

Driver's Guide to School Bus Crossing

Reference Guide and Test

Introduction

Safe school bus crossing is one of the most important safety issues for school bus drivers to understand and implement. There have been instances when students have been struck by other vehicles while crossing the street, and in rare circumstances, students have been struck by their own school bus. The video covers many of these important issues.

Lights, Mirrors and Safety Equipment (Pre Trip Inspection)

1) It is important to remember that a driver is not alone when crossing students. A school bus provides tools that can be used to help identify students as well as problem objects around the bus. Tools that should be checked as part of the pre trip inspection include:

- a) **Alternating Amber Warning Lights** - These lights are the first warning signs for both motorists and students, when a bus is approaching a bus stop. All ambers, both in the front and in the rear of the bus, must be working properly.

- b) **Turn Indicators** - They are used when you are about to stop at an loading or unloading zone.

- c) **Alternating Red Flashing Lights** - These lights are extremely important and are used as traffic control to stop all vehicles traveling in either direction. Another part of the red flashing lights - are the **flashing stop signs**. These signs are located on the left side of the bus and should open flawlessly.

- d) **Cross Arm** - This device requires students to walk several feet in front of the bus before crossing. This allows the driver to see the students, as they cross in front of the bus.

e) **Mirrors** - Mirrors are a bus driver's second pair of eyes. Make sure they are properly adjusted and clear of debris or dirt. Also, make sure the seat is correctly adjusted so you have the best view of crossing students.

2) Be sure to check all of the warning lights and safety equipment on the bus before heading out to pick up students. If you have any questions about an item on the bus that is not working properly, immediately bring it up to your supervisor .

Safe Crossing Procedures

1) **Danger Zone** - The danger zone is an area that completely surrounds the bus. Students should use extreme caution whenever they are in the danger zone. It also goes without saying that drivers must stay focused whenever their students are inside the danger zone. The danger zone should be approximately a ten foot radius around the bus. There are also two areas that are considered to be the **most dangerous**; one located at the front of the bus and the other at the rear of the bus. This is where most accidents occur and students should avoid placing themselves in those areas, whenever possible.

2) School bus drivers **must** be aware of the policies of their district. Crossing procedures vary from district to district, so the driver must make sure they understand the policies of **their** district. If the driver isn't sure about **any** aspect of the policy of their district, they should go to their supervisor and get an explanation.

3) **Approach** - A safe approach to a drop off or pick up area is important for the following reasons.

a) It gives the driver a chance to observe vehicles and obstructions around the stop.

b) It allows drivers to properly warn vehicles and students that the bus

will be stopping.

c) It gives the driver a chance to survey the loading area to determine the safest place to stop at.

4) When approaching a bus stop you should:

a) Proceed cautiously at a slow rate of speed.

b) Be on the look out for pedestrians, vehicles or other objects.

c) Stay focused on and continually check your mirrors throughout the procedure.

d) Activate your alternating flashing amber warning lights at least 200 ft. before the school bus stop. Remember, this warns students and motorists that you will be bringing the bus to a stop

e) Turn on the right turn signal indicator 100-300 feet before pulling over. Keep in mind, the amount of space to activate your turn signal will vary upon the location of the bus stop, the traffic surrounding the bus and other obstructions. That is why it is important to familiarize yourself with your routes ahead of time. (Always follow the guidelines of your school district during this procedure.)

f) Don't forget to continually check your mirrors to monitor the danger zone for students, vehicles and other objects in the area you are approaching.

g) Move as far as possible to the traveled portion of the road way and bring the bus to a complete stop. If students are already present, you should stop the bus at least ten feet away from the loading students.

This forces them to walk to the bus. By doing this you can have a clear view of all their movements.

- 5) **At The Stop** - Once you have brought the bus to a complete stop, you should:
- a) Place the transmission in park. If there is no park shift point, put it in neutral and set the parking brake. This procedure should be done at every stop.

 - b) Make sure to check all mirrors again and survey the area.

 - c) You should then open the service door to activate the red flashing lights. Make sure that traffic is a safe distance away, before opening the service door.

 - d) After doing another check to make sure lights are engaged and all traffic has stopped, signal the students to exit. And always be sure to count all students heading out or onto the bus.

 - e) Students who are waiting to cross, should be taught to stand a minimum of 10 feet from the right front bumper allowing the driver to increase their view of students movements. You will know that students are far enough away from the bus if you can see all of their feet.

 - f) Check all of the mirrors again and thoroughly look to make sure the red stop signs with flashing lights are still engaged.

 - g) Crossing students should wait and watch for your signal. And once it is made, students should cross far enough in front of the bus to be in the drivers view. Once again, you should count all the crossing students as well as the ones who are not crossing.

h) Students should be taught, when crossing, to stop at the left edge of the school bus stop. They should wait there for your signal to continue. The reasoning for this is that it gives drivers another chance to check and make sure the roadway is completely clear from vehicles attempting to pass the bus either from the rear, or vehicles traveling toward the front of the bus. And once it is determined that it is safe to do so, signal the students to finish crossing the road.

i) Once all students, including the students who did not cross in front of the bus, have been accounted for, disengage the alternating red lights and safely merge back into traffic and continue your route.

6) There are several steps to ensure a safe crossing at every stop. It is important to realize that every part of the school bus crossing procedure is critical. Do not become complacent. And remember, remain diligent when crossing students.

Special Circumstances and Additional Safety Issues

1) When crossing students to or from a school bus, a good rule of thumb is to anticipate the unexpected. For example, in the video, a student throws another student's book under the front of the bus. The student crawls so far under the front of the bus to retrieve the book that the driver has trouble identifying the student in the cross-view mirror. The video poses the question, "What should the driver do?" The solution is to secure the bus and leave it to physically check since it is not clear what she sees.

2) Here is another important issue that we cover in the video. A student arrives late to the bus stop and makes an attempt to cross the street unaided by the school bus driver. The driver recognizing the danger of oncoming traffic honks her horn to warn the student to stay in place until she is ready to safely wave him across the street.

3) In the video, we show a student waiting to cross the road. Simultaneously, a motorist decides to pass the bus and in the process ignores the flashing red lights and the stop sign on the side of the bus. Fortunately the school bus driver notices that the driver of the car is ignoring the stops signs.

The driver keeps the crossing student safe and continues to monitor the mirrors until it is safe to cross the student. It is against the law to pass a school bus when the red lights are flashing and the stop signs are engaged. If this happens to you, make sure to document any relevant information so local law enforcement will be able to investigate the incident. The most critical observations to be included in the report are:

- a) The time and location at which the violation occurred
- b) The vehicle license plate number
- c) A description of the vehicle involved in the violation

Don't let careless drivers put your precious cargo at risk. Report any driver who runs the bus's red lights.

There are several steps to ensure safe crossing procedures. Staying focused and remaining diligent are a couple of the keys for doing so. Remember the importance of making sure that all the tools the bus provides are working and in good condition. It is you, the driver, who will be the one that has to take these procedures seriously and apply them every time you are on your route and crossing students. Remember to follow your districts policies and state regulations.

Stay Safe and protect the special cargo you are transporting each school day.

Test Questions

1) The items that should be checked as part of a pre trip inspection, and specifically pertaining to safe crossings are the:

- a) Amber warning lights
- b) Red flashing lights
- c) Turn Indicators
- d) Mirrors
- e) Crossarm
- f) All of the above

2) It is not important to check the mirrors on approach to a bus stop because any students that are present will be in front of the bus.

TRUE or FALSE

3) The most dangerous zones are where most accidents occur.

TRUE or FALSE

4) The amber warning lights are designed to stop traffic from passing the bus.

TRUE or FALSE

5) Turn on the right turn signal indicator 100-300 feet before pulling over.

TRUE or FALSE

6) You should be able to see students feet when they are waiting to cross.

TRUE or FALSE

7) Students should stop at the left side of the bus when crossing and wait for your signal to continue.

TRUE or FALSE

8) School districts may slightly vary in their policies and procedures.

TRUE or FALSE

9) What should you do if you cannot clearly identify something in the mirrors?

10) It is okay if a motorist runs the bus's red lights as long as you keep the students safe.

TRUE or FALSE

Answer Key

1) f

2) FALSE

3) TRUE

4) FALSE

5) TRUE

6) TRUE

7) TRUE

8) TRUE

9) Secure the bus and physically check on the object

10) FALSE