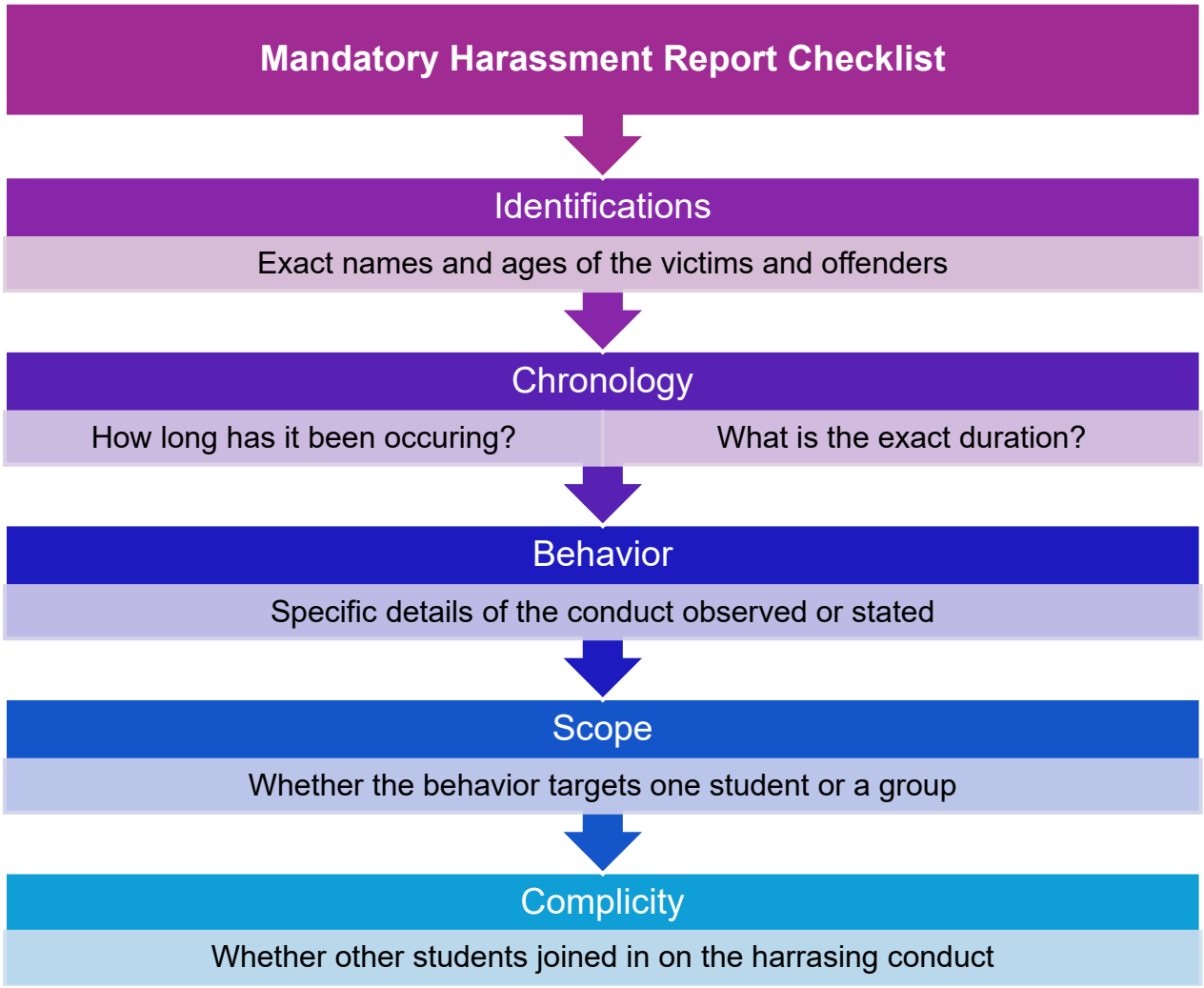
Harassment within a student transportation vehicle can manifest across three explicit categories:

- **Verbal:** Indecent propositions, suggestive remarks, sexual jokes, or explicit comments regarding a passenger’s body or clothing.
- **Physical:** Unwelcome touching, brushing against another student's body, pinching, or blocking someone's physical path down the center aisle.

- **Visual/Digital ("Sexting"):** The act of taking, displaying, or sending sexually explicit messages, text communications, or photographs using mobile phones inside the cabin. Under Colorado law (C.R.S. § 18-7-109), unauthorized sharing or possession of explicit intimate images by juveniles is a serious offense subject to school disciplinary action and juvenile legal prosecution.

2. Mandatory Harassment Reporting Protocol

The moment sexual harassment is suspected or reported, the operator must never attempt to handle it internally or dismiss it as "kids being kids." You must document the following details objectively and turn them in directly to your supervisor and building administrators:



- **Continuous Monitoring:** Following the initial submission of the report, the operator must continue to monitor the involved students closely. Reassign the victim to a highly visible seat in the front row near the driver's station. This

creates an immediate, protective safety bubble while the official district or school administration investigation is conducted.

PART 5: BEHAVIORAL PROFILING & DE-ESCALATION

Every student misbehaves for a reason. To manage a vehicle successfully, you must learn to look past the disruptive action itself and identify the underlying behavioral type. This allows you to apply the correct strategy to de-escalate the tension without losing control of the bus.

The Four Profiles of Problem Behavior

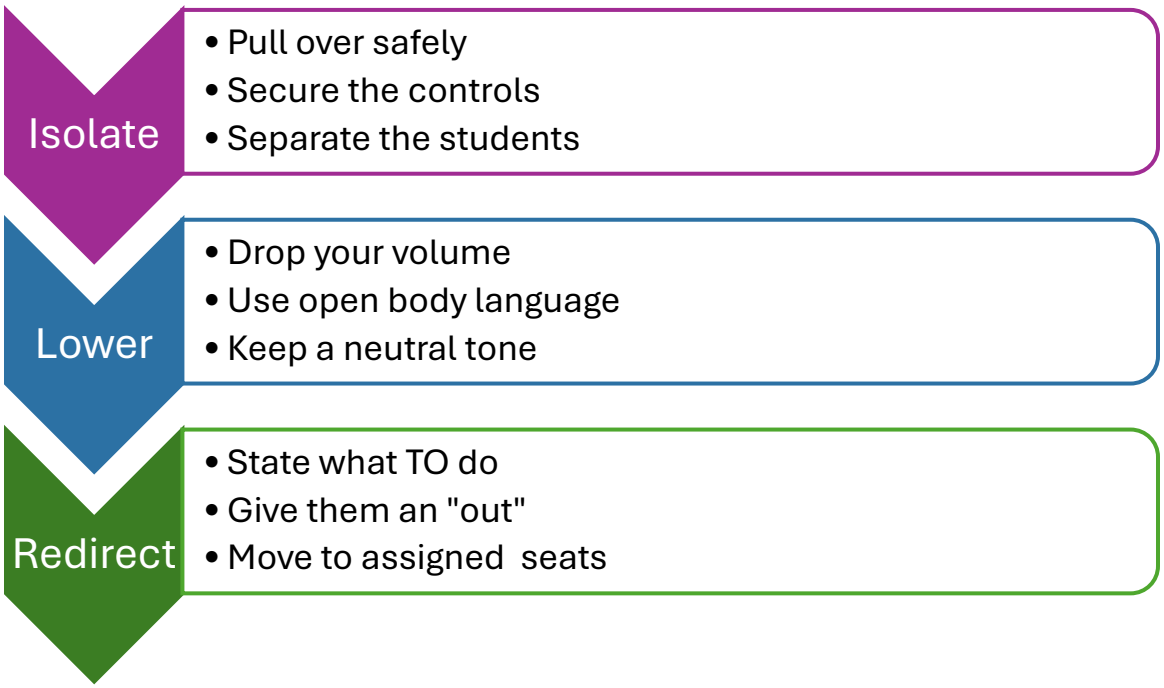
Most school bus disruptions fall into one of four distinct student profiles:

- **The Attention Seeker:** This student acts out, uses loud language, or breaks minor rules primarily because they want the driver or their peers to notice them.
    - *The Strategy:* Do not give them a massive reaction, as an angry outburst from the driver gives them exactly what they want. Instead, use a calm, quiet, direct verbal correction or a private seat reassignment. Keep your attention focused on rewarding students who behave correctly.
- **The Power Seeker:** This student intentionally defies your instructions (e.g., refusing to sit down or refusing to move seats) to challenge your authority in front of the other passengers.
    - *The Strategy:* Never engage in a public power struggle. Do not argue back or try to force an immediate showdown while driving. Calmly state the rule and the clear consequence once, then give the student a moment to comply. If they refuse, do not keep trying to talk to them; safely pull over, secure the bus, notify dispatch, and document the defiance on a formal Bus Conduct Report when you return to the garage.
- **The Revenge Seeker:** This student feels mistreated or unliked by the driver or their peers, and they lash out maliciously by damaging the bus (vandalism) or verbally attacking others to "get even."
    - *The Strategy:* Remain completely objective. Do not take their comments personally. Treat them with strict fairness and respect, remove them from the target situation immediately by moving their seat, and involve school counselors or principals to address the root cause.
- **The Distanced/Withdrawn Student:** This student completely isolates themselves, ignores interactions, or displays extreme helplessness, which can occasionally hide deeper emotional distress or trauma.

- *The Strategy:* Check on them quietly without drawing embarrassing attention to them. Establish a basic, friendly rapport during loading and unloading by greeting them by name, ensuring they feel secure and included in the cabin environment.

Standard Steps for Verbal De-escalation

When a conflict or a loud argument breaks out between students while you are on your route, you must use targeted communication to defuse the situation before it turns into a physical fight:



1. **Lower Your Volume and Pitch:** When a student is yelling, your natural instinct is to talk louder to overpower them. **Do the opposite.** Speak in a quiet, slow, and deeply controlled voice. To hear you, the student will naturally have to stop shouting and lower their own volume, immediately bringing down the emotional energy in the cabin.
2. **Use "What" and "How" Open-Ended Questions:** Avoid asking "Why did you do that?" as "Why" questions automatically make a child defensive and combative. Instead, use neutral, problem-solving questions like, *"What do we need to do right now to fix this seat problem?"* or *"How can we make sure everyone is safe for the rest of this ride?"*
3. **Focus on Directives, Not Restrictions:** Tell the student exactly what you want them **to do**, rather than what you want them to stop doing. For example, instead of shouting *"Stop standing up and causing chaos!"*, say, *"I need you to slide your*

back completely against the seat cushion and face forward so it is safe for me to drive." Clear, positive instructions give the child a simple path to compliance.

4. **Offer a Dignified Out (Choice-Giving):** Avoid cornering a student or making them lose face in front of their friends. Frame your directive as a clear choice with an immediate consequence. For example: *"You can choose to sit quietly in this front row for the rest of the route, or you can choose to leave your seat unassigned and have your riding privileges suspended by the principal tomorrow morning. The choice is yours, let's make a smart one so we can get home."*

PART 6: STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY AND DATA PRIVACY (FERPA & IDEA)

Operating a school transportation vehicle grants you access to highly sensitive, personally identifiable information (PII) regarding the students on your route. Protecting student privacy is not just a matter of professional courtesy; it is a strict legal requirement governed by overlapping federal and state statutes.

The Legal Framework: FERPA and IDEA

- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):** This federal law protects the privacy of student "education records." Under FERPA, a student's route assignment, home address, pickup/drop-off times, behavior logs, disciplinary referrals, and even bus surveillance video are legally classified as education records and must remain confidential.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA):** When school transportation is written into a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) as a "related service," transportation personnel are granted access to specific medical, physical, and behavioral intervention plans to ensure a safe ride. This federal statute demands strict safeguarding of all specialized student data.
- **The Legitimate Educational Interest Threshold:** School districts are legally permitted to share confidential student records with you only because you are designated as a "school official with a legitimate educational interest." This access is a privilege tied directly to your operational duties. You are strictly prohibited from redisclosing this information to anyone outside of the authorized educational team.

Practical Safeguards: Maintaining Privacy on the Road

To remain compliant with federal privacy regulations during your daily runs, you must integrate active data-protection habits into your routine:

- **Physical Record Security:** Never leave student seating charts, route sheets, medical emergency cards, or IEP documentation in plain sight on your dashboard or driver's side console. When leaving the vehicle, store all physical records face down, in a binder, or locked in a secure driver compartment.
- **Airwave Protocol (Two-Way Radio Communications):** Your fleet radio is an open frequency that can be intercepted by parent scanners, nearby motorists, or other students. When reporting a behavioral incident or medical issue to dispatch, never transmit a student's full name or specific medical diagnosis. Instead, refer to students by route number, student stop location, or pre-assigned seat numbers (e.g., *"Dispatch, I have a behavioral issue with the student in seat number three"*).
- **Digital and Camera Privacy:** School transportation video and audio recordings are protected under FERPA. You may not show video footage of an incident to a parent, even if their child was involved, without explicit administrative approval. If a parent demands to see a clip of an altercation, direct them to building administrators or your transportation supervisor.

Navigating Everyday Scenarios: "Need to Know" vs. "Want to Know"

A driver's legal obligation to protect student privacy is frequently tested by well-meaning but unauthorized individuals. You must apply the strict "Need to Know" standard:

- **The Inquisitive Parent:** If a parent at a student stop asks about another child's behavior, routing, or suspension, your response must be immediate and professional: *"To protect the privacy of all our families, I cannot discuss other students. If you have concerns about route safety, please contact the transportation department or the school principal."*
- **The Substitute Driver Transition:** When turning a route over to a substitute driver, you are legally allowed to share essential medical and behavioral notes necessary for safe transit (such as seizure protocols or safety harness requirements). However, do not share subjective, gossipy personal histories (e.g., *"This kid's family is a nightmare"*). Focus strictly on actionable, documented safety accommodations.
- **Peer-to-Peer Venting:** Avoid discussing specific student behavior issues casually in the driver breakroom, in communal hallways, or on social media. Limit student behavioral discussions exclusively to formal meetings with your supervisor, the school principal, or the child's designated education team.

PART 7: MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Under Colorado Revised Statutes (C.R.S.) § 19-3-304, all school transportation vehicle operators are designated as legally mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. Because you are often the first representative of the school system to see a child in the morning and the last to see them in the afternoon, your vigilance is critical to student safety.

The Legal Mandate and Standards of Suspicion

- **The Threshold of "Reasonable Cause":** The law does not require you to prove that abuse or neglect has occurred, nor does it require you to investigate. Your sole legal responsibility is to report when you have reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or has been placed in a situation that would reasonably result in harm.
- **The 24-Hour Reporting Window:** Under Colorado law, a mandated reporter must file an official report **immediately** upon suspecting abuse or neglect, and no later than 24 hours after the initial suspicion or observation.
- **The Personal Obligation Rule:** Reporting your suspicions to a supervisor is a critical step in district communication, but it does not legally fulfill your personal statutory duty. If your supervisor disagrees or fails to act, you are still legally obligated to contact law enforcement or child protective services directly. You cannot delegate your legal liability to anyone else.

Recognizing the Warning Signs on Your Route

As a transportation professional, you must remain highly sensitive to physical, emotional, and environmental indicators during boarding, transit, and off-loading:

- **Physical Indicators of Abuse:** Unexplained, patterned, or symmetrical bruising (especially on the face, neck, upper arms, or thighs); human bite marks; cigarette burns; weld-like marks from cords or belts; or a student who winces or displays extreme discomfort when sitting down or navigating the bus steps.
- **Signs of Severe Neglect:** A child who is consistently dressed inappropriately for Colorado's extreme weather changes (e.g., wearing a thin t-shirt, shorts, and no shoes during a winter snowstorm); consistent, severe body odor or unwashed clothing; severe, untreated dental decay; or constant, overwhelming hunger or dehydration (e.g., begging for food or water every day upon boarding).
- **Behavioral Red Flags:** An abrupt, radical shift in student behavior; extreme withdrawal or depression; hyper-vigilance (always watching adults as if waiting

for a blow); sudden, extreme aggression toward younger students; or an intense, verbalized fear of going home at the end of the school day.

Step-by-Step Reporting Protocol

If you observe signs of abuse or neglect, execute this formal reporting sequence immediately:

1. **Do Not Investigate:** Do not cross-examine the student, pull up their clothing to inspect wounds, or attempt to contact the child's parents to ask questions. Investigating can compromise active law enforcement inquiries.
2. **Contact the State Hotline:** Immediately call the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at **1-844-CO-4-KIDS (1-844-264-5437)** or contact local law enforcement. If you believe a student is in immediate, active life-safety danger (e.g., being dropped off to a visibly intoxicated caregiver or an empty home in freezing weather), bypass the hotline and call **911** immediately.
3. **Provide Objective Information:** When speaking with the hotline intake specialist, be prepared to provide:
    - The student's name, age, school, and home address (if known).
    - The date, time, and specific location where you observed the issue.
    - A completely objective description of what you saw or heard, using exact student quotes if they spoke to you.
    - The names and contact information of the parents or guardians (if available).
4. **Secure the Hotline ID and Document:** Request and record the official **Hotline Referral ID number** and the name of the intake specialist. Document the exact date and time you made the call. Keep this information in your personal, secure files as proof of compliance with Colorado state law.

Legal Protections and Severe Penalties

- **Good-Faith Immunity:** Colorado law provides complete civil and criminal immunity from prosecution, civil lawsuits, or employer retaliation for any mandated reporter who makes a report in good faith. You are legally protected even if a professional investigation later concludes that no abuse occurred.
- **Penalties for Non-Reporting:** Intentionally failing to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a Class 2 misdemeanor in the State of Colorado. A conviction carries severe personal penalties, including up to 120 days in jail, fines of up to

$750, immediate termination of school district employment, and direct civil liability for any subsequent injuries the child suffers due to the unreported abuse.

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Unit Ten – Addendum

This addendum is intended to support the use, understanding, implementation, and documentation of the Colorado Department of Education School Bus and Multifunction Bus Operator Guide 2026. It does not replace federal law, Colorado law, Colorado State Board of Education rules, or local Educational Entity policy. Operators are responsible for following all requirements applicable to their assigned job responsibilities.

- Certificate of Receipt and Understanding
- Operator Responsibility Statement
- Sample Training and Documentation Checklist
- Emergency Procedures Quick Reference
- Accident/Incident Reporting Instructions
- Railroad/Light Rail Safety Reference
- Special Transportation Needs Reference
- Confidentiality Reminder
- Communication
- Child Safety Restraint Systems Quick Reference
- Wheelchair Securement Quick Reference
- Pre-Trip/Post-Trip Reference
- Local Educational Entity Policy Insert
- FAQ/Glossary

COLORADO
Department of Education
School Finance and Operations Division

Certification of Receipt and Understanding

I, _____ certify that I have been provided with, or have access to, the Colorado Department of Education Small-Capacity Vehicle and Type A Bus Route/Activity Operator Guide 2026.

I further certify that I have been provided with, or have access to, the Colorado Rules for the Operation, Maintenance, and Inspection of School Transportation Vehicles, 1 CCR 301-26.

I understand that, as a school transportation vehicle operator, I am responsible for operating a school transportation vehicle in accordance with the applicable requirements of 1 CCR 301-26 and the laws of the State of Colorado, as they relate to my assigned job responsibilities.

I acknowledge that I must receive the training and documentation required under the School Transportation Vehicle Operator Requirements set forth in 1 CCR 301-26, 4204-R-6.00, as applicable to my assigned job responsibilities, prior to transporting students in the State of Colorado.

By signing below, I certify that I have read, understand, and agree to comply with the applicable requirements referenced above.

Driver Signature:_____ Date:_____

School District/Charter/Service provider:_____

Trainer(s) Name (Please Print):_____

Trainer(s) Signature:_____

Operator Responsibility Statement - Sample

As a school transportation vehicle operator, I understand that student transportation is a safety-sensitive responsibility. I acknowledge that I am expected to operate in a professional, lawful, and safe manner at all times while performing assigned duties.

I understand that I am responsible for:

1. Operating only vehicles I am properly qualified, licensed, endorsed, trained, and authorized to operate.
2. Following applicable federal law, Colorado law, State Board of Education rules, and Educational Entity policies.
3. Conducting required vehicle inspections and reporting defects, concerns, or unsafe conditions according to local procedures.
4. Maintaining safe control of the vehicle and passengers.
5. Following assigned routes, stops, loading procedures, unloading procedures, railroad crossing procedures, and emergency procedures.
6. Maintaining confidentiality regarding students, families, medical information, behavioral information, educational information, and other sensitive information.
7. Reporting crashes, incidents, safety concerns, student concerns, route hazards, and vehicle concerns through the appropriate chain of communication.
8. Asking for clarification when a rule, procedure, route, student need, or assignment is unclear.

I understand that failure to follow applicable requirements may result in corrective action, retraining, removal from service, or other action as determined by the Educational Entity and/or applicable authority.

Operator Signature: _____ Date:_____

Sample Training and Documentation Checklist

This checklist is intended to help document that the operator has received or been provided access to the applicable training, information, and documentation related to assigned job responsibilities. Not all items apply to every operator or assignment.

Operator Information

Operator Name: _____

Position/Assignment: _____

Educational Entity: _____

Supervisor/Trainer: _____

School Year: _____

Applicable Vehicle Type

Check all that apply:

☐ School Bus
☐ Multifunction Bus
☐ Small Vehicle Route
☐ Activity Trip Vehicle
☐ Substitute / Relief Operator
☐ Other: _____

Required / Applicable Training and Documentation

Item	Applicable	Date Provided / Completed	Trainer / Verifier	Operator Initials
Access to Operator Guide	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Access to applicable rules/procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Vehicle familiarization	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Pre-trip inspection procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____

Post-trip inspection/child check procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Route procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Loading and unloading procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Student management procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Emergency evacuation procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Railroad crossing procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Light rail safety, if applicable	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Crash/incident reporting procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Confidentiality expectations	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Special transportation needs information, see Rule for more requirements	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Child safety restraint system procedures, if applicable	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Wheelchair securement procedures, if applicable	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Radio/communication procedures	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____
Local Educational Entity policy review	☐ Yes ☐ No	_____	_____	_____

Operator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor/Trainer Signature: _____Date: _____

Emergency Procedures Quick Reference

Operators shall follow Educational Entity procedures during emergencies. The following quick reference is intended to support immediate decision-making and does not replace local emergency protocols.

General Emergency Priorities

In any emergency, the operator should:

1. Safely stop and secure the vehicle as appropriate.
2. Protect students and passengers from immediate danger.
3. Contact dispatch, transportation administration, emergency services, or law enforcement as required by the situation and local procedure.
4. Follow the Educational Entity's chain of communication.
5. Document the facts of the incident as soon as practicable.

Crash or Collision

If involved in a crash or collision:

1. Stop and secure the vehicle.
2. Check for injuries.
3. Contact dispatch or the appropriate supervisor immediately.
4. Request emergency assistance if there are injuries, fire, hazardous conditions, or blocked traffic.
5. Keep students supervised and accounted for.
6. Do not release students except according to the Educational Entity policy or procedure.
7. Do not admit fault or speculate about cause.
8. Document facts only.

Fire, Smoke, or Suspected Fire

If there is fire, smoke, or a suspected fire:

1. Stop the vehicle in a safe location, if possible.
2. Evacuate passengers when continued occupancy creates a hazard.

3. Move passengers to a safe location away from traffic and the vehicle.
4. Contact dispatch and emergency services.
5. Use emergency equipment only when safe and appropriate.
6. Do not allow passengers to re-enter the vehicle until authorized.

Medical Emergency

If a student or passenger experiences a medical emergency:

1. Safely stop and secure the vehicle, if necessary.
2. Contact dispatch and request emergency medical assistance, if warranted.
3. Follow the student's known medical plan or local procedure, if applicable and available.
4. Keep the student under observation.
5. Protect the student's privacy.
6. Document the event according to local procedure.

Student Left on Vehicle/Missing Student Concern

If an operator discovers or suspects that a student has been left unattended, is missing, or was not released according to procedure:

1. Immediately contact dispatch or transportation administration.
2. Follow local emergency communication procedures.
3. Do not delay reporting while attempting to resolve the matter independently.
4. Document the facts as directed.

Severe Weather or Road Hazard

If severe weather, road closure, flooding, ice, low visibility, downed power lines, or another hazard affects safe operation:

1. Reduce speed and increase following distance.
2. Do not proceed through unsafe conditions.
3. Contact dispatch or transportation administration for directions.
4. Follow approved route deviation procedures.

5. Document the condition or hazard as required.

Accident/Incident Reporting Instructions

Operators shall report crashes, incidents, student injuries, vehicle damage, route hazards, parent/guardian concerns, student behavior concerns, equipment concerns, and other safety issues according to the Educational Entity procedure.

General Reporting Expectations

Reports should be:

1. Timely.
2. Factual.
3. Objective.
4. Complete.
5. Submitted through the appropriate chain of communication.

Operators should not speculate, assign blame, diagnose medical conditions, or include personal opinions in official reports.

Information Commonly Needed

Depending on the type of event, operators may be asked to provide:

- Date and time
- Vehicle number
- Route or trip number
- Location
- Weather and road conditions
- Names of involved persons, if appropriate
- Witness information, if available
- Description of what occurred
- Actions taken
- Notifications made
- Injuries or reported complaints of injury
- Vehicle or property damage

- Law enforcement or emergency response involvement

Immediate Notification Required

Operators should immediately notify dispatch or transportation administration when any of the following occur:

- Crash or collision
- Injury or possible injury
- Student left unattended or a missing student concern
- Vehicle fire, smoke, or mechanical failure
- Medical emergency
- Threat, weapon, assault, or serious behavior incident
- Unsafe road or route condition
- Railroad crossing or light rail emergency
- Vehicle immobilized on or near railroad tracks
- Any situation requiring emergency response.

Railroad Crossing and Light Rail Safety Reference

Railroad crossings, light rail crossings, and street-running rail areas require heightened awareness and strict compliance with applicable procedures.

Railroad Crossing Safety

Operators must follow all applicable railroad crossing procedures, including Educational Entity procedures and requirements applicable to the vehicle being operated.

Operators should remember:

1. Trains may approach from either direction.
2. Multiple tracks create multiple hazards.
3. A train clearing one track does not mean all tracks are clear.
4. The vehicle must not be driven onto a crossing unless there is sufficient space to completely clear the tracks.
5. Operators must never stop on railroad tracks.
6. If warning devices activate, operators must not proceed until it is safe and lawful to do so.
7. If the vehicle stalls or becomes trapped on or near tracks, evacuate passengers immediately and move them away from the tracks in the safest direction according to emergency procedures.

Light Rail Safety

Light Rail Vehicles may operate within or near the same roadway used by motor vehicles. These areas require additional caution because tracks may be embedded in the street, may run parallel to traffic, and may not be separated by curbs, medians, or barriers.

Operators should remember:

1. Light Rail Vehicles may approach from either direction.
2. Light Rail Vehicles are often quiet and may appear to be moving more slowly than they actually are.
3. Tracks may be difficult to see in certain weather or lighting conditions.
4. Operators must pay attention to all sets of tracks.
5. Operators must not stop on tracks or within the track spacing.

6. Operators must use caution near parking areas, intersections, turns, and crossings where motorists may become confused.
7. Operators must comply with traffic control devices, warning devices, and local procedures.

Operator Initials: _____ Date: _____

Special Transportation Needs Reference

Students may have transportation-related needs identified through an IEP, Section 504 plan, medical plan, behavioral plan, safety plan, seating plan, or other Educational Entity process. Operators must receive and follow information necessary to safely transport students, as applicable to their assigned duties.

Operator Expectations

Operators are expected to:

1. Follow transportation-related instructions provided by the Educational Entity.
2. Review applicable student-specific information before transporting the student, when provided and required.
3. Protect student confidentiality.
4. Ask questions when the student needs clarification on equipment, procedures, or emergency instructions.
5. Report changes, concerns, incidents, or safety issues through the appropriate chain of communication.
6. Avoid modifying student supports, equipment, seating, or securement procedures unless authorized and trained to do so.

Examples of Information Operators May Need

Depending on the assignment, operators may need information related to:

- Loading and unloading assistance
- Seating location
- Behavior support procedures
- Medical alerts or emergency response procedures
- Communication needs
- Evacuation assistance
- Child safety restraint systems
- Wheelchair securement
- Specialized equipment
- Adult support or paraprofessional/aide responsibilities

Confidentiality Reminder

Operators may receive, observe, or have access to student information while performing transportation duties. This may include student names, addresses, disabilities, medical needs, behavioral information, family information, discipline information, IEP information, Section 504 information, or other sensitive information.

Operators must protect confidential information and use it only for legitimate transportation and safety purposes.

Operators Shall Not

1. Discuss student information with unauthorized individuals.
2. Share student information with other students.
3. Discuss one student with another student's parent or guardian.
4. Post student information, photos, videos, route information, or incident information on social media.
5. Leave documents containing student information unsecured.
6. Use student information for any purpose unrelated to assigned duties.

Operators Should

1. Direct parent/guardian concerns to the appropriate transportation or school administrator.
2. Report confidentiality concerns through the appropriate chain of communication.
3. Ask for clarification when unsure whether information may be shared.
4. Follow Educational Entity policy for handling, storing, and returning confidential documents.

Operator Initials: _____ Date: _____

Communication and Chain of Command

Clear communication is essential to safe transportation operations. Operators shall follow Educational Entity communication procedures and use the appropriate chain of command.

Standard Communication Expectations

Operators should:

1. Use professional language.
2. Keep communication brief, factual, and appropriate.
3. Avoid discussing confidential student information over open channels unless necessary for immediate safety.
4. Notify dispatch or supervision of delays, route hazards, incidents, unsafe conditions, or emergencies.
5. Follow local procedures for parent/guardian communication.

Suggested Chain of Communication

Operator → Dispatcher / Route Coordinator → Transportation Supervisor → Transportation Director / Administrator → District or Educational Entity Administration

Local Educational Entity may modify this chain of communication.

Communication Notes

Local radio channel/procedure:

Dispatch phone number:

Transportation supervisor contact:

After-hours emergency contact:

Child Safety Restraint System Quick Reference

This section applies when an operator is assigned to transport a child using a child safety restraint system or other approved passenger securement system.

Operators shall only use child safety restraint systems and equipment that they have been trained and authorized to use.

General Expectations

Operators should verify that:

1. The restraint system is appropriate for the student and vehicle assignment.
2. The restraint system is installed according to manufacturer instructions and Educational Entity procedures.
3. Harnesses, straps, buckles, and securement points are properly positioned.
4. Straps are not twisted, damaged, loose, or improperly routed.
5. The student is positioned and secured according to training and procedure.
6. Concerns are reported before transportation occurs when a safety issue is identified.

Operators Must Not

1. Modify restraint equipment.
2. Use damaged or incomplete restraint equipment.
3. Add unauthorized padding, accessories, or extensions.
4. Transport a student in equipment the operator has not been trained to use, unless authorized through local procedure.
5. Ignore improper fit, missing components, or securement concerns.

Wheelchair Securement Quick Reference

This section applies when an operator is assigned to transport a student or passenger using a wheelchair or mobility device.

Operators shall only perform wheelchair loading, unloading, and securement if they have been trained and authorized to do so.

General Expectations

Operators should verify that:

1. The wheelchair is positioned according to vehicle and securement system requirements.
2. The wheelchair is secured using the required securement points.
3. Securement straps are attached to appropriate locations on the wheelchair frame.
4. Lap and shoulder belts are used as required by training, equipment instructions, and local procedure.
5. Wheel locks, power controls, or other stability features are addressed according to procedure.
6. The lift, ramp, floor tracking, securement hardware, and occupant restraints appear serviceable before use.
7. Any concern is reported immediately.

Operators Must Not

1. Attach securement straps to removable parts, wheels, armrests, footrests, or weak components unless specifically authorized by equipment instructions.
2. Transport a wheelchair that cannot be safely secured.
3. Leave a passenger unattended on a lift.
4. Use damaged securement equipment.
5. Modify securement equipment or wheelchair components.

Pre-Trip and Post-Trip Inspection Reference

Operators are responsible for conducting required inspections according to applicable rules, training, and Educational Entity procedures.

Sample - Pre-Trip Inspection

Before operating, operators should verify applicable items, including but not limited to:

- Driver credentials and required documentation
- Exterior condition
- Tires and wheels
- Mirrors
- Lights and reflectors
- Windshield and wipers
- Horn
- Brakes
- Steering
- Emergency exits
- Emergency equipment
- Passenger area
- Seats and securement equipment
- Communication equipment
- Fuel/charge level
- Leaks or visible damage
- Warning equipment, if applicable
- Vehicle-specific equipment

Defects, damage, missing equipment, or unsafe conditions must be reported according to local procedure before the vehicle is operated.

Sample - Post-Trip Inspection / Child Check

At the end of each route, trip, or assignment, operators shall complete post-trip procedures according to training and Educational Entity policy.

Operators should:

1. Walk through the vehicle.
2. Check all seats and floor areas.
3. Check under seats.
4. Check the rear of the vehicle.
5. Look for sleeping students, personal belongings, damage, spills, or safety concerns.
6. Complete any required child-check system procedure.
7. Secure the vehicle.
8. Report concerns as required.

Operator Initials: _____ Date: _____

Local Educational Entity Policy Insert

This section may be completed by the Educational Entity to identify local procedures, contacts, and expectations.

Educational Entity: _____

Transportation Department Contact: _____

Transportation Office Phone: _____

Emergency Contact / After-Hours Number: _____

Dispatch Contact: _____

Maintenance Contact: _____

Local Procedures

Crash/incident reporting procedure:

Student behavior reporting procedure:

Vehicle defect reporting procedure:

Fueling / charging procedure:

Radio/communication procedure:

Weather delay/closure procedure:

Route deviation procedure:

Parent/guardian communication procedure:

Confidential document handling procedure:

Other local requirements:

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Am I responsible for knowing every rule in 1 CCR 301-26?

Operators are responsible for understanding and following the requirements that apply to their assigned job responsibilities. Operators should ask for clarification when a requirement, procedure, route, vehicle, or assignment is unclear.

2. What should I do if I am assigned to operate a vehicle I am not qualified or trained to operate?

Do not operate a vehicle if you are not properly qualified, licensed, trained, authorized, or comfortable operating safely. Immediately notify the appropriate supervisor or transportation administrator.

3. What should I do if I identify a vehicle defect during pre-trip?

Report the defect according to the Educational Entity procedure. Do not operate a vehicle if the defect creates an unsafe condition or if local procedure requires the vehicle to be removed from service.

4. What should I do if I believe a route, stop, or roadway condition is unsafe?

Notify dispatch, your supervisor, or transportation administration as soon as safely possible. Provide factual information about the concern, including location, time, condition, and any immediate hazard.

5. What should I do if a parent or guardian asks about another student?

Do not discuss another student. Refer the parent or guardian to the appropriate school or transportation administrator.

6. What should I do if I receive student medical, behavioral, IEP, or Section 504 information?

Use the information only for legitimate transportation and safety purposes. Protect the information from unauthorized disclosure and follow the Educational Entity procedures for handling confidential information.

7. What should I do if I have not received the information I need to safely transport a student?

Notify your supervisor or transportation administrator before transporting the student, when possible. Ask for the information, training, or clarification necessary to safely perform your assigned duties.

8. What should I do if a student refuses to follow directions?

Follow student management procedures and local reporting expectations. Do not escalate the situation unnecessarily. Maintain safe control of the vehicle and report the behavior according to the Educational Entity procedure.

9. What should I do if I am involved in a crash?

Stop, secure the vehicle, check for injuries, notify dispatch or supervision, request emergency assistance if needed, supervise students, and document facts according to local procedure.

10. What should I do if I am unsure about a procedure?

Ask for clarification from dispatch, your supervisor, transportation administration, or the appropriate Educational Entity representative. Operators should not guess when student safety, vehicle operation, or regulatory compliance is involved.

Glossary of Common Terms

Activity Trip/School-Related Event

Means any academic, athletic, or extracurricular activity officially sponsored, organized, or sanctioned by an Educational Entity, regardless of whether the activity occurs on or off school grounds or within or outside of regular school hours.

Educational Entity

A school district, charter school, institute charter school, board of cooperative services (BOCES), or other entity responsible for providing or arranging school transportation services, as applicable.

Multifunction Bus

A vehicle designed to transport students that may be used for school transportation purposes, but is not equipped with traffic control equipment used on a school bus for loading and unloading students.

Post-Trip Inspection

A required inspection or check that is completed after a route, trip, or assignment to ensure the vehicle is clear of passengers, belongings, damage, or safety concerns.

Pre-Trip Inspection

A required inspection that is to be completed before vehicle operation to determine whether the vehicle appears safe and ready for service.

Route

means a documented and authorized itinerary approved by an Educational Entity for the transportation of students. A Route consists of travel between identified locations—including student stops, school campuses, or other approved facilities—operated by a vehicle and driver meeting all applicable state and federal safety standards. This definition includes regular daily schedules, shuttle services, and specialized transport, regardless of whether the itinerary follows a fixed timetable.

School Bus

A motor vehicle that meets applicable school bus construction, equipment, and use requirements and is used for transporting students to or from school or school-related activities.

School Transportation Vehicle

A vehicle used by an Educational Entity, or on behalf of an Educational Entity, to transport students as permitted by applicable law, rule, and policy.

School Transportation Vehicle Operator

Means an employee of an Educational Entity, as defined in these rules, who is responsible for safely transporting students for Routes, and/or School-Related Events.

Safety-Sensitive Function

A duty or activity that directly affects the safe operation of a school transportation vehicle or the safety of students, passengers, motorists, pedestrians, or the public.

Special Transportation Needs

Transportation-related needs arising from a student's disability, medical condition, behavior plan, IEP, Section 504 plan, safety plan, or other documented need requiring specific transportation supports or procedures.