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Best Practices for School Bus Drivers

1. Perform a thorough pre-trip / Safety school bus inspection, using nationally recognized criteria. Documented on provided form, which at a minimum, shall ensure that all safety equipment is in working order, i.e., brakes, tires, all lighting systems, steering and horn.

During your inspection of the bus, you should walk both through and around the vehicle looking for the following:

- Articles left on the bus
- Sleeping students
- Open windows and doors
- Mechanical/operational problems with the bus, with special attention to items that are unique to school buses mirror systems, flashing warning lamps and stop signal arms
- Damage and/or vandalism

(Resource: (Vehicle Operation) SISBO, Classroom Curriculum Section 3. Idaho Commercial Drivers manual 10.2.6.)

2. Be in the moment: Focus and concentration are the 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 children safely, or handle issues that may arise.

(Resource: (Loading and Unloading Best Practice) Classroom Curriculum)

3. On route follow: Best Practices For Loading And Unloading For School Bus Drivers, and Classroom Curriculum, Section 4 and 5.
4. Strictly enforce safe crossing procedures

Educate Children:

- a. Eye Contact:

Eye contact between driver and student must be established before the student begins to cross. Teach children the concept "I See You, You See Me."

(Resource: (Loading and Unloading Best Practice) Idaho School Bus Driver Classroom Curriculum)

- b. Signal to Cross:

- 1) Use a consistent Safe Crossing Signal when it's safe for the child to cross, pointing in the direction you want the child to walk. All bus drivers in your operation should use the same Safe Crossing hand signal, and all children should be trained about what it means. SDE endorses the joined fingers, open palm, single arm wave and eye contact with the driver for student crossing. Long steady blast of the horn is to be used as a danger signal.

(Resource: (Loading and Unloading Best Practice) Idaho School Bus Driver Classroom Curriculum)

- 2) Upon your signal, the students should:

- Cross far enough in front of the school bus to be in your view.
- Walk to the left edge of the school bus, stop, and look again for your signal to continue to cross the roadway.
- Look for traffic in both directions, making sure the roadway is clear.
- Proceed across the roadway, continuing to look in all directions.

(Resource: Idaho Commercial Drivers Manual 10.2.3)

- c. Danger Signal:

Teach children a consistent Danger Signal so they know what to do if a motorist fails to stop for your stopped bus. All drivers in the fleet should teach students the same signal. 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".

(Resource: (Loading and Unloading Best Practice) Idaho School Bus Driver Classroom Curriculum)

5. Student Management:

- a. Bus drivers are responsible for the proper discipline of students on the bus and must exercise this function in accordance with written policies and instructions of the school authorities.

(Resource: Classroom Curriculum, Section 10.)

- b. Bus drivers should familiarize themselves with written policies and instructions of the school authorities. The school district's student transportation student management policy, including the duties and responsibilities of students, teachers and drivers shall be in concert with the district's written classroom policies. (Idaho Code §33-512)
- c. School bus drivers shall establish proper rapport with students. Drivers should instruct students in appropriate behavior in accordance with the district's student management policy. Drivers should be aware that they represent the school system and present a positive image in dress, language, and manner.

(Resource: (Student Management) SISBO)

6. Emergency Evacuation:

- a. Provide all students transported to and from schools in a school bus or multifunction school activity bus with instruction in the location and operation of all emergency exits. Also, provide supervised emergency exit drills to each student transported to or from schools in a school bus or multifunction school activity bus.
- b. Before departure on each activity trip, provide all students transported in a school bus, school-chartered bus or multifunction school activity bus instruction on the location of all emergency exits and demonstrations of their operation. Instruction should include a general review of safe riding practices, rules and procedures.

(Resource: (Written Policies) SISBO)

- c. "Know the abilities of the students who are being transported, Best practices in student transportation include a plan for the evacuation of students from the school bus in the event of an emergency. A guiding principle in special education transportation is that "no student should be placed on a bus until a plan for evacuation has been prepared for the student."

(Recognized language in school bus industry.)

7. Other:

a. Backing a School Bus: All steps shall be covered:

- 1) Activate 4 ways
- 2) Honk horn
- 3) Back slowly
- 4) Use mirrors
- 5) Spotters if available

(Resource: Idaho Code 33-1502. (Skill Level Two) Idaho BTW Curriculum. Idaho Commercial Driver's License Manual, 10.7.3. Federal Motor Carrier, 49 CFR 383-111)

b. Railroad crossings: All school and activity buses shall stop at all railroad grade crossings. All steps shall be covered:

- 1) Driver activates hazard warning lights at least 100 ft. before railroad tracks.
- 2) Driver stops 15-50 ft. back from railroad tracks.
- 3) Driver shuts off radio, other noisy equipment and quiets passengers.
- 4) Driver fully opens entrance door and driver's window
- 5) Driver has visual and audible proof that no train is approaching.
- 6) Driver does not shift out of low gear until bus has cleared railroad tracks.
- 7) Driver turns off hazard warning lights after clearing tracks.

(Resource: Idaho Code §33-1508, §49-648, §49-649)

c. Post trip and child check:

Post-trip: You must perform a post-trip safety inspection of your bus at the end of each shift, and you must prepare a written inspection report on each bus operated. You must identify the bus(es) you operated and list any defect or deficiency that would affect the safe operation of the bus that would cause it to suffer a mechanical breakdown. You must also prepare a written report if no equipment defect or deficiency is found. In all instances, you must sign the report. The Driver's Inspection Report notifies your company of the condition of the bus and identifies any defects or deficiencies

found that would make the bus unsafe or cause it to break down. Depending on your company's policy regarding the distribution of the inspection report, if possible, you should leave a copy of the inspection report in the bus for at least a day so it can be reviewed by the next driver.

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- Sleeping students
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- Damage and/or vandalism

(Resource: Federal Motor Carrier 383-111 #17. Idaho Commercial Driver's License Manual 10-2-6. Idaho School Bus Driver Training Curriculum)