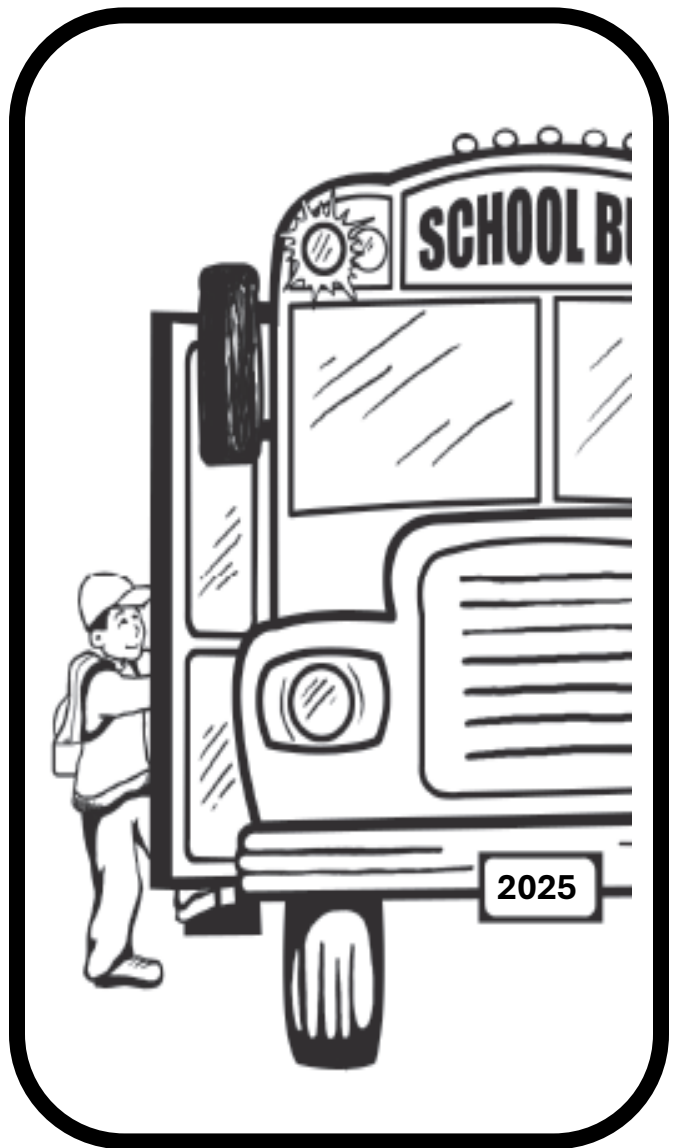


2026

School Bus Safety Is One Bus Stop At A Time



For The Children...

Please Note:

The license plate of the bus in the cover design displays the year associated with the data that is represented in this document. The data in this document spans a date range from school years 1959-1960 to 2024-2025 and is updated annually.

The date at the top of the cover page, specifies the year of publication. The data in this document, is always in a one-year lag and represents the previously fully completed school year.

New York State Master Instructors

The instructional backbone of the New York State School Bus Safety Training Program is the Master Instructor (MI). These professionals have been trained by the Education Department to provide instruction to not only school bus drivers, monitors and attendants, but also to the more than 1,583 School Bus Driver Instructors (SBDIs) who are responsible for training drivers and attendants across the state. They are listed here to recognize their work in developing New York State's Training Program. The MI program, established in 1985, continues to drive the school bus safety effort in New York State. The following are NYS Active Master Instructors:

Lisa Leber	Patricia Coyne	Suzanne Fynn
Pete James	Pete Lawrence	Kelly McLaren
Paul Quinn Mori	Mike Martucci	Ron Mackey
Bill Hoosty	Harold Nicholson	Daniel Proctor
Faye Stevens	Lori-Ann Savino	Mark Rice
Kathleen Furneaux	Susan Soudant-Dello Ioio	John Sharpe
Betty Hughes	Cindy Peterson	Karyn Such
Joe LaMarca	Jay Ballard	JoAnne Thompson
Deborah Stevens	Frank Barney	Kari Turner
Gale Winsper	Nicole Dolce	Brian Trask
Jim Minihan	Cindy Jurewicz	John Spacht
Lorraine Misciagno	Pat Milburn	Anthony Reid
Calvin Bent	James Rogan	Judy Kahn
Maria Caro	Elizabeth Fox	Maria Carocci
Wilhem Gibbs	Brad Countermine	Jeremy Bricks
Laura Greene-Hailey	Paul Overbaugh	Mary Banko
Frank Klein		

New York State Education Department (NYSED) SBDI/MI Advisory Committee

Calvin Bent	Jerome Keenan	Jennifer Stauffer
Jeremy Bricks	Frank Klein	Faye Stevens
Patricia (Trish) Coyne	Kelly McLaren	Dawn Tighe
Daniel Higbie	James Minihan	Gale Winsper
Pete James	Paul Mori	Paul Overbaugh
Judy Kahn	John Spacht	Kristene Reichard

Table of Contents

Master Instructor Listing & NYSED Advisory Committee	3
Preface	5
State Director’s Message	6
Diagnostic Analysis of Student Fatalities	7
NYS 2023-2024 SY Summary of Accident Reports	17
Not My Kid	26
Safety Alert – Parent/Caregiver Guidance	27
School Bus Safety is a Team Activity	28
Crossing Poster Life Saving Tips	30
Routing & Driving Tips	34
Loading & Unloading Tips	36
Charter Bus Safety & Procedures	49
Highway Rail Crossing Safety Tips & Cautions	50
NYS Safety Drill Checklist	60
NYS Accident Reporting Requirements	61
Safety Alert – Children’s Clothing	64
NYS Fatality Summary	65

Preface

This document is created to enhance school transportation safety for the more than 2,300,000+ children who ride more than 50,000 school buses each day in New York State. Its distribution to school bus drivers, monitors, and attendants is required in all Pre-Service, Basic, and Advanced Courses.

This document should also be distributed to the following groups: children, parents and parent organizations, supervisors, administrators, school board members, teachers, school transportation organizations, legislators, the media, and any other groups and/or individuals with a vested interest in school transportation safety.

The highest level of student safety cannot be achieved until everyone involved with school transportation is fully aware of the potential dangers.

This document analyzes 64 years of school transportation fatalities. It describes lessons learned from these tragedies and recommended procedures for avoiding such tragedies in the future.

If you have suggestions and/or comments about this document, please forward them to:

The University of the State of New York
The New York State Education Department
School Bus Safety & Driver Training Unit - Room 876 EBA Albany, New York 12234-0001
(518) 474-6541
FAX (518) 474-1983

©2026 by New York State Education Department

Electronic copy may be accessed at www.p12.nysed.gov/schoolbus/state.html



**THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT/THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE
OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234**

Office of Educational Management Services, Pupil Transportation Services
Room 475, Education Building Annex Tel: (518) 474-6541
Fax: (518) 474-1983

State Director's Message

January 2026

Dear NYS School Bus Drivers, Monitors, and Attendants:

We reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that **School Bus Safety Is One Bus Stop at a Time**. This living document reflects New York State's ongoing dedication to pupil transportation safety and is provided during Pre-Service, Basic and Advanced Course Training, as well as at the start of each school year.

Its purpose is simple: to equip you all, our transportation professionals, with clear insight into safety trends and practical guidance that strengthens your daily work. Every training requirement, certification, and professional development opportunity exists for one reason: **to protect the school-age children entrusted to your care**.

Built upon more than sixty years of expertise and experience, this resource is designed to help you learn from the past, reinforce safe practices, and eliminate unsafe ones. Please review it carefully and consult your School Bus Driver Instructor (SBDI) with any questions you may have.

At NYSED, we recognize the vital role you play in the safety and well-being of students across the state. We are grateful for your unwavering dedication and proud of the professionalism you bring to the school bus each day. Thank you.

Sincerely,

David Elliott
Coordinator, Educational Aid Services
Interim/Acting Director of Pupil
Transportation

NEW YORK STATE SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION STUDENT FATALITIES — A DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS

2/1/1960 – 6/30/2025

School bus accidents, some of which result in student fatalities, are a reality for the school transportation community. Careful examination of the circumstances and causes surrounding such tragedies helps the school transportation community develop prevention strategies and techniques. This document is a detailed examination of the trends and lessons identified by an analysis of school bus accidents in New York State that have occurred since 1960.

School buses can be involved in many types of accidents, with or without student passengers. For the purpose of this document, a “school bus student fatality” is defined as a student killed while riding in, entering, or exiting a school bus. Fatalities occurring to school bus drivers or attendants, pedestrians who were not entering or leaving the bus, or passengers in other vehicles are not included in school bus student fatalities. Based on this definition, 120 school bus student fatalities have occurred in New York State since 1960. There were no student fatalities in the 2024-2025 school year.

A careful examination of this data has highlighted some disturbing trends in student fatalities. What follows is the outcome of that examination.

Please Note: *This document represents only the data from MV104F reports received by the NY State Education Department. There is a possibility of under-reporting, non-reporting or inaccurate reporting of school bus accidents and incidents.*

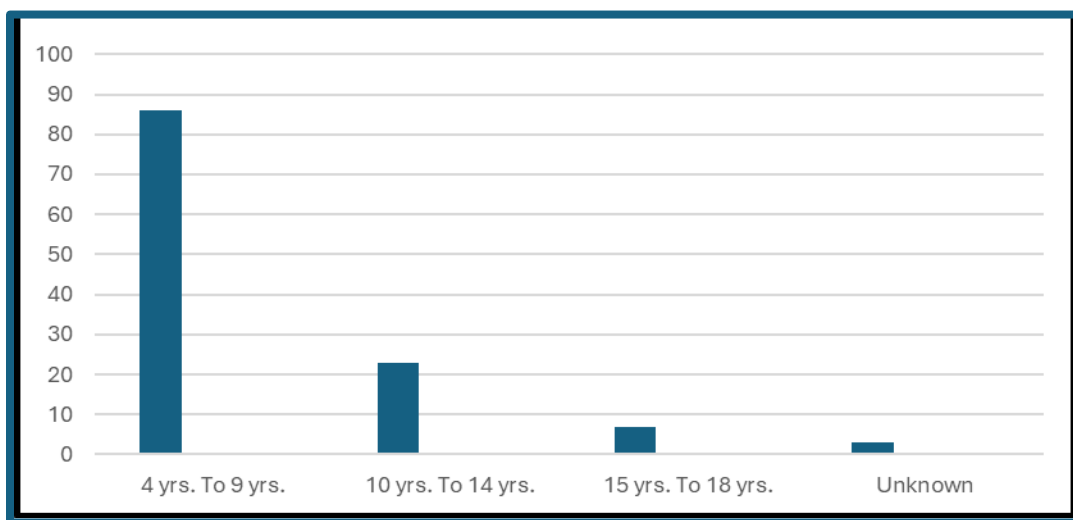
TREND #1: YOUNGEST STUDENTS AT RISK

Overall, children ages 4 to 8 (grades K-3) were most susceptible to a school bus fatality. These children were involved in 70 percent of the fatalities (84 out of 120). Factors that likely contribute to these statistics:

- The smaller stature of younger children makes it more difficult for bus drivers and motorists to see.
- These younger students are unable to see over or around objects such as parked cars or bushes.

- Their hearing has not completely developed; they cannot easily tell the direction sounds are coming from.
- Their vision has not developed completely; they cannot estimate the speed of an approaching vehicle.
- They are inexperienced in regard to road hazards and fail to act safely around school buses and traffic.
- Young children have a very short attention span and require frequent reminders to learn (and remember) safety procedures.
- In 2024-2025 school year, there were no student fatalities.

Age of Student 1959-1960 – 2024-2025 SY

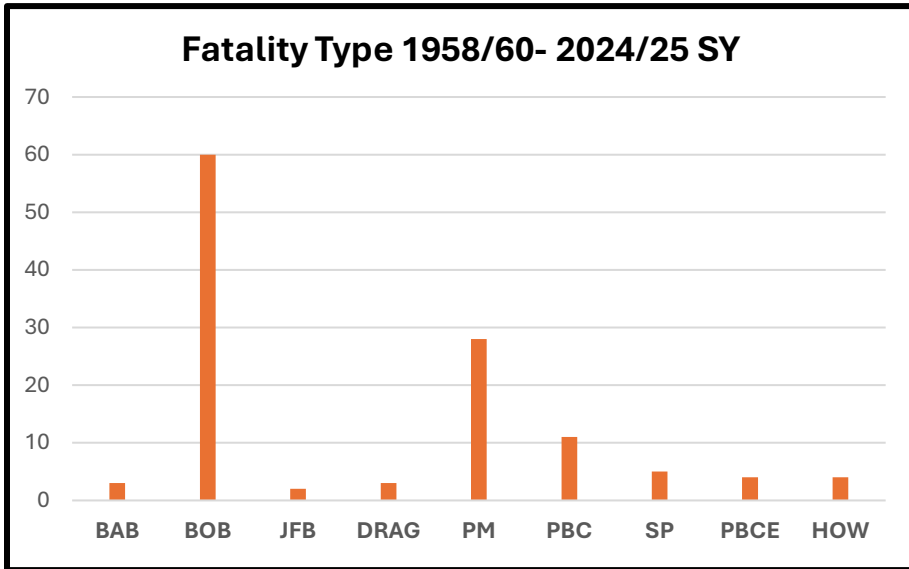


TREND #2: MOST FATALITIES OCURRED OUTSIDE THE BUS

Of the 120 fatalities, since 1960, 101 (84.1%) involved students as pedestrians (outside the bus) during the loading or unloading process at a bus stop or school. Students are most vulnerable to serious injury at this time because they are not inside the bus, which affords them protection. There are two specific types of loading or unloading accidents:

- By Own Bus (BOB) – A child is struck by the school bus
 - Student crossed too close to the bus and the bus driver didn't see the child
 - Child dropped something under the bus and tried to get it
 - Child slipped under the side of the bus
 - Child missed the bus and ran to catch it
 - Child's drawstring or backpack straps were caught in handrail or door and the child was dragged by the bus

- Child crossed unexpectedly and was not seen by driver
- Passing Motorist (PM) – A child is struck by a passing motorist
 - Child was struck by a motorist (PM) illegally passing the bus (on either the right or left side of the bus).



BAB = By Another Bus

BOB = By Own Bus

JFB = Jumped from Bus

DRAG = Dragged by Bus

PM = Passing Motorist

PBC = Passenger Bus Collision

SP = Student Pedestrian

PBCE = Passenger Bus Collision with Ejection

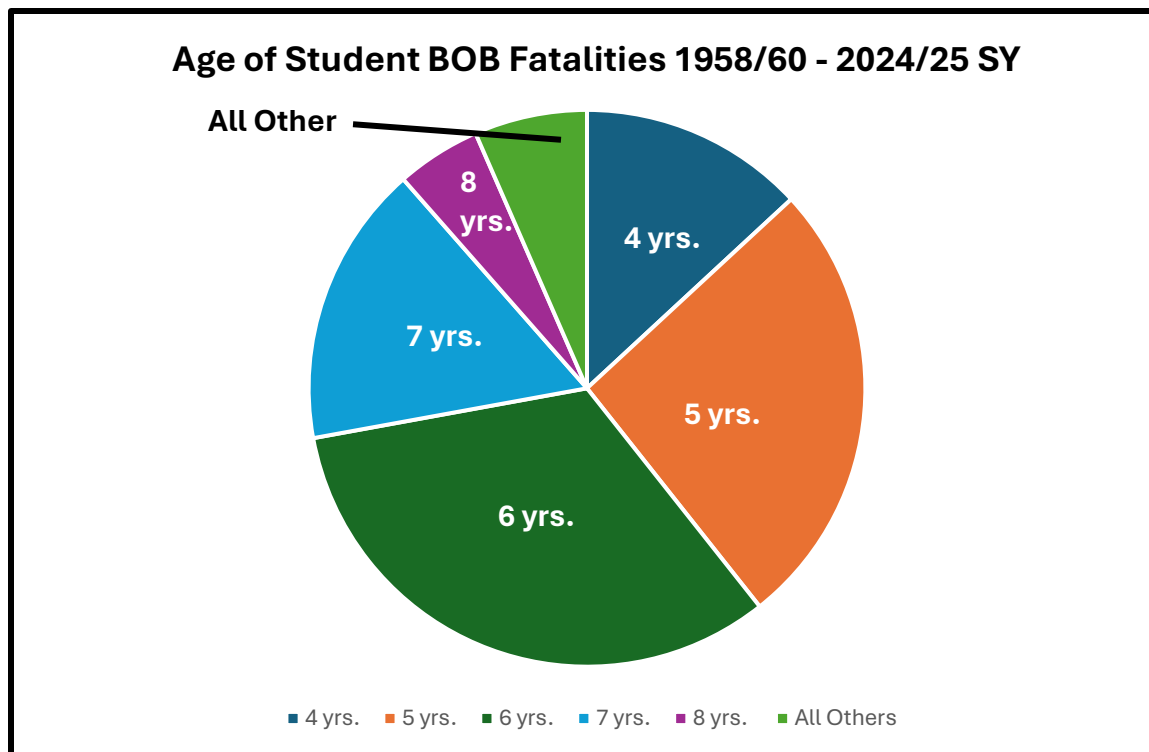
HOW = Head Out Window

- By Own Bus (BOB) accounted for 61 or 50% of student fatalities.
- Passing Motorist (PM) accounted for 28 or 23.3% of student fatalities.

By Own Bus Fatalities

Of the 61 fatal accidents categorized as “BOB,” 54 or 88.5% involved children under 8 years of age. The age/grade level most at risk of being involved in a By Own Bus fatality is 4 to 7 years old (kindergarten through second grade).

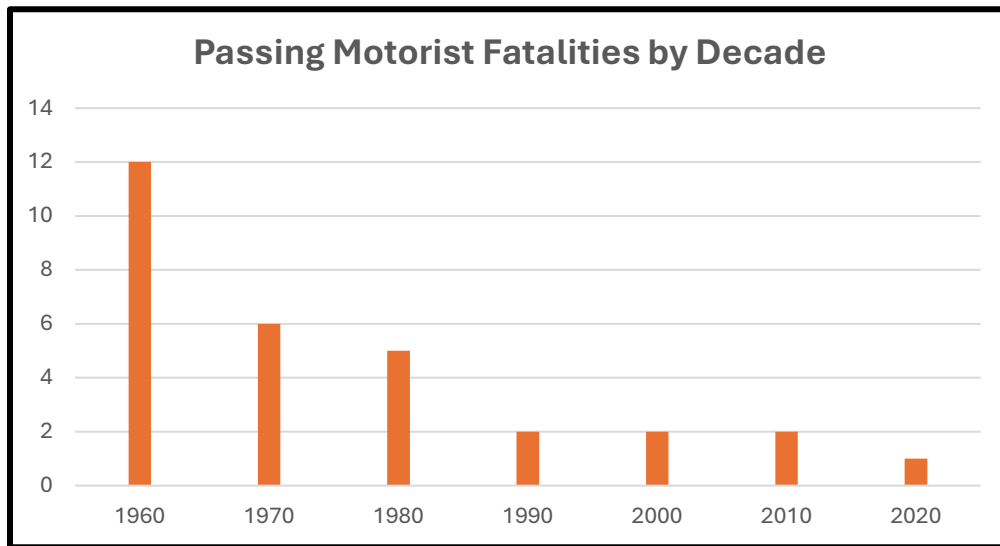
When compared to all other grades, kindergarten through second grade are much more likely to be run over by their own bus.



Passing Motorist Fatalities

Fatal accidents involving students who were struck by a passing motorist typically involved one or more of the following factors:

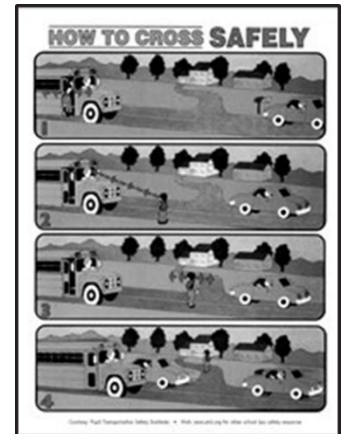
- Motorists attempted to pass the bus, claiming they didn't have time to wait.
- Motorists claimed they couldn't see the flashing lights because the lights were dirty or because sun, rain, snow, or fog blinded them.
- The bus driver waved the car through the red flashing lights, unaware a child was crossing the road at that time.
- The motorist, demonstrating disregard for the law and/or children's safety, did not stop for the flashing red lights.



Commit to Zero Fatalities

In the 1980s, several Passing Motorist fatalities occurred over a short period of time, causing an intensive campaign to be launched in the 1985-86 school year. This campaign was initiated to alert the public of its legal obligation to stop for school buses, stopped with red lights flashing.

The Education Department, school districts, and contract providers of transportation services (in partnership with private business, local governments, and the Governor’s Traffic Safety Committee) designed several campaigns to alert the motoring public of their obligation to stop for stopped school buses. Twice, the legislature amended the law to levy stiffer penalties for passing stopped school buses. Several years later, reductions have been made but passing motorist incidents remain a serious risk to our students.



However, school bus accident reports of near misses and students being injured, and of school bus drivers saving passengers’ lives during the loading/unloading process, reminds us that public awareness campaigns and school bus driver alertness during the loading/unloading process continue to be critical in protecting children's lives.

Let’s commit to zero fatalities in the coming year!

PASSENGER FATALITIES

The following scenarios are the most common causes of Passenger Fatalities:

- School bus collisions involving a large vehicle, such as a train or large truck.
- Bus driven off the road, striking a fixed object.
- Student puts head out window as bus passes a utility pole, sign, or another vehicle.
- Student jumps from a moving bus.

Passenger fatalities are usually the result of:

- Temporary inattention or distraction on the part of the school bus driver.
- Mirrors out of adjustment or driver not using them properly.
- Lack of effective student behavior management practices.
- Improper use of defensive driving techniques, designed to help the driver monitor the ever- changing traffic environment.

TREND #3: MOST INJURIES OCCUR INSIDE THE BUS

As we have discovered, most fatalities occur when students are outside the bus during the loading/unloading process. However, the overwhelming majority of school bus injuries occur to passengers inside the bus.

- In 2025, all student injuries reported were experienced by students inside the bus. The overall majority of passenger injuries, excluding “unknown” were minor, however even minor injuries can result in major lawsuits and settlements paid out by districts and/or contractors.
- Students are most vulnerable to injury when they are out of their seats because they are not correctly positioned to benefit from the protection the bus design provides. When students are standing, they can be injured even in a non-collision, evasive maneuver or quick stop.
- Students sitting in the rear or front seats have been shown to be most at risk for injury or death in frontal or rear collisions—the most common types of collisions.

Drivers must be aware of all injuries to bus passengers, no matter how minor. Every injury must be reported to a supervisor for appropriate action and follow-up.

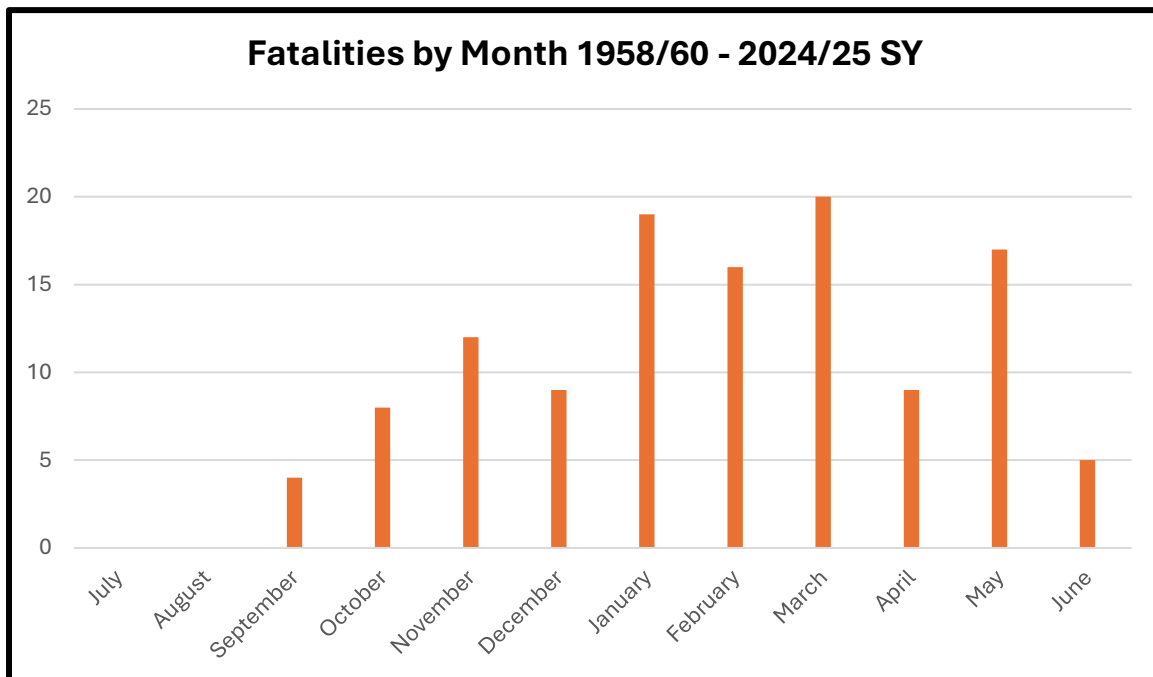
TREND #4: ***MOST DANGEROUS TIMES – AFTERNOON & MID-YEAR***

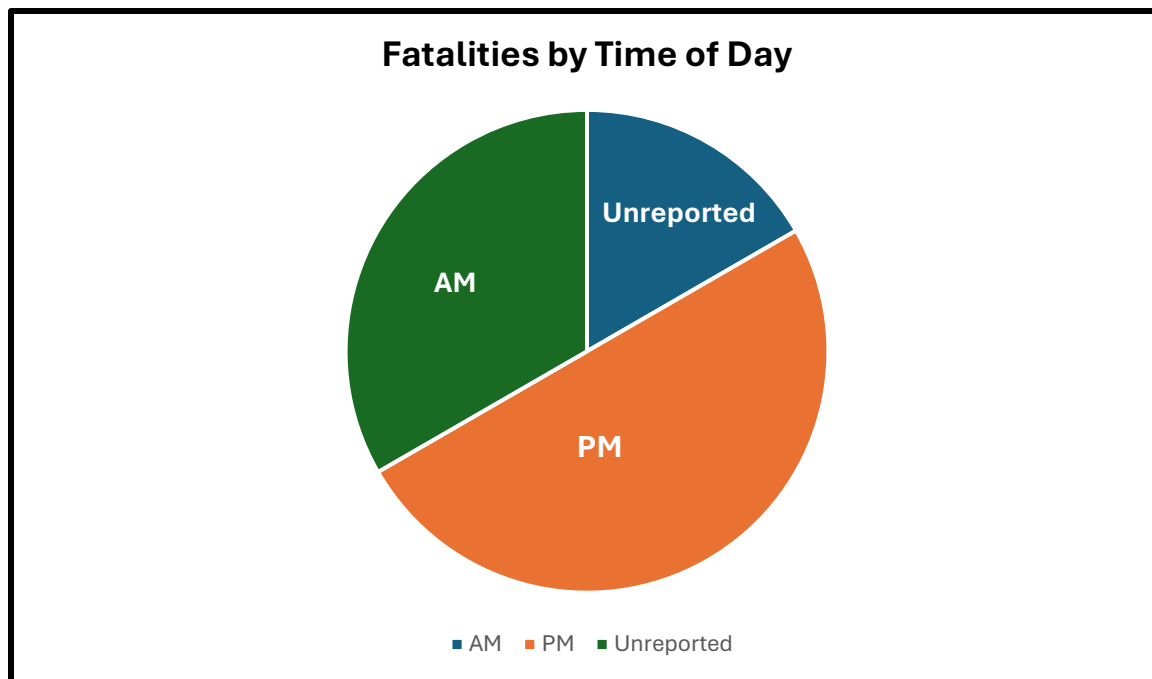
Most student fatalities take place on the afternoon trip home from school.

- Students and drivers alike often think about what they will do when they get home instead of concentrating on unloading safely.

Most fatalities take place between December and June.

- School bus drivers, students, and motorists are often lulled into complacency after school has been in session for a few months.
- Interestingly, June and September have the least fatalities, suggesting that drivers tend to be more focused and anticipate the unexpected—during these months.



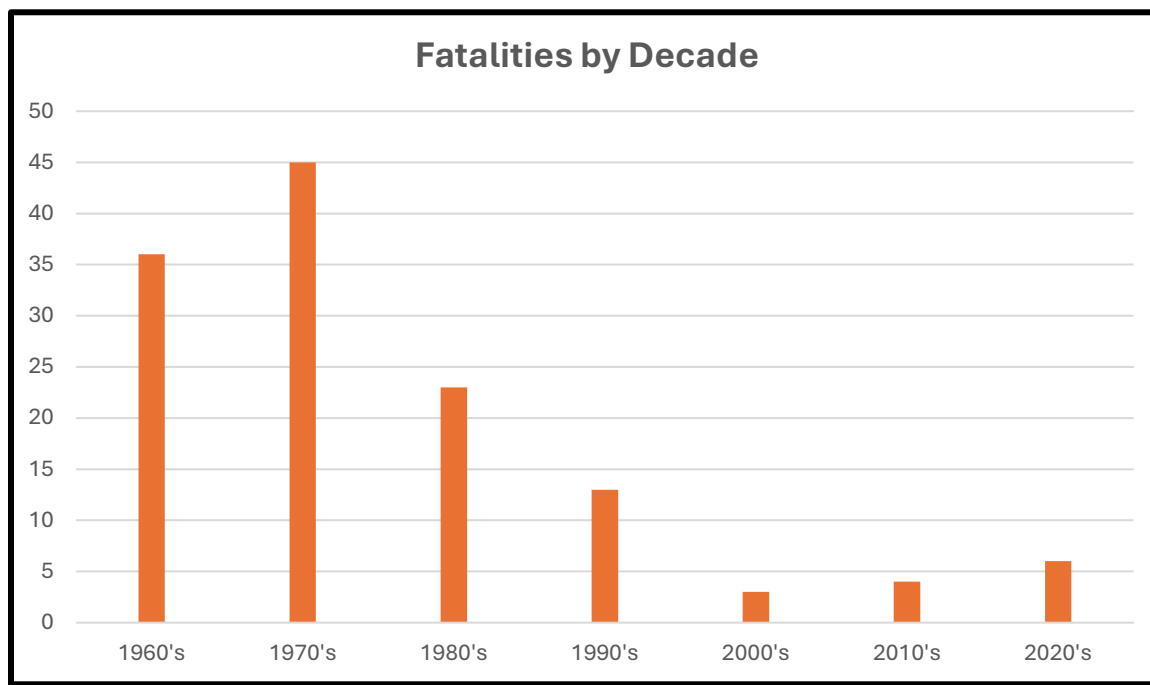


TREND #5: DRIVER AND STUDENT TRAINING PROGRAMS HAVE DRAMATICALLY REDUCED FATALITIES

The 1977 Basic Course of Instruction, updated in 2019, set a new standard for bus driver training:

- From 1960 to 1976, 67 fatalities occurred, or 4.1 fatalities per year.
- From 1976-1990 there were 76 children killed as student pedestrians outside the bus during loading and unloading. An average of 5.4 children killed each of the 14 years.
- From 9/1/76 to 6/30/2023, 57 fatalities occurred, or 1.2 per year.
- From 6/30/23 to 6/20/24, 4 fatalities occurred.
- There were no student fatalities in 2024 – 2025 SY.
- There were 204 fatalities from 1960 to 2025, an average of 6 students per year – 6 too many.
- K-6 Classroom Curriculum for School Bus Safety, the Safe Crossing Video and the State Education Department Crossing Poster were introduced in the late 1980s. Sixteen children have been killed as student pedestrians (outside the bus during loading or unloading) since 1990.

This demonstrates the importance of today's driver, monitor, attendant, instructor, and student training efforts, as well as the use of team management concepts, in operating today's training program as a school transportation safety team.



TWO ELEMENTS THAT ARE NON-TRENDS

1. Weather Related

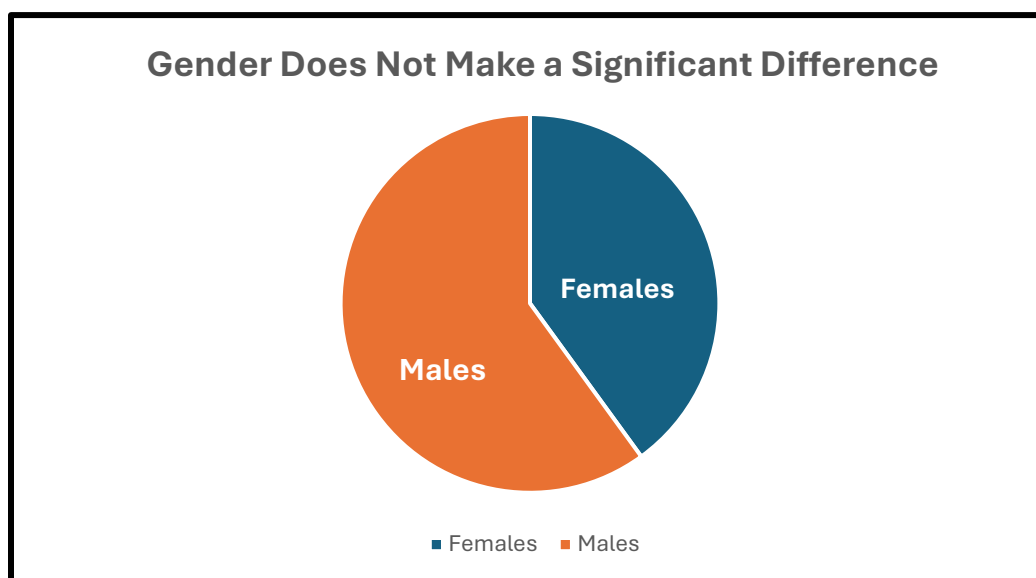
Bad weather conditions are not a significant factor in fatal school bus accidents in New York State. In fact, accident reports indicate most accidents happen on clear, dry, sunny days.

Early data regarding weather was not collected for New York student fatalities (this was addressed beginning with the 1984-85 school year). National statistics, however, show the greatest number of national student fatalities occur on clear, dry, sunny days. New York's statistics generally follow those at the national level, and since 89% of fatalities since the 1984-85 school year occurred on clear, dry, sunny days, it is reasonable to rule out bad weather as a significant factor in school bus fatalities.

2. Gender Of the Student

Gender is also not a significant factor in fatal school bus accidents. Boys and girls have been equally susceptible to school bus fatalities. This trend seems to contradict other childhood accident data. Four times as many boys die in bicycle accidents than girls and almost twice as many boys then girls die as pedestrians than by drowning.

In the school year 2023-2024, there were 2 girls and 1 boy who were tragically lost. There were no student fatalities in 2024-2025.



SUMMARY—WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

An effective school transportation safety program requires that students, drivers, parents, school administrators, and affiliated groups be made aware of the basic characteristics most likely to lead to a school bus fatality. This awareness, coupled with a strong elementary school safety curriculum that incorporates this information, is the most important action that can be taken to enhance the safety of a child's ride to and from school and school-related activities.

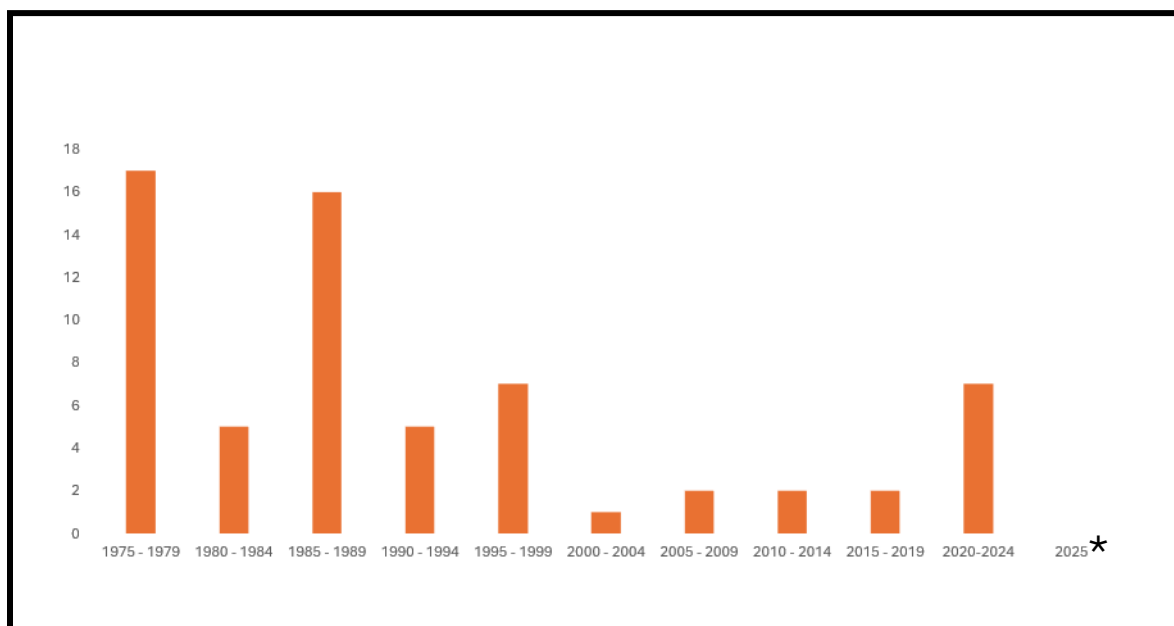
New York State Bus Accidents 2024 – 2025 SY Summary of Accident Reports Submitted to NYSED

The 110 months from April 23, 1987, to June 21, 1996, continues to be the longest period on record without a passing motorist fatality; however, passing motorist fatalities in 2004, 2006, and 2011 emphasize the need to stay vigilant during loading and unloading. This is further emphasized by the potential of significant under-reporting of passing motorist incidents.

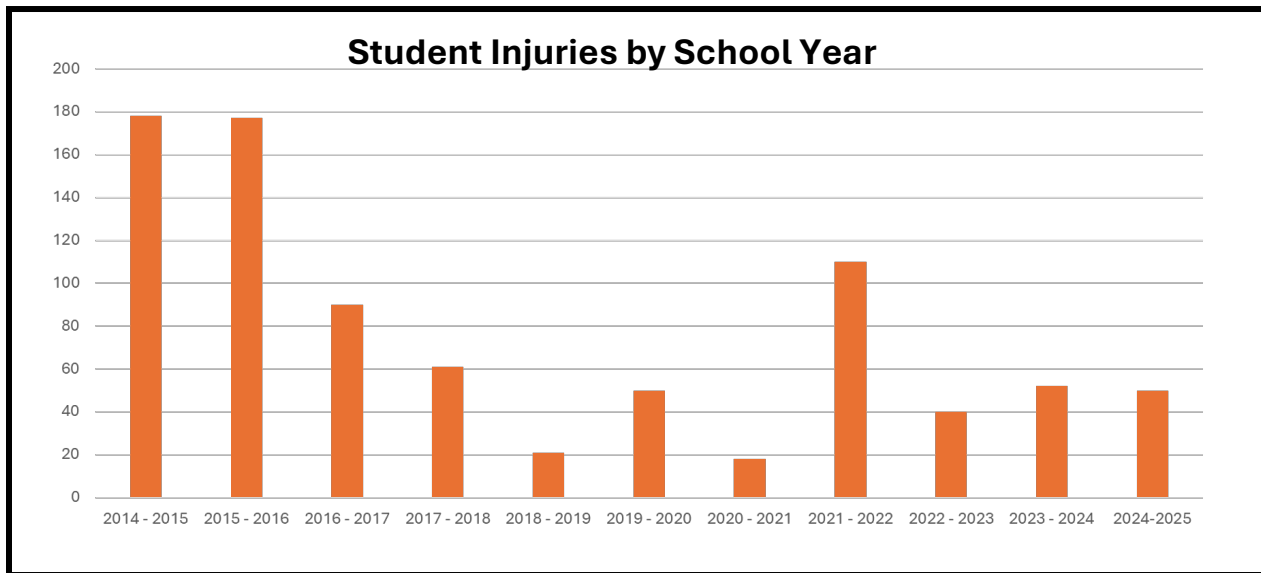
The last school bus loading or unloading fatality was in the 2021- 2022 school year, a “By Another Bus” (BAB) fatality.

It is important to note that although New York State student transportation professionals have done an admirable job in reducing both By Own Bus and Passing Motorist fatalities, we have not eliminated loading and unloading accidents completely.

Fatalities Numbers – 5 Year Blocks



* Note: There were no student fatalities in 2024-2025 school year.



2024– 2025 SCHOOL BUS RELATED FATALITIES

- Fatalities:
 - Public School Student Fatalities 0
 - Private School Student Fatalities 0
 - Other Motorist Fatalities: 1
 - Pedestrian Fatalities: 0
 - Bus Driver or Attendant Fatalities: 1

2024 – 2025 SCHOOL BUS RELATED INJURIES

- Student injuries: 50
- Injury Severity:
 - Severe: 0
 - Moderate: 6
 - Minor: 9
 - Unknown: 35
- Driver Injuries: 14
- Attendant/Monitor Injuries: 0
- Other Motorist Injuries: 1
- Non-Student Pedestrian Injuries: 8

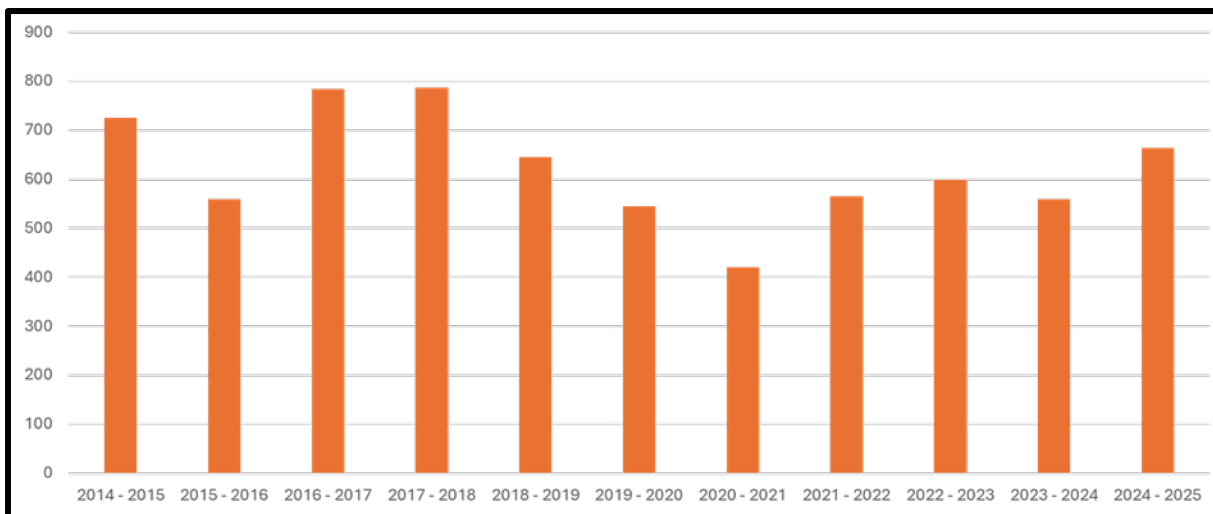
Each school year, data is compiled from the many MV104F forms that are sent to NYSED. The data helps to identify trends and statistics. However, the one sure thing in injury reporting is the number of reports barely scratch the surface of the true number of injuries occurring on New York State school buses each school year.

2024 – 2025 TOTAL SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENTS REPORTED

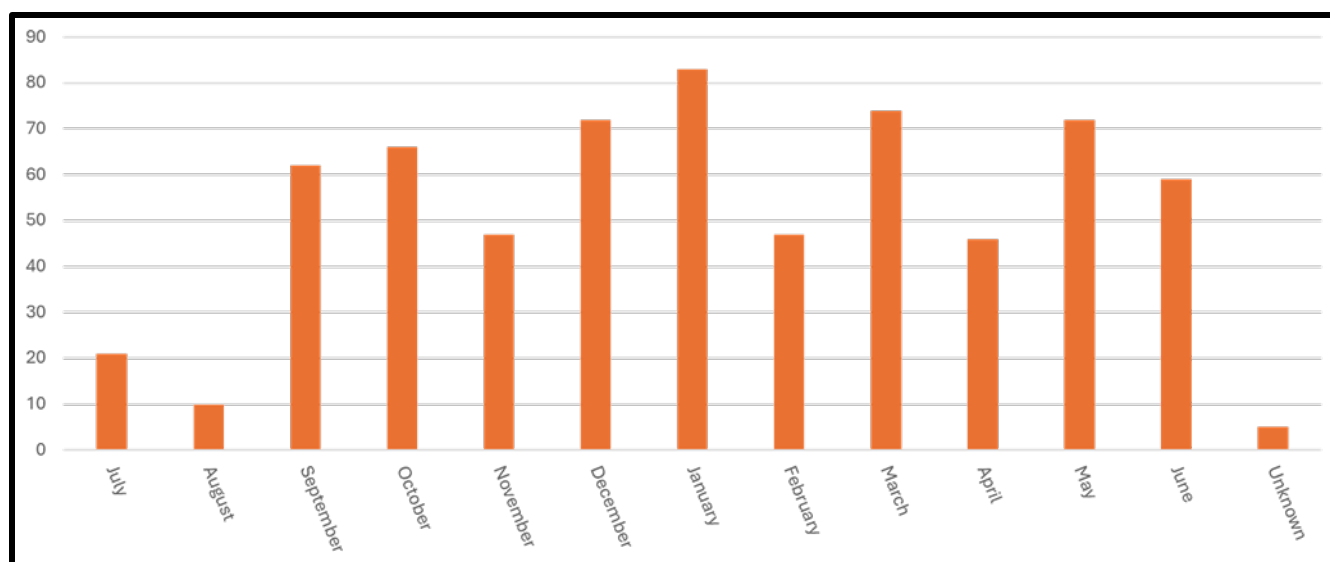
The 2024 - 2025 school year saw 664 reported accidents. This is not a record, in fact it is below the average range (736) for reported school bus accidents, since the 2000-2001 school year.

- Reported Accidents: 664
- Types & Characteristics of Accidents Reported:
 - Loading: 6
 - Unloading: 4
 - By-Own-Bus: 0
 - Passing Motorist: 0

Total Accidents by School Year



2024 – 2025 School Bus Accidents by Month



SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT FACTS: 2024-2025 SCHOOL YEAR

Buses Rear-ended: 216

- Maneuver at the Time of Being Rearended:
 - Loading: 6
 - Unloading: 4
 - Stopped at R/R Crossing: 5
 - Stopped in Traffic: 67
 - In process of turning: 50
 - Involved following too closely: 1
 - Backing: 68
 - Other: 15

Of the 664 school bus accidents reported for the 2024-2025 school year, 32.5% involved the bus being rear-ended.

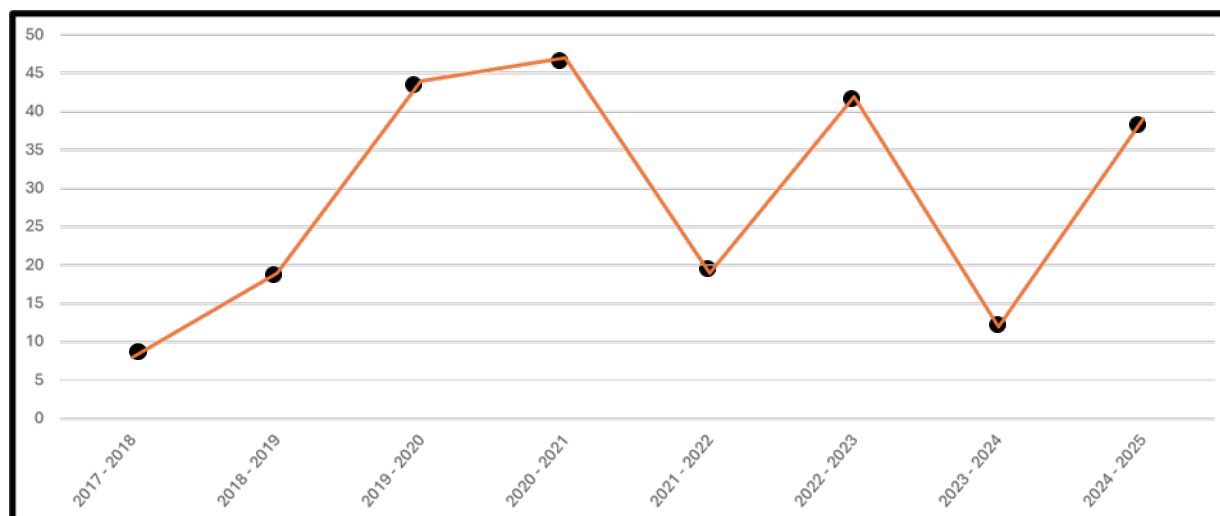
Weather Related Accidents: 87

- Weather Conditions at Time of Accident:
 - Snow: 33
 - Wet Road Conditions: 22
 - Sleet/Hail/Freezing Rain/Ice: 30
 - Fog/Smog/Other: 2

Miscellaneous Accident Types:

- Animal: 3
- Immersion: 0
- Sideswipe: 126
- Head-on Collisions: 6
- Pedestrian Accidents: 5
- Non-collision Injury Accidents: 0
- Backing Accidents: 68
- Intersection Accidents: 81
- Bus to Bus: 39
- Unknown: 20

Bus to Bus Accidents by School Year



ACCIDENT LOCATION BY SCHOOL YEAR

2013-2014

- Urban: 19%
- Suburban: 66%
- Rural: 13%
- Unknown: 2%

2014-2015

- Urban: 31%
- Suburban: 13%
- Rural: 53%
- Unknown: 3%

2015-2016

- Urban: 21%
- Suburban: 14%
- Rural: 60%
- Unknown: 2%

2016-2017

- Urban: 23%
- Suburban: 16%
- Rural: 56%
- Unknown: 5%

2017-2018

- Urban: 20%
- Suburban: 11%
- Rural: 57%
- Unknown: 12%

2018-2019

- Urban: 28%
- Suburban: 12%
- Rural: 55%
- Unknown: 5%

2019-2020

- Urban: 24%
- Suburban: 13%
- Rural: 59%
- Unknown: 4%

2020-2021

- Urban: 21%
- Suburban: 15%
- Rural: 56%
- Unknown: 8%

2021-2022

- Urban: 32%
- Suburban: 15%
- Rural: 49%
- Unknown: 4%

2022-2023

- Urban: 18%
- Suburban: 42%
- Rural: 32%
- Unknown: 8%

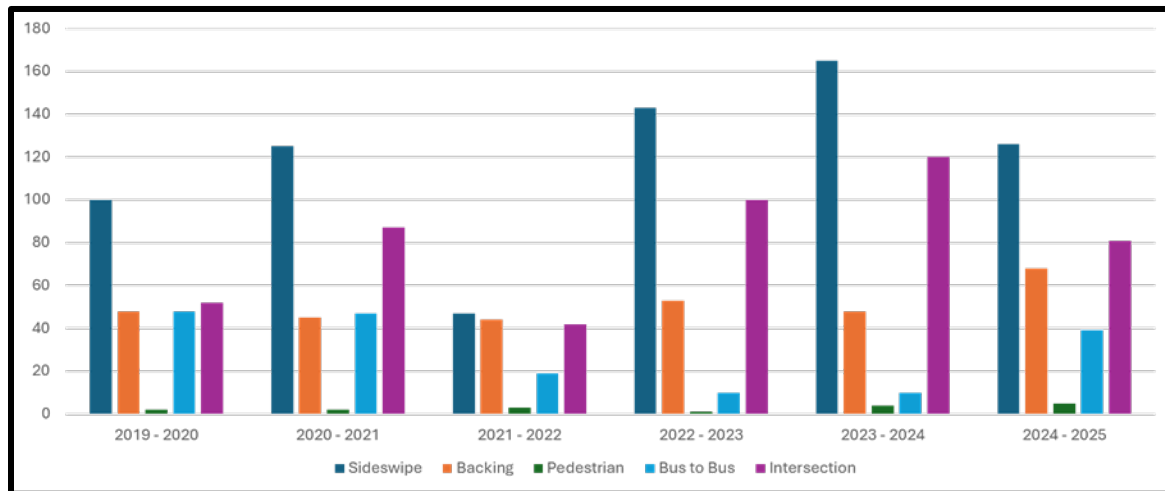
2023-2024

- Urban: 25%
- Suburban: 8%
- Rural: 58%
- Unknown: 9%

2024-2025

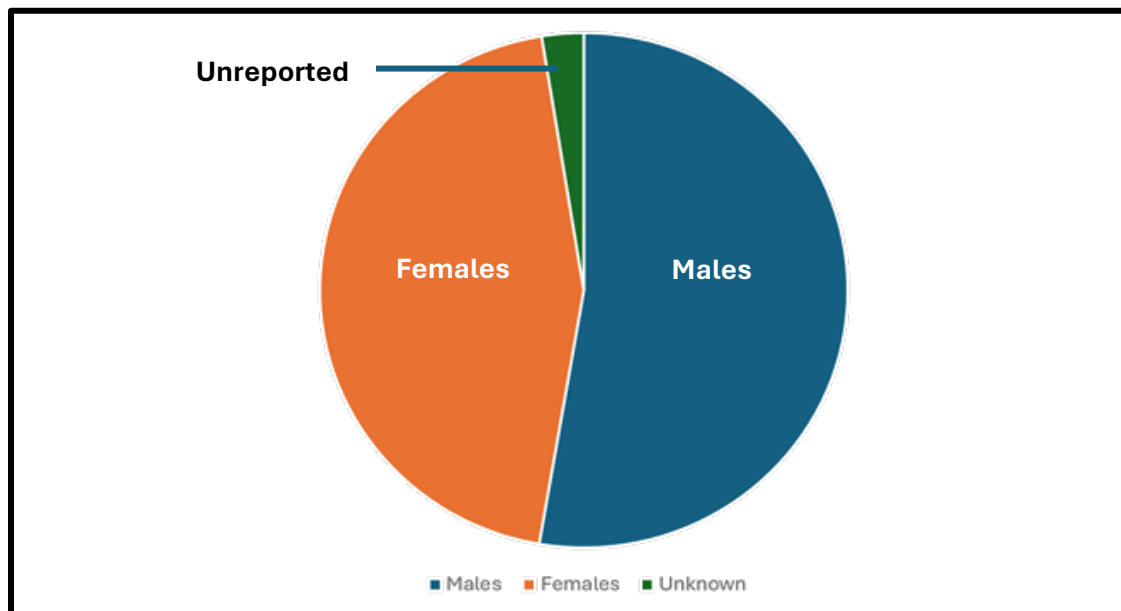
- Urban: 22%
- Suburban: 15%
- Rural: 60%
- Unknown: 3%

Accidents by Most Common Types



2024-2025 Driver Gender

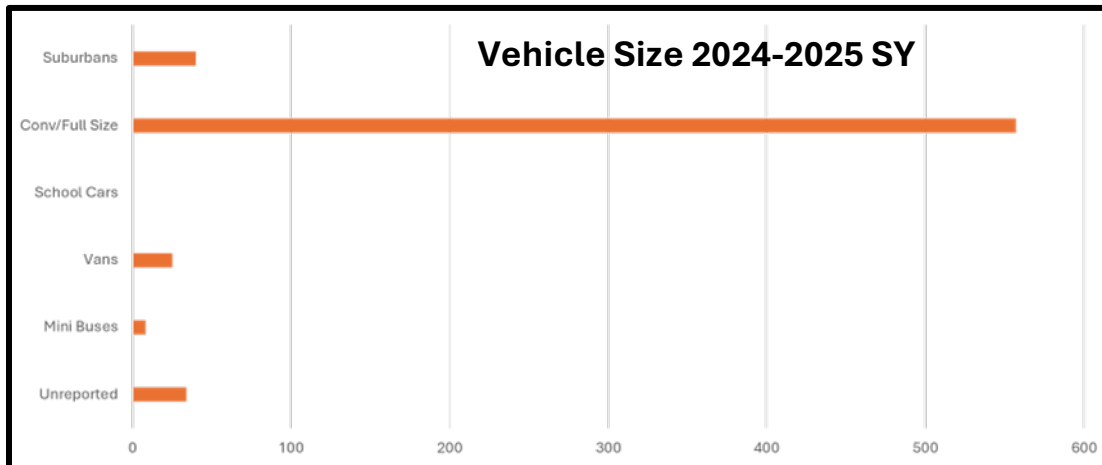
In 2024-2025 school year, males represented 52.7% and females 44.7% of bus drivers involved in accidents. Gender unreported, 2.5%.



2024-2025 VEHICLE SIZE

Full-size buses (conventional or transit style) accounted for 84% of all accidents.

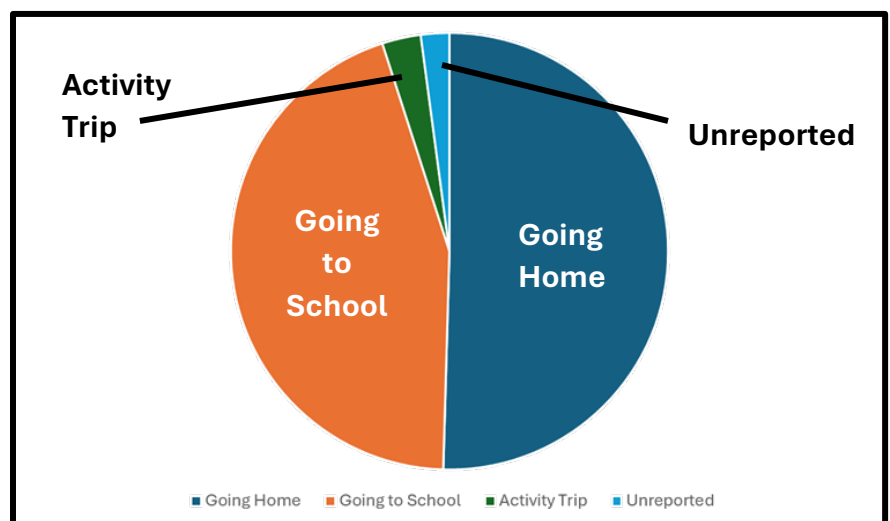
- Mini-buses: 1%
- Vans: 3%
- Suburbans: 7%
- School cars: 0%
- Unreported: 5%



2024-2025 TIME OF DAY

As with fatality statistics, accident statistics indicate there is a higher risk of an accident occurring on the afternoon bus ride home by a narrow margin.

- Going Home: 50%
- Going to School: 44%
- Activity Trip: 2%
- Unreported: 4%



2024-20245 Preventability 61.5%

According to information provided in the reports and following National Safety Council guidelines, 61.5% of all school bus accidents reported in the 2024-2025 school year, could have been prevented by the bus driver.

Note: *This report was prepared by the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute for the New York State Education Department. Its purpose is to provide School Bus Driver Instructors, school bus drivers, attendants, monitors, dispatchers, supervisors, mechanics, Certified Examiners, and safety officials with information about current trends in New York State school bus accidents. Ultimately, it is hoped this information will help prevent future accidents. This data is based solely on data derived from reports made by operators in NYS. The reliability of this data could potentially be undermined due to under reporting the data, a failure to report at all or incorrect data reported.*



NOT MY KID, NOT MY STOP

School bus drivers need to be highly aware of the possibility of children chasing after the bus. This can occur when a child mistakenly believes they have missed his or her bus and tries to catch it or approaches the bus to meet a sibling getting off, or just because children enjoy chasing buses.

Drivers need to be aware that children might appear from any direction at any time—especially near a bus stop.

In recent years, a number of incidents have taken place in which a child has been killed or seriously injured in these kinds of incidents:

- In two cases, the children were routed to ride the bus that struck them but missed the bus and were running to catch it. One child had chased the bus a full city block.
- In two other cases, the victims were siblings of the child riding the bus. One was a two-year-old who got under the bus while the mother was talking to the bus driver, and one was a nine-year-old who rode across the street on a Big Wheel™ bike just as the bus was leaving the stop in the afternoon.
- In 2023-2024 a driver was stopped by a pedestrian on right, and student mistook the bus stopping as his and was to pick him up. It was not the student's bus. Driver struck the child as they attempted to cross from left to board.

The school bus stop is a dangerous place. During the 2024 - 2025 school year, 10 school bus crashes occurred at bus stops. Bus drivers must be highly alert for all potential hazards – pedestrians or vehicles – when stopped, approaching, or leaving the vicinity of a school bus stop. Drivers need to be aware of traffic behind their bus and remember children can be anywhere. Just because it's "not my kid, not my stop" is no excuse for not being alert to children near the bus.

Use the Safety Alert on the next page to help educate parents of preschoolers, daycare centers, and babysitters who receive young children from the bus.

SAFETY ALERT

Dear Parent or Preschool Care Provider:

Your bus driver has been entrusted with the serious responsibility of protecting the safety of your child. The driver cannot control the hazards outside the bus. We ask your cooperation to assign a responsible person to meet the bus every day to receive your child. This will ensure your child's safety as well as the safety of other children in the area.

We also want to alert you to the dangers of long drawstrings or straps on children's clothing, or long mitten strings. Across the country, a number of incidents have occurred in which children's clothing or mitten strings became entangled in the bus door or handrail as the child stepped off the bus. In some cases, children have been dragged several feet and seriously injured or even killed. Please make sure your children's clothing does not have any long, dangling strings or straps that could jeopardize their safety while getting off the bus, as well as in other daily activities such as the playground.

Another danger to be aware of is dark clothing during the non-Daylight Savings time when it is darker in the morning and afternoon. Small children should be dressed in bright-colored clothing or have reflective tape on their outerwear for better visibility by motorists and school bus drivers.

Our goal is to protect the safety of your child!

Thank you.

School Bus Safety is a Team Activity

The accident analysis identifies certain key trends that can guide us in working with students. The key lessons learned are that boys and girls in grades K-3 who are getting off a bus are more susceptible to a fatal accident than other children. Such accidents usually take place from October to May. Students are most often struck by their own school bus, and secondarily by a passing motorist. Unlike fatalities, most student injuries occur when students are riding on the bus.

What Can Be Done?

Education, Education, and More Education: The student age group most susceptible to a school bus accident must be educated thoroughly about the dangers of riding a school bus. Student safety awareness and, more importantly, their retention level, must be raised by frequent bus safety instruction. The following programs are recommended to increase awareness and improve retention of critical safety procedures by young students.



In the School

Many products have been created by the State Education Department to help train the youngest, most vulnerable children. Other products have been created based on the state materials. Many other safety products are available from other sources. Be sure what you use accurately displays the behaviors you want your children to follow. Inaccurate training information is dangerous.

- K-6 Classroom Curriculum for School Bus Safety provides lessons for different times of the year, covering all school bus safety topics.
- Classic Safety video, "Safe Crossing: An EGG-cellent Idea" is a 10-minute video for younger elementary students, which focuses on safe crossing and riding behaviors.
- "How to Cross Safely" poster is available in 17-inch x 22-inch size for posting in classrooms and 8-inch x 10.5-inch size for posting in the bus. The bus posters are a vinyl crack-and-peel material to stand up to the harsh environment inside a school bus. The safety message of this poster is described fully on the next pages.

- School Bus Safety Activity and Coloring Books in English and Spanish is a 16-page coloring and activity book that uses illustrations from the K-6 Curriculum to stress the important topics of crossing, evacuation, danger zones, and riding safety.
- School Bus Safety Crosswords and Word Search Digital Download booklets reinforce school bus safety with students, including evacuations, bullying and many other safety principles.

On the Bus

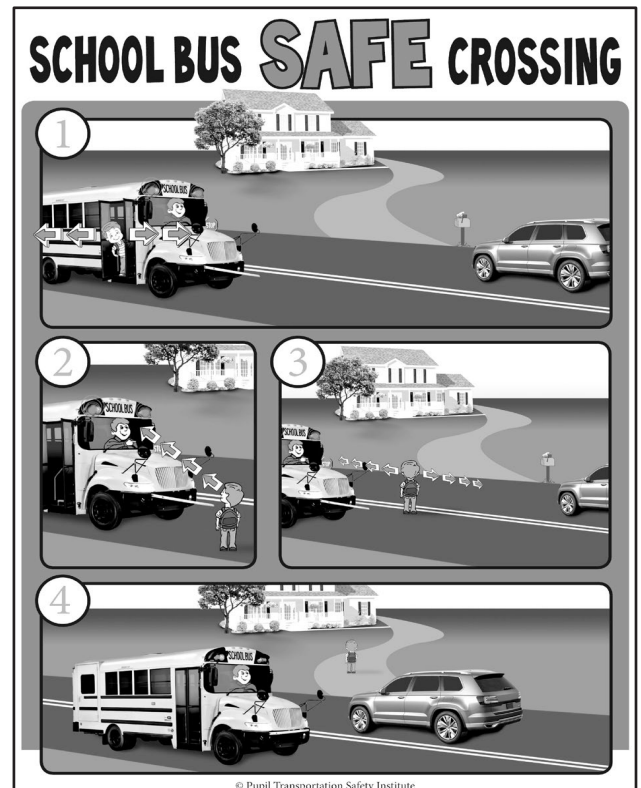
In addition to a bus driver's day-to-day opportunity to train students in safety procedures, the three times a year BUS SAFETY DRILLS provide an additional opportunity for in-depth instruction.

The most important safety tool for use on the bus is the SAFE CROSSING POSTER created by NYSED in 1984. Schools should display the poster (which illustrates proper procedures for crossing in front of a school bus) at eye level for 4- to 8- year- olds in the classroom and on the bus as they exit. A safety illustration, posted in this position, gives these children the opportunity to observe this critical life-saving message each time they leave the classroom and bus, thereby enhancing awareness and retention of the safety message.

Posters can be placed in different areas in the classroom or on the bus, but posters near exits ensure children see this important message just as they embark on the most dangerous part of their trip to and from school.

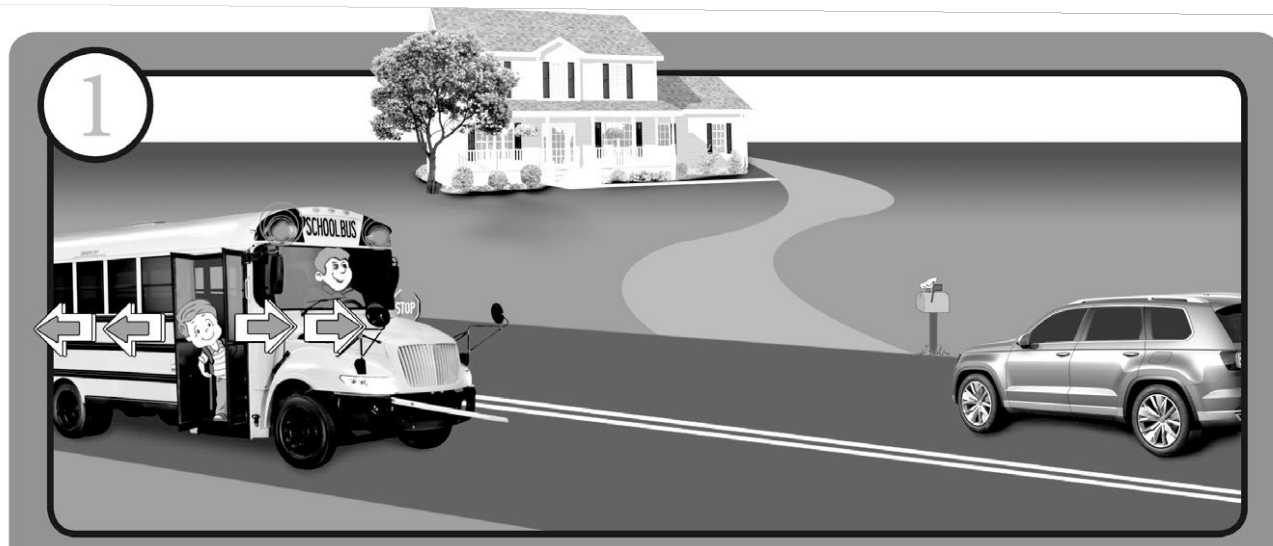
Teachers, parents, and bus drivers should emphasize the safety message depicted in the poster. The most vulnerable children are too young to retain information they read. Once explained, the message in the illustration is understood easily by young children.

A HIGHLY VISIBLE illustration will subliminally enhance the child's ability to retain the important safety messages. Professional, quality renditions of the crossing poster and other listed safety materials are available from the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute, 10 Adler Drive, Suite 102, East Syracuse, NY 13057, 800-836-2210, or at www.ptsj.org.



Crossing Poster Illustrates 6 Life Saving Tips

LIFESAVING TIP #1: CHECK BEFORE YOU STEP



Students should be looking out the door for passing motorists and a safe space to step before they exit the bus. REASON: Buses are sometimes passed on the right side by inattentive or impatient motorists. If students step off the bus without checking first, they could be hit by a passing vehicle.

The second reason for "check before you step" is the student should be sure the driver has stopped the bus in a place that is safe to disembark. The student should tell the driver if the bus is stopped in a deep puddle, close to a snowbank, or if there is no access to a safe space for the student to wait while the bus pulls away. This is especially important for a substitute driver who might not know the route well.

The third reason for "check before you step" is for drivers and students alike to be conscious of the possibility of drawstrings, scarves, or backpack straps, which can get caught on bus handrails, in the door as it closes, on a fire extinguisher, or anything else in the step-well. More than a dozen children have been dragged and killed in such accidents around the country. All school bus drivers must remain extremely vigilant about this danger!

LIFESAVING TIP #2: I SEE THE DRIVER, THE DRIVER SEES ME

Students should be looking at the driver's face while waiting to cross in front of the bus.

REASON: If a student can see the driver's face, the driver should, therefore, be able to see the student, which means the child has moved out of the driver's blind spot in front of the bus. No accident report ever indicated the driver could see the child he or she ran over.

"I SEE THE DRIVER; THE DRIVER SEES ME" is a phrase that's easy for children (and adults) to learn and remember. Eye contact between driver and student is extremely important in the "crossing" situation. The important point is...

Visual contact between driver and student is critical.

NOTE: If you drive a transit-style bus (flat front), be sure to make the children walk at least "10 big steps" in front of the bus to wait for your signal to cross. If not, they could get into the habit of standing just a few feet in front of the bus and be in great danger if they happen to ride a conventional style bus sometime in the future.

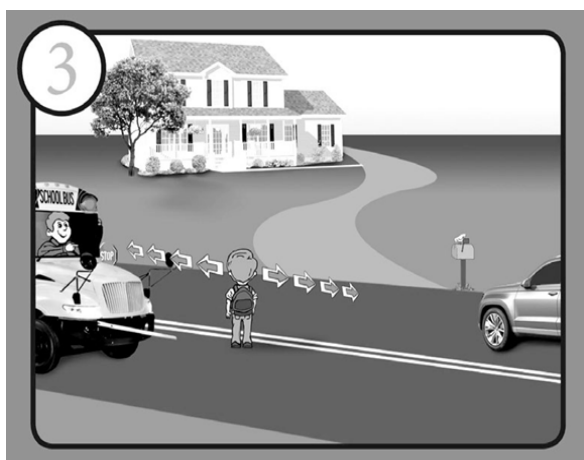


LIFESAVING TIP #3: WAIT FOR THE DRIVER'S SIGNAL TO CROSS

Students cannot see through the school bus when looking back to see if cars are coming.

The school bus driver, using all mirrors properly, is in a position to analyze what traffic is

doing. It is only when the bus driver is convinced that traffic is controlled that the driver gives the child the signal to cross the highway, using proper crossing procedures while doing so.



Use the "Universal Crossing Signal." Hold hand with palm facing the student until it is safe to cross. Then, with your thumb pointing up, index finger extended out (pointing), and remaining three fingers curled in toward the palm of the hand (like a clenched fist), the driver points at the child and slowly motions from right to left

(left to right, if loading), indicating that the child should proceed across the road while following proper crossing procedures.

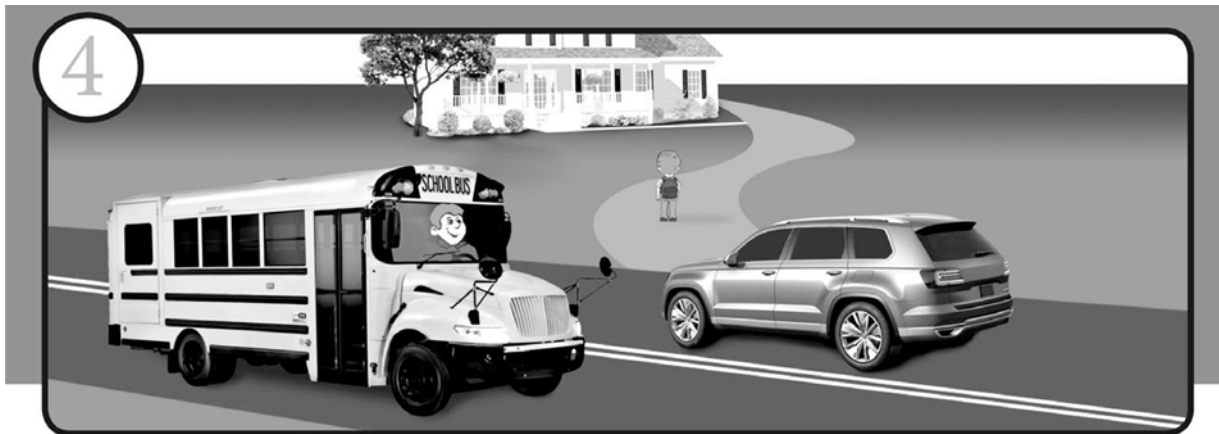
(NOTE: There has been some confusion about the symbolism of this signal. It is not a "pistol" signal which could evoke the violence that haunts our society. It is a TWO-PART SIGNAL. First, the "thumbs up" signal indicates that the coast is clear; then the index finger points in the direction to travel.)

LIFESAVING TIP #4: LOOK LEFT, RIGHT THEN LEFT AGAIN

Students need to stop and look both ways as they cross in front of the bus. REASON: If students see a passing motorist early enough, they may be less likely to be hit and more likely to retreat to safety if properly taught to do so.

When crossing a highway as a pedestrian, or entering an intersection when driving, the traffic that will reach us first, is always coming from the left. This being the case, children should be taught to look "LEFT, RIGHT, AND THEN LEFT AGAIN." It is also logical as children move to the outside edge of the bus to cross the road that they look left first, because the view to the right has been clear as they entered the roadway initially.

Students should practice stopping at the outside edge of the bus to check for oncoming traffic as they cross in front of the bus. REASON: stopping encourages children to look carefully for motorists, and not to run across the highway immediately upon discharge, which is very dangerous.



LIFESAVING TIP #5: USE BACKPACKS OR BOOKBAGS

Students should carry books and other items in a backpack, tote bag, etc. REASON: If their belongings are in a bookbag, children are less likely to drop something they may return to pick up and, while doing so, be run over by their own bus. This happens too often.

Use caution to choose backpacks or tote bags that do not have long draw strings, dangling strings or loose straps that could get caught in the bus door. Children could be dragged resulting in serious injuries or worse.

LIFESAVING TIP #6: HORN MEANS DANGER

The bus horn is our state's "UNIVERSAL DANGER SIGNAL." If the bus driver perceives danger while the child is crossing, the horn means "get back to the side of the road you started from." The horn provides the quickest and most reliable signal in this situation. In an emergency, hand signals could be misinterpreted by the child, or hard to see because of glare or darkness. Outside PA systems are not on all buses and may not work well in very cold weather. Also, using the PA to alert a child of an approaching vehicle might take too much time.

In the Home

- Parents should post the Crossing Poster at home for continued reinforcement of important safety procedures.
- Parents should review school bus safety procedures on a regular basis with their children.

Everywhere

School bus drivers, teachers, and parents should point out the location of the crossing poster and emphasize the safety message on it as often as possible. Until the lesson is learned and children are able to demonstrate the safety procedures successfully, the message should be repeated as follows:

- Weekly for children in grades K-3
- Once per month during the first week of each month for grades 4-6
- Once as follows for grades 7-12:
 - ✓ First week of school
 - ✓ Second week of November
 - ✓ First five school days of January, March, and May

Emphasize to students the importance of looking both ways as they cross the road. Motorists do not always stop for the flashing red lights of stopped school buses. Train children to return immediately to the protection of the bus if they see an approaching vehicle.

Encourage all students, especially those in grades K to 3, to carry their belongings in a backpack or tote bag (or other type of carrier). A backpack reduces the possibility of a student dropping an object near or under the bus, returning for it, and being run over by the bus.

During the bus ride, a single container on a child's lap is more easily controlled than three books, two drawings, four pencils and a lunch bag. Keeping student items together in a backpack is also safer during an accident, as there is less clutter for everyone to work around during an evacuation.

ROUTING AND DRIVING TIPS

Attempt to route all buses to eliminate the need for children to cross in front of the bus during loading or unloading, especially on busy roads or roads with poor sight distance.

When children must cross in front of the bus, these procedures must be followed:

- a) Identify all crossers on the driver's student list and route sheet. This is critical safety information for the regular driver at the beginning of the school year, and for all substitute drivers during the year.
- b) Avoid discharging children in a spot that causes them to walk back along the side of the bus. Children could slip and fall under the bus and be run over.
- c) Teach students the "UNIVERSAL CROSSING SIGNAL" for loading and crossing and the "UNIVERSAL DANGER SIGNAL"—the horn—to warn them of danger while crossing.
- d) If parents meet children who must cross the road at the bus stop, encourage them to meet their children as they exit the bus. This results in the child crossing the road under parental supervision, which is safer. Be sure parents also follow proper crossing procedures so their children will learn the correct way to cross. Someday the parent won't be there, and the child will have to cross alone.
- e) When discharging a mix of non-crossers and crossers at a bus stop, discharge the crossers first. Observe their crossing carefully. After all crossers have crossed the road safely, discharge the non-crossers. Because motorists may drive by the exit door, children should look both ways before leaving the bus stepwell.

After all students are away from the bus safely (remember DMV's 15-foot law), proceed with caution, checking your outside pedestrian mirrors as you begin to move. It is extremely important to make sure all children are away from the bus **BEFORE** moving forward. Never move the bus if there's any question that a child isn't at least 15 feet away. It is critically important that every driver **CHECK THE DOOR ONCE MORE!**

NOTE: *By discharging crossers first, waiting motorists are more likely to remain stopped if they see children crossing the road. If non-crossers are discharged first and waiting motorists observe no crossers, they're more likely to become impatient and pass the bus when children are crossing. Separating crossers and non-crossers puts the school bus driver in a better position to control discharging students. Bus drivers must also be sure all students are seated before leaving the bus stop, as well as during the route.*

A driver's undivided attention during the complex task of crossing is critical. Drivers must also monitor motorists very closely during the entire crossing process. Students' lives have been saved by drivers who saw "out of control" motorists approaching the bus while students were outside the bus. Drivers must be prepared to communicate with students AT EVERY MOMENT during the crossing procedure, and students must be taught to respond to the driver's warning immediately.

Use these procedures when loading all children, not just crossers:

- Children who are not seated are vulnerable to greater injury in an accident or sudden braking or steering actions. Be sure all children are seated properly before you move the bus.
- Use "MIDDLE LOADING" to keep children out of the front and rear seats whenever possible. Because most accidents involve a bus striking something in front or being struck in the rear, most student passenger fatalities occur in the front or rearmost seats. Use these seats only if the bus is completely full and be sure these seats are emptied as soon as possible.
- Drop off all passengers after the following maneuvers, not before:
 - ✓ Backing the bus
 - ✓ Making a right turn

Students should always be on board the bus when it is backing or making a right turn near a bus stop.

TIME WELL SPENT

The most effective and economical safety insurance is purchased with time spent teaching children safety procedures, and time spent paying careful attention to children getting on or off your bus, at every single bus stop, every single day.

NOTE: 50.8% of all school bus fatalities have occurred since 1960 when children were run over by their own bus. Driver, parent, and student awareness of this fact, along with training and alertness, are critical to eliminate these tragic incidents. Cooperative programs to educate children, parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and motorists are very important.

Thank You!

***New York's Children Are Safer Because
of You!***

Loading and Unloading Safety
New York State Procedures, Tips, and Cautions for School Bus Drivers 2018
Courtesy of Pupil Transportation Safety Institute

Many of these lifesaving safety procedures, tips and cautions were first developed by school bus drivers. If you have a suggestion to add, use the form at the end of this document.

A. Strictly Enforce Safe Crossing Procedures

- Establish eye contact between driver and student: "I See You, You See Me."
- With transit-style (flat front) buses, students should still be trained to walk at least 10 big steps away—someday they may ride a conventional style bus again.
- Use the New York State Universal Crossing Signal when it's safe for the child to cross, pointing in the direction you want the child to walk.
- Drivers and students must follow all safe crossing procedures in the morning, too.
- Teach children the New York State Universal Danger Signal so they know what to do if a motorist fails to stop for your stopped bus. If the bus driver honks the horn while the child is crossing, it means, "Return to the side of the road you started from at once!"
- When crossing, students must stop and check for traffic (looking carefully left, right, left, and listening carefully, too) before entering the unprotected lane.
- Enforce Safe Crossing Procedures with older students too—don't give up on older students! Safe crossing is a law. And older students set an example for younger children on the bus.
- Don't train discharging students to walk to a set location before crossing, such as a tree or driveway. A substitute driver may not stop the bus in exactly the same spot, and students could be confused.
- On routes with bus attendants, children should still be taught to make eye contact with the driver and wait for the driver signal to proceed. The attendant's role is to accompany the crossing child and make sure the correct crossing



procedures are followed. The attendant may not be there one day. Young children need to learn how to cross the street on their own.

B. Count and Re-count Children at Every Stop, Every Day

- If you've lost count of a child who has exited your bus, secure the bus, shut it off, take the key with you, get out, and check under and around the bus. Never take a chance!
- Appoint a student bus helper to double-check your student count at each bus stop, from inside the bus. It's still the bus driver's responsibility, but an extra set of eyes can only help.



C. Assume the Worst from Approaching Motorists

- Continually check for approaching traffic during the entire loading/unloading process.
- Keep children inside the bus until all visible traffic is stopped.
- Be alert for vehicles (trucks, motorcycles, snowmobiles, bikes) passing your bus on the right (passenger) side, or on the shoulder. Train children to “check before they step” off the bus. Strictly enforce this safety procedure.
- Whenever possible, let traffic behind the bus pass before you arrive at the next bus stop. Pull over only in a safe location and come to a complete stop. Don't "troll" along the edge of the road; it's dangerous and illegal. Be very careful when pulling onto a shoulder. Watch out for drop-offs, soft shoulders, etc.
- Activate yellow school bus flashers well in advance of the bus stop: two utility poles, or about 300 feet in residential areas, and further on higher speed roads, roads with limited visibility, during bad weather, or in heavy traffic conditions.
- Even emergency vehicle drivers (police, ambulance, fire) should stop for a school bus stopped with its red school bus flashers activated, but don't assume they will stop. If it's possible to do so safely, abort the loading or unloading process and let the emergency vehicle pass—it's for everyone's good. Funeral processions have been known to drive through school bus flashing lights, too. Be careful!

- Be careful motioning students to their seats after they've boarded the bus. Waiting motorists have mistakenly interpreted this as a signal to proceed past the bus.

D. Resist Distraction During Loading or Unloading

- Do not use the internal overhead mirror inside the bus while loading or unloading children. Your attention must be focused outside the bus until you're safely away from the bus stop. The internal mirror can be the most dangerous piece of equipment on a bus.
- Check on student behavior and address any problems well ahead of the bus stop. Loading or unloading requires your complete focus. Wait until the bus is safely away from the loading zone before dealing with onboard behavior problems.
- Silence your onboard students as you load or unload. Flash dome lights on and off as a signal for silence during critical driving tasks such as loading and unloading.



E. Stay Alert for Special Dangers

- Kindergarten through third grade children are most vulnerable to loading and unloading accidents. Young children are short and harder to see near your bus.
- They are also impulsive and inexperienced in traffic. Be extremely cautious when loading or discharging young children!
- Take-home routes are the most dangerous. Children may be pent-up with energy after school, and bus drivers are tired.
- By Own Bus accidents - children being run over by their own buses, are the most common type of student school bus fatality. Understand the danger and use extreme caution.
- Be aware of spring fever. The most dangerous months for By Own Bus fatalities are December to May. Children, and bus drivers, may get careless about safety procedures after school has been in session for several months. Remember, an accident can occur in a split-second of inattention.

- Children should be on board whenever the bus backs up. Minimize backing. All backing is dangerous, especially near bus stops. Use a bus attendant or a reliable student as a spotter from the inside rear of your bus. Only back up at approved turnarounds.

- At bus stops near corners, children should be on the bus when the bus turns right. The rear duals of a bus can "track" over the curb and run over a child on the corner. Pick up children before turns and drop them off after turns.

- School loading areas can be congested and hazardous. Be extremely alert in school bus loops!

- Group stops (at trailer parks, apartment complexes, etc.) can be very challenging—watch out! Train students to wait for the bus in an orderly manner and insist discharging children immediately move away from the bus to prearranged spot.



- Stops with mixed crossers and non-crossers can be challenging. The potential for confusion is high. Discharge crossers first; then discharge non-crossers. Children who must cross should be indicated clearly on the route sheet.
- If several students are crossing, they should cross as a group. Don't let children straggle across one at a time—it's harder to keep tabs on them, and waiting motorists are more likely to lose patience.
- Be aware of children carrying loose papers. Tell children to keep belongings in a backpack or book bag.
- Watch out for children's clothing with dangling straps, drawstrings, or mitten strings. Bus handrails, doors, even fire extinguishers mounted near the exit can snag loose clothing as children get off the bus. Watch out for children wearing bulky winter coats and hoods—they can't see traffic or other hazards.
- Be alert for students trying to retrieve an item from the external luggage compartment on your bus at school or at a bus stop.
- Don't run early or late on your route—children can become confused, creating a dangerous situation. If the bus is early in the morning, children might chase after it without watching for dangers. If the bus is late, children may become confused and try to board another bus or get on at another stop. Dangerous situations can result.

- When facing another school bus while loading or unloading children, make eye contact with the other bus driver. Be sure both of you are finished loading or unloading before proceeding.
- In heavy fog, get off the road to a safe area and stop. Wait for fog to lift or for further instructions from your supervisor. Use four-way hazard flashers (and roof-mounted strobe lights, if equipped). If you encounter dense fog approaching a bus stop and are worried traffic behind you may not stop for your stopped bus, you might need to go past the stop. Train children ahead of time to wait well back from the roadway, especially in foggy conditions. Explain they should go back inside or wait in a safe area until conditions have improved if their bus goes past the stop. Always alert base by radio, at once, if you can't make a stop for any reason.
- Be alert for pranks at bus stops during the last week of school (water fights, jumping out of bus exits, etc.) Don't let yourself become rattled; children have been run over in the chaos. Report any rumor about planned pranks to your supervisor ahead of time.
- If you lose track of a student, remember GOAL – Get Out And Look! Safety is the GOAL – Get Out And Look!

F. Correctly Adjust Mirrors on Each Bus Driven, Each Day

- Checking mirror adjustment is one of the most important parts of a trip inspection. Never drive a bus with mirrors out of adjustment. It is against the law, and dangerous to children. Be aware of the potential danger of a student getting caught in the service door of your bus. Visually verify that all students are at least 15 feet from the bus. Don't let anything distract you during this process. Don't rely on your peripheral vision – turn your head to check the door.



Check both pedestrian (crossover) and driving mirrors for children in or near the danger zones just before resuming forward motion. **CHECK THE DOOR ONCE MORE** for students who may be caught in the door. Keep checking driving mirrors as you pull slowly forward to watch for children running up to the bus from any direction.

- Pull away from the bus stop at low (idle) speed so you can stop quickly if a child appears near your bus suddenly.

- Mirrors can be deceptive. Force yourself to search mirrors slowly and carefully. Quick glances easily can miss a child. Search for children who have tripped and are lying on the ground, not just for children standing up; search for children wearing dark or low-contrast clothing.
- Mirrors create blind spots. Move in the bus seat to "look around" mirrors before moving forward. Don't check mirrors only while leaning over to close the bus door. Your view into the mirrors is distorted. You could fail to see a child.

G. Resist the Temptation to Rush

- Driver rushing has been a factor in many school bus accidents, including By Own Bus fatalities.
- Remember: "One bus stop at a time." Focus on what is happening as you load and unload children at each stop. Keep other thoughts and concerns out of your mind at this "moment of truth."
- Focus and concentration are signs of a professional. If you are worrying about personal problems or thinking about errands you need to do after work, you can't load and unload children safely.
- Report unrealistic route times to your supervisor, or your School Bus Driver Instructor (SBDI). Don't give in to unrealistic time pressures on your route. "Safety first, schedule second."
- Never move the bus if children are within 15 feet on any side. It's against the law and very dangerous. Don't allow students to walk back along the side of the bus.
- If you miss a stop by mistake, never back up. Go around the block, even if it's a long one. Alert base by radio. Backing is dangerous, especially near a bus stop. You could easily back over a child.
- Substitute drivers must avoid rushing too. If a sub starts a route late, they should finish it late. Trying to "make up time" while driving a school bus is a recipe for tragedy.
- Rushing doesn't just mean breaking the speed limit—in a school bus you can rush at 20 mph. Rushing means you're not being alert to potential dangers around your vehicle.

H. Understand Route and Bus Stop Safety

- Never change the location of a bus stop (pick-up or drop-off) without approval from your supervisor. Personal liability could result if a child was hurt and it was proven you had changed the location of the bus stop. Never alter your route without official approval.
- If a child is waiting for your bus on the wrong side of the road, or at an unapproved stop, pick the child up that day as safely as you can, but alert base by radio and talk to your supervisor about the situation as soon as you return to base. Use good judgment and keep children's safety foremost when unexpected situations arise on your route.
- You are the eyes and ears of the transportation department. Report any unusual hazards, such as dangerous crossovers, to your supervisor.
- When loading or unloading children, stop your bus toward the right of the driving lane, positioned straight ahead and not at an angle. Try not to leave more than 18 inches of driving lane on the right side of your bus. This makes it harder for a vehicle to pass your bus on the right side.
- Under normal circumstances, don't pull onto a shoulder when loading or unloading students. However, if a wide shoulder or a bike lane is present at a bus stop, you may need to stop your bus more to the right. According to NYS DMV, it's not against the law to stop a school bus on the shoulder of a highway (other than an interstate highway) when picking up or discharging passengers. Every bus stop is unique. Ask your supervisor or SBDI for guidance.
- In the morning, stop your bus before the waiting students. Make students walk toward your bus—it's safer. Pulling up next to them could result in a tragedy in slippery weather or if a child moves suddenly into the road. Train children to wait until your bus is fully stopped, and until you signal them it's safe, before they move toward your bus.
- Bus stops on corners can be confusing to motorists entering a road from an intersecting road. Work with your supervisor to place bus stops safely back from intersections whenever possible.
- Train yourself to search for unusual hazards as you approach each bus stop: criminal activity, strangers, dogs, cars backing from driveways, construction equipment, snow banks, etc. You can't be too careful today.



I. Use Safety Equipment Professionally

- Secure your bus whenever you load or unload students by setting the parking brake and placing the transmission in neutral (automatic or standard transmission). It is dangerous to leave a bus in gear when students are directly in front of the bus. The driver's foot could slip off the service brake, or the bus could be struck from behind and knock the driver's foot off the brake—such incidents have occurred. Securing your bus at each stop may add a few more minutes to your run, but it ensures a higher degree of safety for your students.
- Let your foot lightly rest on the service (foot) brake while your bus is stopped to load or unload children. Brake lights help wake up approaching motorists.
- When ready to resume forward motion after children have boarded or exited, take special care that the transmission is in "Drive" before releasing the emergency brake. You don't want your bus to roll back.
- Never move your bus with the door open and red school bus flashers activated. It's illegal and confusing to motorists.
- When it's dark, use your dome lights if you must cross children (for instance, early in the morning during the winter). The Universal Crossing signal may be more visible to children outside the bus. However, be careful that dome lights don't create glare that makes it even harder to see.
- If your bus is equipped with an external PA system, use it to supplement the Universal Crossing hand signal when crossing students, but not replace it. Equipment can always break down. A spare bus might not be equipped with a PA system. Children need to be reminded constantly about the Universal Crossing signal.
- If your bus is equipped with a crossing gate, think of it mainly as a training tool for children. Don't rely on crossing gates to keep children away from the bus. No piece of safety equipment is foolproof. Children are unpredictable. Don't use a bus equipped with a crossing gate (or any other piece of safety equipment, required or optional) if it's not in working order.
- Check frequently to make sure your Master Switch is activated, and your school bus flashers are working during the route. Check your pilot light next to the Master Switch, or your stop arm, to make sure it's working. Double-check the Master Switch after crossing railroad tracks to make sure you've reactivated it.
- The most important piece of safety equipment on a bus is a professional, alert, caring school bus driver.



J. Educate Children

- Children learn by repetition, repetition, repetition! Remind kids about safe crossing procedures every time they get off your bus. You don't need to give them a speech but say something every day that will keep safety in the forefront of their minds as they exit the bus. Daily instruction of children who must cross the road is a law—and a good one! Daily reminders save children's lives.
- Stress to children they should never return if they drop something near or under the bus. However, be prepared for the unexpected children may do so anyway. Training is very important, but children will always be unpredictable.
- Use bus safety drills to test students' mastery of loading and unloading procedures. Conduct drills in an isolated section of a parking lot so you can let students practice crossing procedures safely. Ask your supervisor or SBDI for help.
- Every crossing student must be crystal-clear about what driver signals mean. A single moment of confusion could cost a child's life if a car is speeding toward your bus. Teach passengers to check carefully for traffic before crossing, and to return to the safe curb if you sound the horn (Universal Danger Signal).
- Teach children they must ignore grandparents, parents, or friends, and pets while crossing in front of the bus. A distracted child could run across the road without waiting for the driver signal and be struck by a passing motorist—it has happened. If parents or grandparents don't understand the safety reason for this, ask your supervisor to give them a courtesy call.
- Teach children not to place too much faith in red school bus flashers. Remind children the road is a dangerous place, and cars will drive by the bus!
- Train students to wait for the bus safely back from the road, in an orderly line. Many school bus drivers have been very successful at teaching children to wait in an orderly fashion.
- Teach children about mail box dangers. Don't let students stand at the mail box right next to the road as your bus pulls away from the stop. Don't let them run across the street behind your bus to pick up the mail. If their parents permit it, children can get the mail after the bus has left the area.
- The State Education Department's "How to Cross Safely" poster should be mounted in every New York State school bus. Make sure one is in your bus. However, safety



posters are not effective unless used by bus drivers as teaching tools on a regular basis.

- Coloring books, crossword books, word search books, certificates, etc. are great ways to reinforce safe crossing procedures with younger kids.
- All kindergarten children should view the State Education Department's Classic "Safe Crossing: an 'Egg- Cellent' Idea" training video. The video teaches children critical safety procedures such as: how to get on and off a bus; how to cross the road in front of the bus; what the "Universal Crossing" and "Universal Danger" signals are; what to do if they drop an item near the bus, etc.
- Driver-in-the-Classroom bus safety programs to reinforce loading and unloading safety make a big difference. Many wonderful New York State school bus drivers have volunteered to offer safety training to children in the classroom. If your school system doesn't have a "driver-in-the-classroom" program yet, talk to your supervisor or SBDI about what it would take to get one going.

K. Always Expect the Unexpected from Children

- Err on the side of caution—trust your intuition. Children's lives have been saved when bus drivers "just didn't feel right" and checked under their buses. Young children will do almost anything around a bus. Children have crawled under buses, crawled into wheel wells, climbed on bumpers, played with crossing gates, grabbed hold of mirrors, etc. In some of these incidents, an attentive bus driver discovered the child; in others, the child was run over by the bus and killed.
- Watch out for children running after a bus they missed as it pulls away from the bus stop. If a child isn't at the bus stop in the morning, be especially careful as you pull away. The child may be late and chase after the bus. Check the surrounding area carefully before you pull away.
- Be alert for parents following your bus in their own cars to catch the bus at a later stop, or even at a traffic light! Children could run up to the bus door unexpectedly, just as you pull away.



- Watch out for students sneaking off the bus while you are focused on crossers outside the bus. Don't leave the door fully open. Just "crack" it enough to keep the red school bus flashers activated. With air doors, place your right arm across the aisle to keep students from going out the door.
- Watch out for a student on the bus signaling to a motorist outside to proceed past the school bus flashers—it has actually happened!
- Be alert for unsupervised younger brothers and sisters near a bus stop. Tragedies have occurred when preschool children have rushed to meet an older brother or sister getting off the bus. Report to your supervisor or an SBDI any unsupervised children playing at or near a bus stop.
- Snow banks near bus stops can be dangerous. Check carefully for kids playing or climbing on snow banks, or hiding behind banks. Never discharge a child directly into a snow bank or any other unsafe situation.
- Be alert for last-second warnings from others just before moving your bus away from a bus stop. Other motorists, other bus drivers, parents or teachers outside the bus, or even children on board your bus might have seen a child under or near your bus. Take warnings seriously.
- Silence students and turn the AM/FM radio down at each bus stop, so you can hear warnings. It's also a good idea to open the driver window at the bus stop, to be able to hear well.
- If no one is home to receive a young child or a child with special needs, radio base and ask for guidance before proceeding. Know your school or company policy about dropping off young children. Never force a child off the bus who seems frightened or confused. Ask base what you should do.

L. Use Middle Loading Whenever Possible

- In the morning, keep children out of the rear and front seats until all other seats are filled. In the afternoon, empty the rear and front seats first. Train children to fill the middle seats first. Children in rear and front seats may be more vulnerable to injury in certain types of severe collisions.
- Middle loading saves lives. It has been recommended by the National Transportation Safety Board and the State Education Department for many years.

- Middle loading is especially important on bus routes with high-speed truck traffic.
- Teach children why you don't want them in the back or front seats if the bus isn't full.

M. Listen To Children

- Don't force children off the bus if they tell you they should get off someplace else. They may be pulling your leg, or they may be telling the truth. Always use your radio to check with base when unexpected situations arise on a route.
- Train children to remind the bus driver every day if they have to cross the road after getting off the bus. Getting children involved like this helps them remember safety procedures. Substitute drivers really benefit from this tip!
- If children say there's a problem, take it seriously. Maybe they're joking, maybe not. Tragedies have occurred when drivers ignored children's warnings.



N. Educate Parents and Teachers

- Explain the importance of book bags or backpacks to parents and teachers. Book bags and backpacks reduce the chance that a child will drop an item near the bus. Some drivers carry plastic grocery bags on the bus for students who have forgotten their book bags.
- Explain to parents and/or guardians the danger of dangling drawstrings, straps, or mitten strings. Parents should buy coats and sweatshirts with short drawstrings. Loose strings, straps and dangling items could become caught in the bus door and the student dragged, causing severe injury or worse.
- Large, distracting, or fragile items should not be carried on the bus. Parents should bring such items to school. Children's safety is more important than parents' convenience.
- Encourage parents to reinforce loading and unloading safety procedures at home. For instance, parents of very young children can practice the crossing procedure in the driveway using the family car. Parent training is a huge help! Give parents copies of the "How to Cross Safely" poster.

- Seek parent and school assistance in reinforcing safe behavior on the bus. Parents can be powerful safety allies. Help parents understand how student behavior problems could distract the bus driver and result in a tragedy.
- Regularly remind your school and the whole community about the importance of never passing a stopped school bus. Take part in the annual "Operation Safe Stop" campaign in your area; the campaign's goal is to remind the public to stop for school buses. Work with parent-teacher associations, civic associations, law enforcement, and local media to develop ongoing educational campaigns. Place posters in local stores, churches, and offices. Write a letter to the editor about the importance of stopping for school buses. Ask local politicians and Traffic Safety Boards to help remind the public to stop for a stopped school bus.



Suggestions or Tips

If you have a suggestion of tip not mentioned here, send an email to PTSI at Maria@ptsi.org so it can be shared with other school bus drivers in the state. You may also mail it to:

Pupil Transportation Safety Institute
10 Adler Dr., Suite 102
East Syracuse, New York 13057

Thank you for caring about your passengers' safety!

Charter Bus Safety and Procedures

Properly trained transportation department personnel should be involved in the selection, verification and “day of trip” inspections of charter bus drivers and equipment.



Have clear policies and procedures for selecting charter/coach bus companies. School staff and groups should be provided with a list of acceptable providers and booking deadlines that allow Transportation Department leadership adequate time to contact the Bus Driver Certification Unit to investigate the Charter Bus Company compliance status and driver “school qualified” status.

- Require the Charter Bus Company to provide a pool of three or four names and a recent driver's license abstract for drivers that can be assigned to your charter trip. Be sure the drivers are school qualified, which includes fingerprinting and criminal history cleared, as required by Section 509 of the New York State Vehicle and Traffic Law. All potential drivers should meet the standards in place for your district or company.
- Require the Charter Bus Company also to provide a list of vehicles that will be used to meet the transportation needs of the contract accompanied by copies of each vehicle's DOT inspection history for the past 6 months. Best practice includes using buses manufactured after 2016 that meet seatbelt requirements.
- Require Charter Bus Company to provide a copy of the emergency drill checklist to include instruction on emergency exit locations and use, emergency evacuation procedures, emergency equipment onboard, and proper use of seat belts as required by law.
- Create a Charter Oversight Checklist to follow consistency.
- On the day of the trip, trained transportation personnel should:
 - Verify the driver's identification by requesting to see the driver's license, ensuring they are one of the drivers from the pool provided by the Charter Bus Company.
 - Evaluate the condition of the driver, looking for signs of fatigue, illness, or influence of drugs or alcohol.
 - Have a mechanic investigate the general condition of the vehicle, and ensure this particular vehicle is among those identified on the list of equipment provided to you.

Examples of what to look for are:

- ✓ Inspect the bus body exterior for damage, broken mirrors, or glass
- ✓ Check that the lights are working properly
- ✓ Check the tires to identify dangerous wear or damage
- ✓ Check under the bus for fluid leaks
- ✓ Operation of the passenger door and emergency exits
- ✓ Ask the driver to do a 50-foot brake test

- After all passengers on the roster have boarded, the Driver should complete the safety drill and include all items on the provided checklist. The completed safety drill checklist should include the time, date, location, and signature of the driver and school observer. Safety drills should be kept with the passenger manifest until trip completion.
- On the road, have an assigned chaperone/teacher/trained school official oversee the trip and be prepared to take decisive action to eliminate any threats to the safe operation of the bus:
 - Chaperone should monitor driving performance (speed, safe lane changes, proper following distance, etc.)
 - The chaperone should monitor the driver's physical condition to ensure the driver is not fatigued or distracted
 - Chaperones should periodically monitor the proper use of seatbelts based on compliance with the law and report their concerns to the person in charge.

Highway–Rail Crossing Safety

New York State Procedures, Tips, and Cautions for School Bus Drivers

A. Know Your Bus

- Any vehicle transporting school children in New York State is a school bus and must stop at all tracks and follow all highway–rail crossing safety procedures. This includes small vehicles being used as school buses, such as SUVs, vans, and school cars. Be very careful when stopping at railroad tracks in a small, non-yellow school vehicle, as other motorists may not expect you to stop.
- School buses with or without passengers must stop at railroad tracks in New York State.
- Know the length of your bus. You must know if your bus will fit safely on the other side of the tracks, or between multiple tracks. Some operations indicate the specific length (and height and weight) of the bus on a card taped to the dash of each bus.
- Be aware of blind spots on your bus (mirrors, structural posts and pillars, fans, etc.) that could prevent you from seeing an approaching train. Compensate for view obstructions on your bus by rocking forward and back, left and right, before you drive across railroad tracks.



- Learn how to use reference points on your bus to know how far you are from the tracks. You should be able to determine accurately the distance both in front of and behind your bus. Because drivers are not all the same height, and because there are many different designs and styles of buses, reference points must be determined for each bus. Learning to use reference points is simple. Ask your trainer or SBDI to teach you how to establish reference points on your bus.

B. Know the Route

- Before you leave on a field trip or unfamiliar route, find out about highway-rail crossings you will encounter. Talk to other drivers who have driven to that destination before; or talk to your supervisor or SBDI about any unique railroad crossing features you will encounter and safety tips they can share.
- Highway-rail crossings should be noted clearly on all route sheets. Being a substitute driver is a difficult job. If you are a sub, check the route sheet ahead of time for any highway-rail crossings. Whenever possible, talk to the regular driver about highway-rail crossings on the route you will be driving. Ask ahead of time about any unusual or challenging features.
- Learn the train schedules for crossings on your route, but remember, trains are often off schedule. Unscheduled freight trains could come at any time, from either direction. "Any time is train time."



C. Prepare to Make the Stop

- Well before you arrive at a crossing, check traffic behind you. Are vehicles following your bus too closely? Are there large vehicles behind your bus that might be able to push your bus onto the tracks? Be especially careful when driving a small non-yellow school vehicle.
- Activate your four-way hazard flashers early enough to alert vehicles behind you. Turn on your four-way flashers at least 200 feet before the tracks in town, and at least 300 feet or more on higher speed roads. If necessary, tap your brakes lightly to "wake up" motorists behind your bus. Do NOT use either your red or yellow school bus flashers when approaching or when stopped at railroad tracks. School bus flashers are for passenger loading and unloading only. Train yourself to turn off your school bus flasher master switch at the same time you turn on your four-way hazard flashers. Link the two actions together to avoid activating your school bus flashers accidentally when you open the door after stopping at the tracks.

- If possible, collect traffic behind your bus as you approach a railroad crossing. By slowing down well before the tracks, vehicles behind your bus will also be forced to slow down, preparing them for your stop. This tip is especially important when driving a smaller school vehicle or school car that is not yellow. Other motorists may not be expecting you to stop.
- As you approach a crossing on multi-lane roads, move to the right lane. Stop at the tracks in the right lane so other traffic can go around your bus on the left. Do not pull clear off the road onto the shoulder, though—stay in the driving lane. If you must be in the left lane in order to make a left turn immediately after crossing the tracks, take extra care to alert traffic behind you that you are going to stop at the tracks. Vehicles in the left lane are often traveling faster and may be less prepared to stop.
- Quiet your students, and turn off the AM/FM radio, fans and heaters before you get to the stop. If your bus is equipped with a "Noise Kill" switch, use it. Hearing a train is impossible in a noisy bus. Teach your students to be quiet at every set of tracks. Explain why it's important. Some school districts and bus companies teach children a standard signal for "silence, please—right now," such as blinking the dome lights on or off or raising their hands above their head. Report students who refuse to cooperate.

D. Stop

- Always stop your bus no closer than 15 feet from the nearest rail. Also, do not stop more than 50 feet from the rail. Stop with or without passengers on board. Stop at the point between 15 and 50 feet that gives you the best visibility down the tracks in both directions. If there's a stop line on the roadway, stop before it. Do not stop past a warning gate (unless you must make a second stop to improve your view down the tracks before crossing. In such a case, never stop closer than 6 feet from the closest track).
- Check again for traffic behind the bus after you've come to a stop. Stay alert for a vehicle closing in on your bus at high speed. Leave your four-way flashers on.
- Always make a full and complete stop at the crossing. Never make a "rolling stop" even at seldom-used tracks. Do not allow yourself to be rushed in any way at highway-rail crossings. Being in a hurry is incompatible with school bus safety.
- Never stop your bus on the tracks, or in the danger zone within 6 feet of the tracks, for any reason.

E. Check for Trains and Clearance Across the Tracks

- Double-check to make sure your school bus flasher master switch is off before opening the bus door.

- After the bus is stopped, open the driver's window and entrance door. Opening the window and door helps you hear and see better. Open the door at all crossings. Opening the door at railroad tracks is a recommendation of the State Education Department, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the Federal Railroad Administration, Operation Lifesaver, the National Safety Council, and the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute. If you are driving a small school vehicle such as a school car or Suburban, don't try to open a passenger door or your driver door—just open the driver's window and listen carefully.

- Look and listen carefully for trains in both directions. Search carefully in both directions down the track more than once. Avoid complacency! Unless you remain alert and fully aware of the potential for danger at every crossing, it's possible to turn your head back and forth without really seeing anything! Because a train approaches from a fixed angle, it's easy to miss it unless you look directly and carefully in that direction. Even though a train is very large, the field of vision it takes up as it approaches is small.



- Move actively in your seat to be sure a train isn't hidden in a blind spot on your bus. Always “rock before you roll.”
- Check the status of all warning signals (flashing lights, bells, gates) at the crossing before beginning to cross. Warning signals are designed to alert motorists that a train is approaching well before it is visible. The flashing lights and bells should activate at least 20 seconds before the train arrives at the crossing. Don't make the mistake of only checking for trains that are visible. Tip: Watch the crossing gate on the opposite side of the road for signal activation as you proceed across the tracks—you can't see the one you've already passed!
- Be sure there is adequate clearance across the tracks before beginning to cross. You should be able to stop far enough past the tracks to allow 15 feet safe clearance behind your bus. If you're not absolutely certain your bus will fit in the available space across the tracks, don't commit. Don't begin to cross if traffic on the other side of the tracks is still in the process of clearing out the available space—a vehicle could stall or stop suddenly for some other reason, and your bus could be stuck on the tracks.
- If you see or hear a train while stopped at a safe distance from the tracks, or the flashing lights, bells, or gates activate, secure the bus (set the parking brake). Leave your foot resting lightly on the service brake pedal so motorists will still see brake lights and realize you aren't moving forward. Once you are sure all traffic is stopped behind you, remove your foot.

- Once a train has passed and completely cleared the crossing, repeat the process of silencing the bus and carefully checking for trains before proceeding. A second train could be closely behind the first; never proceed across the tracks immediately after one train has passed.

F. Cross the Tracks

- If you are certain the tracks are clear in both directions, and warning signals do not indicate an approaching train, close the door and proceed across the tracks quickly. Don't move the bus with the door open. Once you have made an informed and considered decision to cross, don't hesitate. Indecision at this point could expose your bus to more danger.
- In a bus with standard transmission, don't shift gears while crossing the tracks. It's against the law. In buses with automatic transmissions, there is no need to downshift manually before crossing. Use "Drive" as you normally would when starting up from any stop. Attempting unfamiliar procedures increases the risk of a mistake.
- Do not dawdle crossing the tracks. Even though tracks can be bumpy for your passengers, do not go so slow that you expose them to danger any longer than necessary. (When transporting children with special medical conditions, extra caution may be necessary to avoid injuring them on bumpy tracks.)
- If the warning signals (flashing lights, bells, or gates) activate just as you begin to cross, continue quickly across unless it is obvious a train is bearing down on the crossing. Warning signals should activate when the train is about 20 seconds from the crossing. This is ample time to cross the tracks and move the bus out of harm's way. Panic or indecision at this point could be deadly—move across the tracks quickly. Don't try to back up. It could take too long, or another vehicle behind the bus could trap you on the tracks. If you've already stopped and checked carefully for trains, you are not breaking the law to continue across at this point. It's the safest thing to do. If the crossing gate comes down on top of your bus as you are going across, keep going. The gates are designed to break. If a gate does strike your bus as you cross, stop in a safe location after crossing and contact base by radio for guidance.

Constitution: 3.31.2000j



Robin Rudd / AP Photo
The 193-ton locomotive that hit a Murray County, Ga., school bus Tuesday, killing three children, sits at the scene of the accident in rural Polk County, Tenn., as NTSB investigators re-enact the wreck.

Bus driver didn't stop at crossing, feds say

Tape reveals talking, radio playing on bus prior to Tuesday's fatal wreck.

By David Bennett
Atlanta Journal-Constitution Staff Writer

The school bus driver in Tuesday's train-bus accident, which killed three children and injured four, did not stop at the unguarded rural railroad crossing, federal investigators said Thursday night.

"We have come to the preliminary determination the bus driver did not stop at the crossing prior to entering it," said Ken Suydam, the National Transportation Safety Board investigator leading the probe into the early morning wreck on near the Tennessee-Georgia line.

Driver Rhonda Cloer, who was released Wednesday from Erlanger Memorial Hospital after treatment for arm injuries and facial cuts, has refused to be interviewed by investigators looking into the worst train-bus crash involving Georgians since 1974. Cloer, whose daughter was among those critically injured, referred questions to her attorney, Suydam said.

G. Leaving the Crossing

- After crossing tracks, leave your four-way hazard flashers on until your bus has resumed “road speed” for that particular area. Don't turn flashers off as soon as you've cleared the tracks. Your bus still represents a hazard until it has reached the speed of other traffic in the area.
- When you turn off your four-way flashers and turn on your school bus flasher master switch. Link the two actions together—turning off the four-way hazard flashers and turning on the school bus master switch at the same time – to make it easier to remember. Forgetting to turn the master switch back on could be a serious safety problem at the next bus stop. Train yourself to double-check your master switch to make sure it's “on” as you approach the first bus stop after crossing railroad tracks. Check periodically to make sure your school bus flashers are working along the route.

H. At Multiple Tracks

- Multiple tracks can be more dangerous than single tracks. After one train has passed, a train on another set of tracks could be approaching, hidden behind the first train. Be very careful.
- If multiple tracks are close together, without room to stop safely in between, and not guarded by separate warning signals (lights, bells, or gates), make only one stop before proceeding. Stop, look, and listen carefully just as at a single track. Check very, very carefully in both directions.
- If you are sure there is adequate room to stop your bus between multiple tracks, stop at each set and perform another careful check for trains. Be sure there is room both in front of and behind your bus. Both the front and rear of your bus should be at least 15 feet from the nearest rail. Be aware of vehicles behind your bus that may not be expecting you to stop at the next set of tracks; leave your four-way hazard flashers on.
- Check for clearance across all sets of tracks. Do not proceed onto a multi-track crossing unless you are absolutely sure you can cross all tracks without stopping for any reason. If traffic ahead of your bus is lined up and beginning to move across the tracks, wait until all vehicles are off all sets of tracks before beginning to cross.
- If a train is passing at a multi-track crossing, wait until it's approximately 1,000 feet or 15 seconds beyond the crossing and you are certain it's not hiding another train approaching on another track before proceeding. After one train has passed, repeat the complete process of silencing the bus and looking and listening for trains carefully before proceeding. Don't be in a hurry.



I. Visibility Problems at Crossing

- Although federal and state agencies recommend that highway-rail crossings have 1,000 feet of visibility down the tracks in both directions, many crossings have limited visibility in one or both directions. The view can be blocked by buildings, signs, trees or brush, signal boxes, railroad equipment, or because of the angle at which the tracks intersect the roadway. Visibility problems can represent a serious challenge to the school bus driver who must cross tracks with a bus load of children.
- 
- If visibility problems exist at a highway-rail crossing you must use, ask your supervisor or SBDI to help determine the safest possible strategy for that particular crossing. Each challenging crossing is unique, requiring its own specific strategy about exactly where to stop the bus for best visibility. A team approach is the best way to figure out the safest possible strategy. Involve local law enforcement, railroad safety personnel, NYS DOT, and Operation Lifesaver. Visit the crossing in a school bus.
 - Find out local train schedules and arrange to observe a train at the challenging crossing. Observing a train gives you an idea of how quickly the train closes in on the intersection, where it will first become visible from the bus driver's seat, and how much time it takes from the moment the train is first visible to when it reaches the crossing. (Never assume trains will always be on schedule. Unscheduled or late trains could arrive at any time.)
 - In some cases, the railroad can improve visibility by cutting trees or brush, or moving or removing other obstructions.
 - It may be necessary to make a second stop after your initial mandatory stop between 15 feet and 50 feet, to increase your view down the tracks at a crossing with severe visibility problems. If the second stop is past the warning gate, the gate could come down on your bus if the signals activate. Other vehicles not expecting you to make a second stop could run into the back of your bus. Discuss the entire scenario step-by-step ahead of time with your supervisor and SBDI to work out details for the safest possible crossing strategy and to clarify any confusion.
 - No matter what strategy you devise with your supervisor and SBDI, never, never, never stop your bus within the danger zone: 6 feet or closer to the nearest rail. Loosened shipping materials on a train can stick out several feet from the tracks, or you could be bumped from behind and knocked into harm's way if you're closer than 6 feet.
 - Making a turn across tracks from a parallel road: If you have to make a right turn directly across tracks from a parallel road, be very careful. It's hard to see back down the tracks

when your bus is parallel to the tracks, and it may be difficult to determine if there is adequate clearance on the other side of the tracks. You may need to look back through the second, third, or fourth passenger window to see down the tracks.

- Talk with your supervisor or SBDI about ways you could re-route to avoid such a challenging situation. For instance, a left turn over parallel tracks usually allows the bus driver better visibility. If you must turn right from a road that runs parallel to the tracks, try to position your bus at an angle before the turn to increase your view back down the tracks. You may also be able to use your west coast mirror to look back down the tracks. Students might also help you check back down the tracks for trains. Of course, safety is still the driver's ultimate responsibility.
- Ask students to wipe windows clear of steam and condensation to help you see. Turn off your four-way hazard flashers and activate your turn signal after traffic is completely stopped behind you before making the turn so other motorists will understand your intentions.
- Sharply angled crossings: When the tracks and the roadway don't intersect at or near a right angle, it can be difficult to see down the tracks in one direction. Because of the angle, your bus also has to travel a slightly greater distance to be across the tracks entirely. Devise a specific strategy for the crossing with the input of your supervisor and SBDI. Determine the best position to stop your bus and the best way to use your mirrors during practice runs without students on board. Learn exactly which set of bus windows to look through to maximize your view down the tracks. Appoint reliable students to keep those windows free of steam when it's cold outside, and to help you check back down the tracks.
- Explain specific crossing strategies for challenging crossings to substitute drivers. Summarize or diagram the strategy on route sheets for subs.

J. Understand Railroad Equipment and Signals

- Passenger trains travel at speeds up to 120 mph. At this speed, a train travels 1,000 feet in just 6 seconds. Tracks carrying high-speed trains may be marked with "High Speed Trains" warning signs. Ask your supervisor or SBDI to check with DOT or the railroad company, or to access the Federal Railroad Administration crossing database Web site to find out maximum train speeds at any crossing you use.
- Because of its large size, a train often appears to be moving more slowly than it really is. It's even harder to judge a train's speed at night. If you can see a train, wait. Never take a chance. Hundreds of motorists across the country are killed each year when they try to "beat the train" across the tracks.



- An average size freight train takes about one and a half miles and 2 minutes to stop. Don't expect a train to be able to stop for your bus—it can't.
- "Crossbucks" signs, which are placed at every public highway-rail crossing, usually include an identification number on the signpost or signal box. Use this identification number when contacting the railroad company about the crossing.
- Listen carefully for train horns: A train should sound its whistle four times, commencing about 1,300 feet from the crossing. It can be hard to hear a train whistle in a noisy bus, especially over the sound of an engine. Always silence your bus at crossings. If you think you hear a train horn or whistle, stay put if you're in a safe location.
- Traffic light at a crossing: If a traffic light controls a crossing, and it is lit green, state law does not require school buses to stop for the tracks. You may proceed with caution, searching for trains in both directions as you approach the crossing. If you feel you must stop to check for a possible train or because you're not sure if the traffic light controls the crossing, be careful to alert motorists behind your bus. They won't be expecting your stop. Tap your brake lights and activate your four-way flashers well in advance.
- "Exempt" signs mean either a crossing is no longer in use, or will be used only by trains with a flag person to direct traffic. School buses are not required to stop at exempt crossings and may proceed with caution. If you feel you must stop in a particular situation, be very careful to alert motorists behind your bus. They won't be expecting you to stop.
- Dead tracks are tracks that are no longer in use. The rails may be pulled up on both sides of the crossing. A stop is still legally required unless an "Exempt" sign is posted, but be very careful – vehicles behind your bus may not expect you to stop. Ask your supervisor or SBDI to contact DOT about placing an "Exempt" sign at any dead tracks you cross, or having the tracks removed.
- Domed crossings are elevated above the level of the roadway. These can be challenging for large vehicles such as school buses. The angle of approach, break-over, and departure can be so steep a vehicle gets stuck on the tracks or strikes its front or rear bumper in the roadway. If you must use such tracks, it might be necessary to cross at a slight angle to avoid hanging up on the tracks. When crossing a domed crossing in a smaller bus, you may have difficulty seeing across the tracks to make sure there's sufficient clearance on the other side. It may also be hard to see down the tracks or to tell how many tracks there are. The number of tracks should be posted on the crossbucks signpost.

K. Prepare for the Unexpected

- Bad weather reduces visibility and can mask the sound of an approaching train. Use extra caution when crossing tracks in snow, rain, or fog. Make sure your students are absolutely quiet.



- Highway-rail crossing signals can malfunction occasionally or be vandalized. Although modern crossing signals are well- designed and checked carefully, don't assume flashing lights, bells, or gates are functioning properly or timed correctly. It is the school bus driver's responsibility to make sure no train is approaching. Vigilant school bus drivers are the ultimate defense against a bus—train tragedy.
- If a crossing gate is down or if flashing lights or bells are activated, but no train is in sight, radio your dispatcher. Never go around lowered gates unless a police officer at the crossing directs you across. Don't ask a bus attendant or student to go out and check the tracks for trains. It may take time for police or the railroad company to respond to problems at a crossing, but school bus drivers cannot take responsibility for crossing on their own, even if other motorists are doing so.
- Train stopped near the crossing: A train may be stopped near the crossing, close enough to trip the warning signals. Law enforcement and the railroad company should be contacted. If this is a recurring problem, your supervisor or SBDI should work with the railroad, DOT, and Operation Lifesaver to correct the situation.
- If your bus stalls on the tracks, evacuate your students at once, even if no train is visible. If an approaching train is visible, perform a front/rear dual evacuation to empty the bus as quickly as possible. Teach students to move away from the tracks as quickly as possible, in the general direction from which the train is coming. The reason to evacuate in that direction is because debris from a crash could fly ahead of the impact point in the direction the train is going.
- If your bus is stuck on a crossing because other vehicles are in the way, use any means to get it off the tracks. Push other vehicles out of the way if necessary. Do whatever you can to avoid a catastrophe. No school bus accident is more devastating than being hit by a train.

New York State Safety Drill Checklist

Use this checklist as a guide to help you conduct an effective bus safety drill.

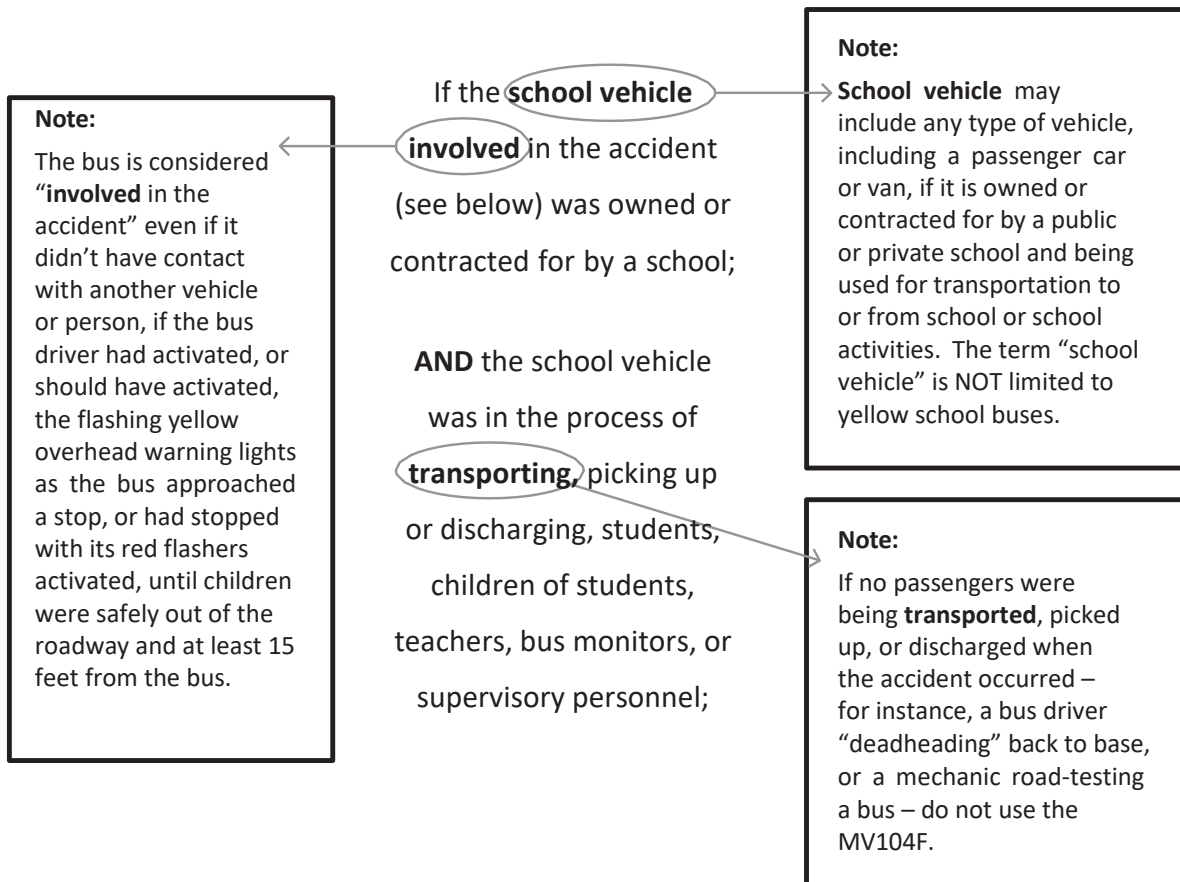
- ☐ **DRILL INTRODUCTION** – Stand up and face your students. Introduce yourself and explain why bus drills are important. Let your students know you care about their safety. Select two reliable Safety Drill Helpers ahead of time (select students seated near the rear of the bus, who ride most of the route) and introduce them to the rest of your students.
- ☐ **RIDING RULES** – Read and discuss the bus rules—explain the “why” of each rule. Explain what the consequences would be if students refuse to comply.
- ☐ **EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT AND EXITS** – Let students point out and open all exits on the bus—don’t forget the passenger door and roof hatches. Remind them it’s dangerous to play with emergency exits.
- ☐ **DISABLED DRIVER** – Demonstrate how to stop, secure, and shut off the bus; explain the importance of knowing the bus number; show students how to use the two-way radio.
- ☐ **SEAT BELTS** – Explain your school policy regarding seat belt use; show students how to wear seat belts low across their hips, fairly tight.
- ☐ **PRACTICE EVACUATION** – Prevent injuries by stressing the importance of orderly evacuation practice. Safety Drill Helpers, teachers, or other adults should serve as spotters as children go out the exit door. Show students how to “sit and slide” from emergency doors—don’t let them jump off the bus, or push or shove. All personal items should be left on the bus during the practice evacuation. Before the evacuation practice begins, point out a safe area to gather after they’ve exited from the bus. Younger students should hold hands in a “safety chain” as they walk from the bus. To protect children during bus drills, the bus should be shut off and secured, with school bus flashers activated.
- ☐ **SAFE LOADING AND UNLOADING DEMONSTRATION** – When the evacuation practice is finished, gather your students at the front of the bus and demonstrate the Safe Crossing Rule. Review the Universal Crossing Signal and Universal Danger Signal. Remind students that cars don’t always stop for buses and to “check before they step” off the bus to avoid being struck by a car passing on the right side of the bus. Let your students point out the Danger Zones around the bus; tell them never to try to get something they’ve dropped near the bus, or to chase after a bus they’ve missed. Tell children to get an adult to help them. Explain why jacket drawstrings can be dangerous. Explain that in severe weather conditions it’s even more important to follow the safety rules when loading and unloading.
- ☐ **CONCLUDE THE DRILL** – Thank your students after the bus drill is complete!
- ☐ **DOCUMENT THE DRILL** – Get the SED required signatures of your witness!

New York State

School Vehicle Accident Reporting Requirements

If the following conditions are met, the bus driver must file NYS DMV Form MV104F, “Accident Report for School Vehicles,” within 10 days. Failure to file is a misdemeanor and can result in a license or registration suspension.

Use the MV104F only if the following conditions are met:



And one or both of the following:

An **injury or death** occurred to any party involved in the accident (Injury can range from complaint of pain with no visible injury, to severe injuries. See the back of the MV104F for definition of injury categories); and/or

Property damage (including damage to a vehicle or a fixed object such as a fence, house, pole, etc.) occurs to any one party in excess of \$1,000.

If the above conditions are not met, do not file an MV104F. However, you may still be required to file an MV104, “Report of Motor Vehicle Accident.”

If the above conditions are met, the bus driver must file the report within 10 days. Your supervisor should have a blank MV104F form, or it may be obtained from DMV; ask your supervisor for assistance in completing the form.

Follow these guidelines in completing the form:

- Print legibly, using black ink, or type.
- Your vehicle (the school vehicle) is Vehicle No. 1 (left side of form)
- If you are filing the report because damage to another vehicle or fixed property is in excess of \$1,000, clearly state damage was in excess of \$1,000 in the section “Describe Damage to (Vehicle No. 2)” on right side, middle, of form.
- All sections of the form must be filled out. This includes the center “SCH” section (which runs the entire width of the form) which asks for information about bus driver experience and training and date, as well as the 11 boxes along the right side of the form. (Fold the form in half vertically so the back matches up with the front, for an explanation of what the boxes mean).
- If more than two vehicles were involved, use a second MV104F. Note page numbers at the top of the forms.
- In the “ALL PERSONS INVOLVED” section, names of all passengers on the bus must be listed, not just those injured. For injuries, consult the “Injury Codes” section on the back of the MV104F to determine classifications. Note that even a “complaint of pain – no visible injury” constitutes an injury in this instance.
- In describing the accident, carefully and honestly explain your version of what happened. The form is a legal document. Answer this question in your explanation: “How did you first become aware that an accident was going to occur or had occurred?” Attach additional sheets of description if needed.

Non-collision injuries

- Injuries that result from non-collision events, such as a student falling from a bus seat, may still need to be reported on the MV104F. NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (Section 605) does not restrict accident reporting requirements to collisions; they extend to “a motor vehicle which is in any way involved in an accident.” Report non-collision school vehicle injuries on the MV104F.
- If the injury resulted from the actions of the bus driver or another motorist: For instance, if the injury occurred when a student fell from the bus seat because the bus swerved suddenly to avoid a car running a stop sign, the MV104F should be filed, because careless actions by the other motorist contributed to the injury.
- If the bus went off the road because the bus driver failed to negotiate a curve properly, and the student fell from the seat when the bus hit a bump on the shoulder, the MV104F should be filed.
- If a student riding in a wheelchair tipped over and was injured, an MV104F should be filed, since the wheelchair was not adequately secured during transport.

- However, if one student injures another during a fight on the bus, or a student slipped and fell on the bus steps, a MV104F does not have to be filed, since bus driver actions did not contribute to the injury.

To obtain MV104F forms, contact NYS DMV, Forms Inventory Control, Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY, 12228. or Website: <http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/forms/mv104f.pdf>

For questions about reporting a school bus accident, contact the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute at 800-836-2210.

School Bus Drivers, Attendants and Monitors: Important Safety Alert:

Children's Clothing Caught on the Bus

Across the United States, children continue to be injured or killed when their clothing is caught on the bus handrail, door, or other equipment, and they are dragged by the bus.

Long jacket or sweatshirt drawstrings, backpack straps, long scarves and loose clothing are especially dangerous.

Your vigilance can prevent a tragedy. Remember these student loading and unloading safety tips:

- Never move the bus unless you are absolutely certain all children are safely out of the Danger Zones. Never rush while unloading children.
- Count children as they exit the bus. If you have lost count of a child outside the bus, shut the bus off, secure it, and check underneath.
- Watch for children with long drawstrings or other loose clothing, or children carrying loose papers or other items—expect the unexpected.
- Make sure your bus handrail is not attached to the bus at such an angle that it can catch a drawstring easily. Check with your supervisor. Dangerous handrails should be changed immediately.
- Remember children's clothing also has been caught in bus doors, the fire extinguisher, seatbelts, and the step outside the entrance door.
- After discharging, scan the entire area carefully before moving, and be alert for any warnings (from bystanders, teachers, motorists outside the bus, or students inside) as you pull away from the stop. Quiet your passengers and turn the two-way radio down to hear last-second warnings.



Loading and unloading children is the Moment of Truth—

Do not allow anything to distract you!