

OKLAHOMA

School Bus Driver Manual



TRAINING MANUAL FOR OKLAHOMA SCHOOL BUS DRIVER CERTIFICATION



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Oklahoma



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School Bus Driver Certification Course Requirements

Enrollment Requirements for the Oklahoma School Bus Driver Certification Course

- A. At least eighteen (18) years of age
- B. Valid United States driver license
- C. Visual acuity of 20/40 or better
- D. Not dependent on insulin *by injection*

Instructional Requirements for the Oklahoma School Bus Driver Certification Course

A unit-based instructional approach shall be utilized. Competency examinations shall be given for each major curriculum component. Participants must score at least eighty percent (80%) on each of the four (4) written tests. Each participant must also demonstrate competency in driving skills. Each participant is required to know all requirements necessary to obtain and hold an *Oklahoma SDE School Bus Driver Certificate* and must comply with all requirements and responsibilities that accompany this state certificate.

Instructional Unit I

Test: Oklahoma Traffic Laws and School Bus Regulations

- a) Driver qualifications
- b) Traffic laws and school laws governing student transportation
- c) Required equipment for school buses

Instructional Unit II

Two Tests: Sound Driving Practices; Passenger Pickup and Discharge

- a) Emergency evacuations
- b) Mirror setting and usage
- c) Defensive driving
- d) Passenger pick up and discharge

Instructional Unit III

Test: Railroad Crossings and Emergency Evacuation Procedures

- a) Railroad crossing maneuvers and safety education
- b) Accident procedures and accident reporting
- c) Safe bus backing procedures and turnabout
- d) Vehicle orientation

Instructional Unit IV

(No written test)

Topics covered shall include student behavior management with emphasis on procedures to handle student discipline techniques and policies. Orientation for the Commercial Driver License (CDL) skills test should also be included.

Instructional Unit V

This class shall be dedicated to each participant receiving on-the-road school bus driving experience and preparation for their CDL skills test.

Course Requirements: Classroom Content

General Orientation and Enrollment

Certification requirements and course outline will be discussed.

Legalities Concerning Public School Buses and Motor Vehicle Laws

Federal regulations and Oklahoma State School Board Regulations will be discussed concerning pupil transportation. Critical to the driver will be a thorough explanation of the Oklahoma Motor Vehicle Laws. Emphasis will be placed on speed laws, following distance, bus turns, passing other vehicles, traffic control devices, bus overcrowding, and railroad crossings.

Emergency Procedures and Accident Reporting

Emergency evacuation of the school bus will be demonstrated and discussed. Topics will include accident reporting, evidence preservation, and an actual school bus evacuation demonstration.

Skill Maneuvers

The four basic driving-skill maneuvers required will be presented for each participant to master. Instructions will cover (1) passenger pickup and discharge maneuvers, (2) railroad crossings, (3) turnabouts, and (4) backing a school bus. Making turns with a school bus will also be discussed.

Student Behavior Management and Disciplinary Procedures

Participants will receive instruction in the relationship between safety and student behavior. Emphasis will be placed on legal aspects.

Defensive Driving Skills

In this session, defensive driving principles will be discussed. Participants will receive instruction in recognizing the six most hazardous conditions affecting safe driving, as well as “time and space management.” There will also be discussion on the six most common positions of vehicles in relation to each other at the time of an accident, referred to as “hazard recognition.” Further topics discussed will include how to assure a complete visual search, driving a bus at night, and driver communication skills.

Passenger Loading and Unloading

Participants will receive instructions for picking up and discharging students with caution and consistency. Discussion will include the importance of selecting safe sites for bus stops, the legal aspects of unauthorized release of children from the bus, and possible special problems concerning school bus stops.

Railroad Crossing Safety

Participants will receive instruction in safety requirements for school buses at railroad crossings. Topics will include relevant state laws, required emergency procedures, and “time-gaps.”

Course Requirements: Driving Range and On-The-Road Driving

Mirror Setting and Usage

A scientific approach to proper mirror adjustment, that is the industry accepted method that must be followed by drivers to effectively limit school bus blind spots, will be demonstrated with a “hands-on” approach. A thorough explanation of the function and area each mirror is designed to cover will be addressed by instruction in proper mirror usage. Mirror reference points will be discussed which should enable drivers to judge distance between vehicles more effectively.

Bus Maintenance and Pretrip/Post Trip Bus Inspections

Participants will receive instruction and demonstration of routine bus maintenance procedures and how to inspect their bus before and after each trip. Each student bus driver will demonstrate the ability to conduct a walk-around bus inspection and basic preventative maintenance procedures.

Emergency Evacuation Drills

Each participant will receive instruction on emergency evacuations of a school bus, utilizing three scenarios: (1) the front exit only, (2) the rear exit only, and (3) both exits simultaneously.

Driving Skill Maneuvers and On-the-Road Driving

There will be a brief orientation of the vehicle and its control devices. Each student bus driver will demonstrate driving proficiency in maneuvering the school bus through the pickup and discharge maneuver, railroad crossing, turnabout and backing, and basic skills such as turning and stopping.

Participants will demonstrate their ability to safely operate the school bus, both on the driving range and on public roads in actual traffic conditions.

Instruction and evaluation will include visual searches while driving, speed management, and time and space management. When conditions permit, instruction should be given on night driving, skid control and recovery, and other extreme road conditions.

Daily Schedule for a Complete Training Course

The Oklahoma School Bus Driver Certification Course shall include classroom instruction by an SDE certified instructor, or an SDE approved on-line course, and additional home-study time devoted to preparation for the required tests, completion and evaluation of study guides, and driving practice and evaluation.

A suggested schedule for the complete school bus driver training course is four (4) hours per day for five (5) days within a week. It is permissible for the SDE instructor to establish the number of days and hours per day to meet their scheduling needs and the needs of the participants.

Exemption from On-the-Road Training Requirement

A participant who already has (1) a valid Class A, B, or C commercial driver license with a school bus “S” endorsement on their driver license and (2) a current *Emergency School Bus Driver Certificate* issued by the SDE, is required to complete only the classroom portion of this course.



OSDE Student Transportation

Philosophy

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) is dedicated to the belief that the most precious resource of the state of Oklahoma is its young citizens, our students. Every school district's student transportation team is charged with the responsibility of transporting our most precious cargo, the children, to and from school and school activities. It is absolutely essential that our children arrive safely and in a mental frame of mind conducive to learning.

For this reason, the school bus driver is a very important member of the educational team. It is their responsibility to safely deliver students to and from school on time, and to promote the moral characteristics necessary for the children's well-being.

The SDE is dedicated to ensuring that all school bus drivers receive the proper training, leadership, and support necessary to enable them to safely and successfully execute their duties. We also pledge diligence in the research of implementing higher standards of student transportation equipment.

Vision Statement

- All school bus accidents are preventable;
- Any injury is unacceptable; and
- A commitment to safety is a requirement!

Mission Statement

Student transportation must ensure safe and accessible transportation in a climate conducive to learning, for the diverse population, in an effective community partnership.

I. General Rules and Regulations

The primary responsibility of a school bus driver in this state is to transport the students to and from school in the safest possible manner. Pupil transportation is an integral part of the overall education program, and provisions have been made for all school bus drivers to be properly trained for their job. The program for training school bus drivers is being carried out by the Transportation Director of the State Department of Education, in cooperation with the Department of Public Safety, local school superintendents, and other school officials.

Oklahoma school bus drivers are hired by the local school's board of education with the recommendation of the district superintendent. The district superintendent is responsible for their district's overall student transportation program.

No board of education shall have authority to enter into any written contract with a school bus driver who does not hold a valid Oklahoma School Bus Driver Certificate issued by the State Board of Education, authorizing said bus driver to operate a school bus in Oklahoma. School bus drivers should understand and honor the conditions of their employment and work within the policy formulated.

The school bus driver is responsible for referring to the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety *Commercial Driver License Manual* for information on buses and other vehicles as to size, weights and measures, and other laws pertinent to operating a bus.

"Except in case of emergency, anyone who operates a school bus, whether a contractor for private hire or an employee of the school district for the transportation of students enrolled in the public schools of the district, shall complete a course of instruction pertaining to the operation of a school bus. Said course to be approved by the Oklahoma State Department of Education and the district involved." (70 O.S. § 9-118)

"All school bus drivers shall have an *annual health certificate* signed by a physician licensed by this state filed in the office of the local Chief Administrative Officer or designee attesting that such physician has examined the applicant, and that the applicant has no sign or symptoms of ill health, and is otherwise, from the observation of such physician, physically and mentally capable of safely operating a school bus. As an alternative to the annual physical examination requirements for school bus drivers, school districts may adopt a policy that utilizes a *biannual physical examination*, provided the examination is in compliance with the physical qualifications and examination requirements of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Act, Subpart E 391.41 to 391.50. (OAC 210:30-5-1)

A. Required Inservice for School Bus Drivers

All local school districts must provide school bus drivers with a **minimum of four (4) hours each year** of school bus driver inservice from the SDE-approved list of subjects. Inservice training should focus on improving driving skills, promoting a professional attitude, and district policies concerning pupil transportation. All inservice attendance rosters must be kept on file at the employing school district.

B. Prohibited Use of Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco (OAC 210:30-5-1)

The use of tobacco by a school bus driver is not permitted during the operation of the bus. The use of an intoxicating or nonintoxicating alcoholic beverage by the driver eight (8) hours prior to or during the operation of a school bus is strictly prohibited. The use of any controlled substance seventy-two (72) hours prior to or during the operation of a school bus is strictly prohibited.

II. Qualifications of a School Bus Driver

Certification Requirements (Excerpts from OAC 210:30-5-1)

- (A) The employing school's Chief Administrative Officer or designee shall certify to the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) that **each applicant submitted for a Standard Five-Year Certification:**
- (i) Is at least 18 years of age.
 - (ii) Has successfully completed a school bus driver certification course approved by the Oklahoma State Department of Education.
 - (iii) Holds a valid Commercial Driver License (CDL) appropriate for the type of vehicle driven with the proper endorsements required by the Department of Public Safety.
 - (iv) Has not been convicted, plead guilty or no contest to a felony during the last ten (10) years.
 - (v) Has passed a driving record check, and **no certificate shall be issued** to a person who within the preceding three (3) years:
 - (I) Has had a license suspended or revoked, canceled, or withdrawn pursuant to the Implied Consent Laws at 47 O.S. § 751 et seq.
 - (II) Has a conviction for a violation of 47 O.S. § 11-902 which includes driving, operating or being in actual physical control of a vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or any intoxicating drug.
 - (III) Has been convicted or plead guilty to a violation of 47 O.S. § 761, operating a motor vehicle while impaired by consumption of alcohol.
 - (IV) Has been convicted of any municipal violation of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or operating a motor vehicle while impaired, or being in actual physical control of a motor vehicle while impaired.
 - (V) Has had four (4) or more traffic violations (excluding parking tickets).
- (B) The Chief Administrative Officer or designee shall certify to the SDE that the applicant for an **Emergency One-Year School Bus Driver Certification:**
- (i) Is at least 18 years of age.
 - (ii) Holds a valid Commercial Driver License with the proper endorsement as required by the State Department of Public Safety.
 - (iii) Has a health certificate on file signed by a licensed physician, and meets all vision requirements, and is not dependent upon insulin by injection.
 - (iv) Has not been convicted or plead guilty to a felony in the past ten years.
 - (v) Has a driving record that has been checked and meets State Board of Education requirements for certification. *[Source: Amended at 9 OK Reg 2357, eff 6-25-92]*

Substitute school bus drivers, and activity school bus drivers, shall meet the same requirements prescribed by the OSDE for a full-time route school bus driver.

Required Physical and Mental Condition

Every school bus driver should accept the fact that the actual driving of the bus is only one phase of this unique job; success or failure depends on a combination of factors. A driver must recognize the goal of driving a school bus is to transport children to and from school as safely as possible, and that the driver's physical and mental condition both will affect his/her ability to drive safely.

Every SDE certified school bus driver must pass an annual physical. A health certificate signed by an Oklahoma licensed physician must be kept on file with the employer. (*Note: A person required to take insulin by injection is not eligible for Oklahoma school bus driver certification.*)

A visual acuity test will be included on the annual physical. With or without corrective lenses, a school bus driver must have visual acuity of 20/40 or better, by Snellen chart test. The importance of a bus driver's good vision cannot be over emphasized. A driver's reactions are largely determined by what he/she sees. Approximately 95 percent (95%) of stimuli for a driver is from sight. When a driver is looking straight ahead he/she not only sees objects in front of them, but also sees objects and movements to each side, known as peripheral vision.

A driver's ability to accurately judge distance and depth is very important for safe driving. This is especially true when driving a bus in close/tight spaces and there is a need to pass, turn, or brake. A person with poor depth-perception is not a good candidate for driving a school bus.

A good attitude is a must to be a successful school bus driver. An ideal school bus driver is always patient in all circumstances and courteous to all passengers. Every safe school bus driver should have the ability to stay calm under stressful situations while driving.

A driver must also be capable of staying mentally alert at all times to qualify for the job of driving a school bus. Lack of sleep and physical fatigue are two factors that can adversely affect a driver's ability to stay mentally alert. Some medications can also cause drowsiness which affects alertness.

A school bus driver must stay focused on their driving and the safe loading and unloading of their student passengers. Failure to devote full time and attention to driving may result in an accident and/or injuries. Cell phone use and eating/drinking snacks while driving a bus are unsafe practices.

In all situations, "SAFETY FIRST" must be the slogan for every school bus driver.

III. Laws and Regulations Governing School Buses

A. Definition of a School Bus

All vehicles meeting the school bus definition must comply with all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards applicable to school buses (*Refer to Federal Register/Vol. 56, No. 81*). The FMVSS definition of a school bus is any vehicle that:

- Has a factory-designed/manufactured seating capacity of **eleven (11) or more passengers** including the driver, and
- Is used for the transportation of students to and from school or related events.

B. School Bus Headlights

"During **any time** any school bus is in operation, the school bus shall have its headlights activated." (47 O.S. § 12-228)

C. Bus Overcrowding

“No school bus shall be operated on the streets or highways in this state (Oklahoma) when loaded with passengers in excess of the number for which such bus is designed to carry. The number of passengers, determined by the local school board, which the bus is designed to carry shall be posted in a conspicuous place on the bus.” (47 O.S. § 11-1104)

All passengers must be seated in a seat when the bus is in motion. Students should be assigned a specific seat number at the beginning of the year. The SDE recommends that school bus seats be numbered similar to the airline method:

- ▶ Row 1 left side seats are 1A, 1B, 1C, and right side seats are 1D, 1E, 1F
- ▶ Row 2 left side seats are 2A, 2B, 2C, and right side seats are 2D, 2E, 2F

D. Required Equipment for Inside the School Bus

The following items are required to be inside every operational school bus:

- One (1) First Aid Kit and one (1) Body Fluid Cleanup Kit
- One (1) Fire Extinguisher, and
- Three (3) Roadway Emergency Reflectors

The expiration date should be checked yearly on all first aid kits and fire extinguishers in each bus.

E. Safety/Seat Belts

“The **driver** of every vehicle used by a school district for the transportation of school children shall make use of such seat belts while in operation of the vehicle, and failure to do so shall be deemed to constitute a misdemeanor; and, upon conviction thereof, such driver shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty-five dollars (\$25) and not more than one hundred dollars (\$100).” (70 O.S. § 24-121)

F. Daily and Annual School Bus Inspections

The most vital part of school bus inspections is the continuous process of the daily pretrip bus inspection and report. Prior to driving any school bus, either the bus driver or the school district’s designee is required to perform a daily vehicle inspection that meets the State Board of Education requirements. Bus defects should be documented and immediately reported to the appropriate school district supervisor. Written documentation of the completion of repairs is recommended.

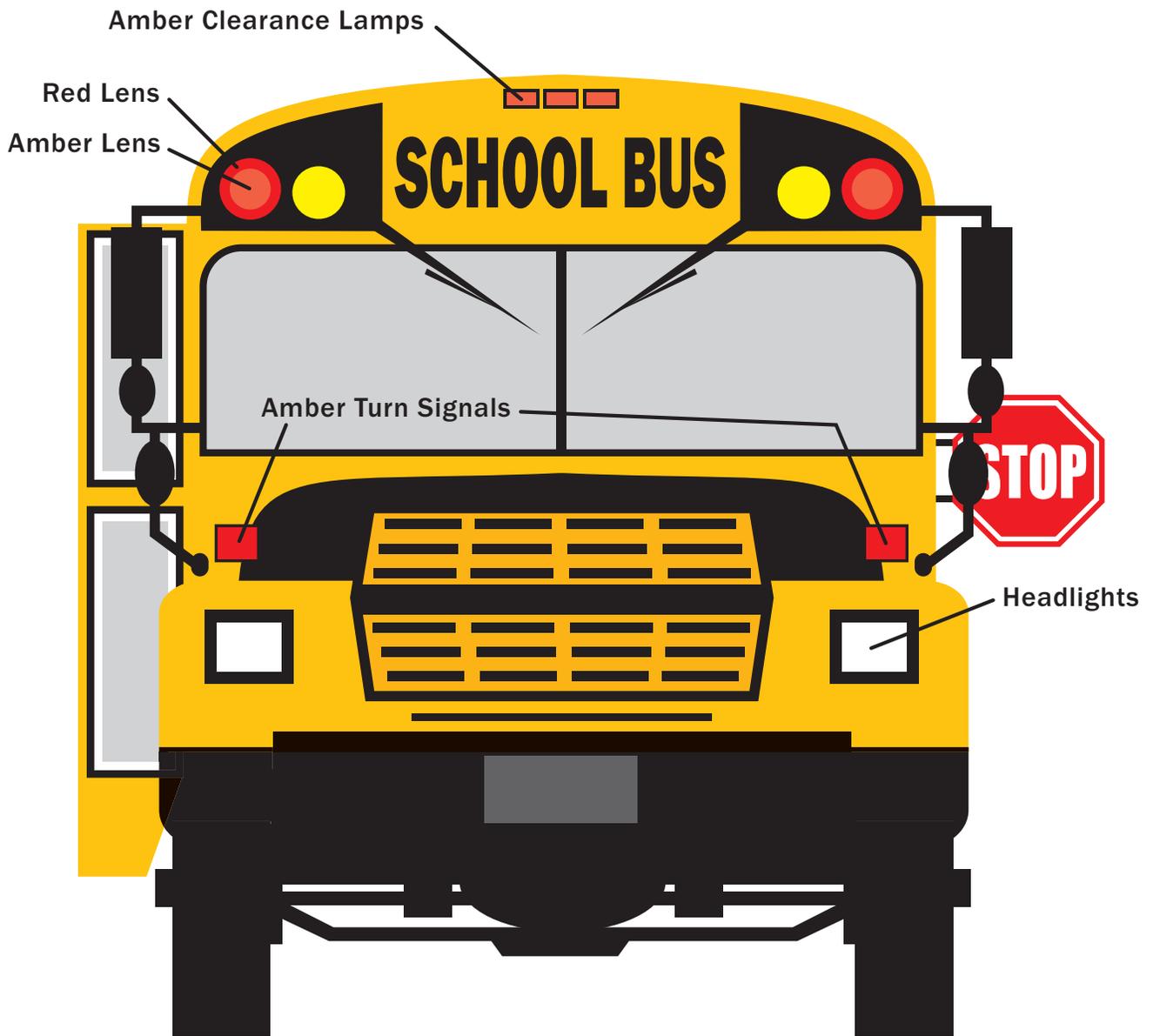
Subchapter 5. Transportation 210:30-5-1 (e) School bus. (2) School bus inspections.

(A) A driver shall perform a **daily** pretrip safety inspection of the vehicle. The inspection shall include: brakes, lights, tires, exhaust system, gauges, windshield wipers, steering, and fuel. The driver shall make a daily written report describing the condition of the bus and listing any deficiencies. This report is to remain on file with the local Chief Administrative Officer or designee for a period of ninety (90) days.

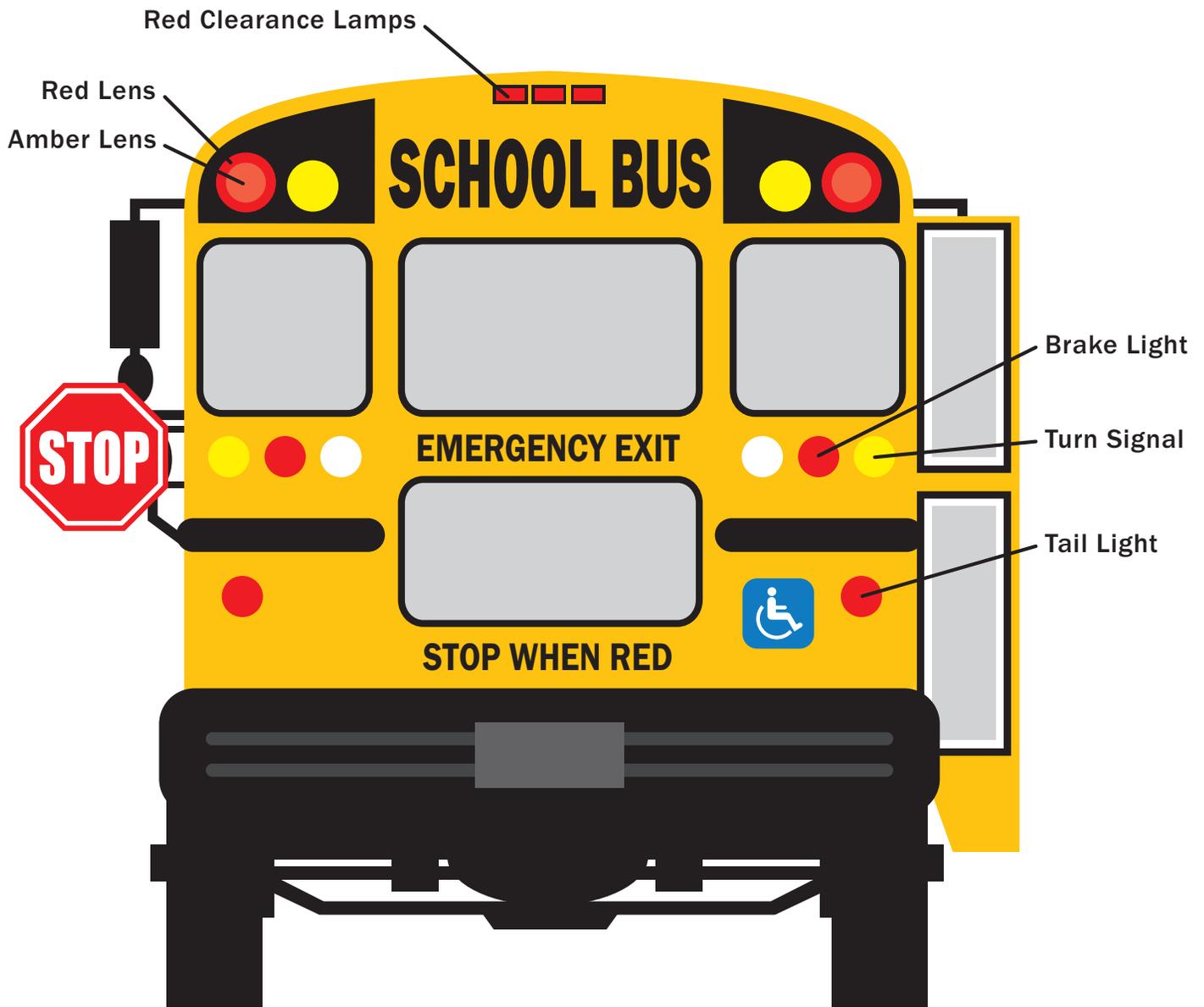
(B) A school district shall have each school bus **inspected annually** by an inspector approved by the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

A team approach and cooperation with fellow bus drivers should make daily school bus inspections less time consuming and more efficient.

Required Equipment on the Front of the Bus



Required Equipment on the Rear of the Bus



The school bus pretrip and post-trip inspections required by the SDE include fourteen (14) total steps. A **pretrip inspection** includes steps 1 through 9 as follows:

1. Raise the bus hood and check all fluid levels and the condition of all belts and hoses in the engine compartment.
2. After the engine has been started and allowed to idle for warm-up, the driver should check the condition of the fire extinguisher, emergency reflectors, and first-aid kit.
3. Check the seats to determine that all seat cushions are secure, that no metal is protruding through a cushion, and that all seats are secured to the floor.
4. Test that the emergency door opens easily and the warning buzzer is working.
5. Turn on all bus lights and check the operation of the loading light system, directional signals, head lights, tail lights, brake lights, clearance lights, and reverse lights. It may be very difficult for one person to check exterior lights without assistance. Although, if the bus is parked inside, the bus's exterior lights may be visible to a person inside the bus.
6. Examine all tires for proper inflation, adequate tread, and look for any defects. Immediately report any defect noted to the district's transportation supervisor.
7. Check the exhaust system to assure there is no possibility for carbon monoxide to enter the bus body which could be lethal. The tail pipe should extend to the rear of the bus and be flush with the rear bumper. Buses that have tail pipes extending out the side of the bus behind the rear wheels must be flush with the side body.
8. From the driver's seat, check the operation of the windshield wipers and washer, horn, parking brake, foot brake, heaters, defrosters, and steering.
9. Adjust bus mirrors according to the procedures on the diagrams included on pages 13 and 14 of this manual. When the rear view mirrors are properly adjusted, and the driver's seat belt is adjusted and buckled, the driver is ready to begin the bus route.

Remember, the bus inspection is not complete until a **post-trip** inspection is performed, which includes steps 10 through 14 as follows:

10. Clean the windows and sweep the inside of the bus.
11. Check the passenger seats for cuts, tears, or protruding metal and immediately report any needed repairs to the supervisor.
12. Check all tires for damage and assure proper tire inflation.
13. Each time before leaving the bus, the bus driver must walk the bus aisle from front to back looking in every seat for small children who may have fallen asleep and cannot be seen from the front of the bus. Imagine a child awakening to find they are alone on a school bus. In the winter season the temperature could be below freezing and in summer it could be 100 degrees. In such conditions, a child accidentally left behind on a school bus may lose consciousness and not be found until the next day. A child could attempt to leave the bus and school grounds without adult supervision. These are worst-case scenarios, but such incidents have been reported from many states, and some have been fatal.
14. Never leave the keys in an unattended bus. Secure the bus according to district policy.

IV. Adjusting Bus Mirrors – Seeing is Believing

A. How to Find the Danger Zones Around a School Bus

The following demonstration will show the danger zones (blind spots) surrounding a school bus. Park a school bus in an open area. Have the shortest driver sit in the driver's seat and adjust the seat appropriately. By beginning with the shortest driver to adjust the mirrors as needed, the tallest driver should also be able to see the area within each danger zone.

This demonstration requires fourteen (14) traffic cones, 18 inches tall. (It may help to mark each cone with a number.) Listening for directives from the seated driver as needed, a person outside of the bus will place the cones as follows:

- Cone 1.** Have the driver look left and slowly move Cone 1 until the base of the cone is aligned with the bottom of the left window in the driver's line of sight. The bottom of the window is the driver's reference point to their immediate left.
- Cone 2.** Place Cone 2 in front of the left side of the bumper, directly in front of the left front tire.
- Cone 3.** Place Cone 3 in front of the right side of the bumper, directly in front of the right front tire.
- Cone 4.** Have the driver look at the left corner of the bus hood and move out Cone 4 until the base of the cone aligns with the edge of the hood. This is the driver's left front reference point.
- Cone 5.** Have the driver look at the center of the bus hood, and move Cone 5 until it aligns with the edge of the hood. This is the center front reference point.
- Cone 6.** Have the driver look at the right corner of the bus hood, and move Cone 6 until the base of the cone aligns with the edge of the hood. This is the right front reference point.
- Cone 7.** Open the service door and have the bus driver to look out the door. Move Cone 7 until the cone's base aligns with the floor at the top of the steps.
- Cone 8.** Turn the steering wheel to the left as far as possible and place Cone 8 behind the right front tire.
- Cone 9.** Place Cone 9 in front of the left front tire.

Show the driver the blind spot areas created by the bus, the danger zones. It is also important to measure the distance from the bus to the cones. The danger zone in front of the bus and to the driver's left is about 14 to 18 feet. Have the bus drivers walk around the bus to see each danger zone created by the bus itself.

To show danger zones behind the bus, continue the demonstration with the next five cones:

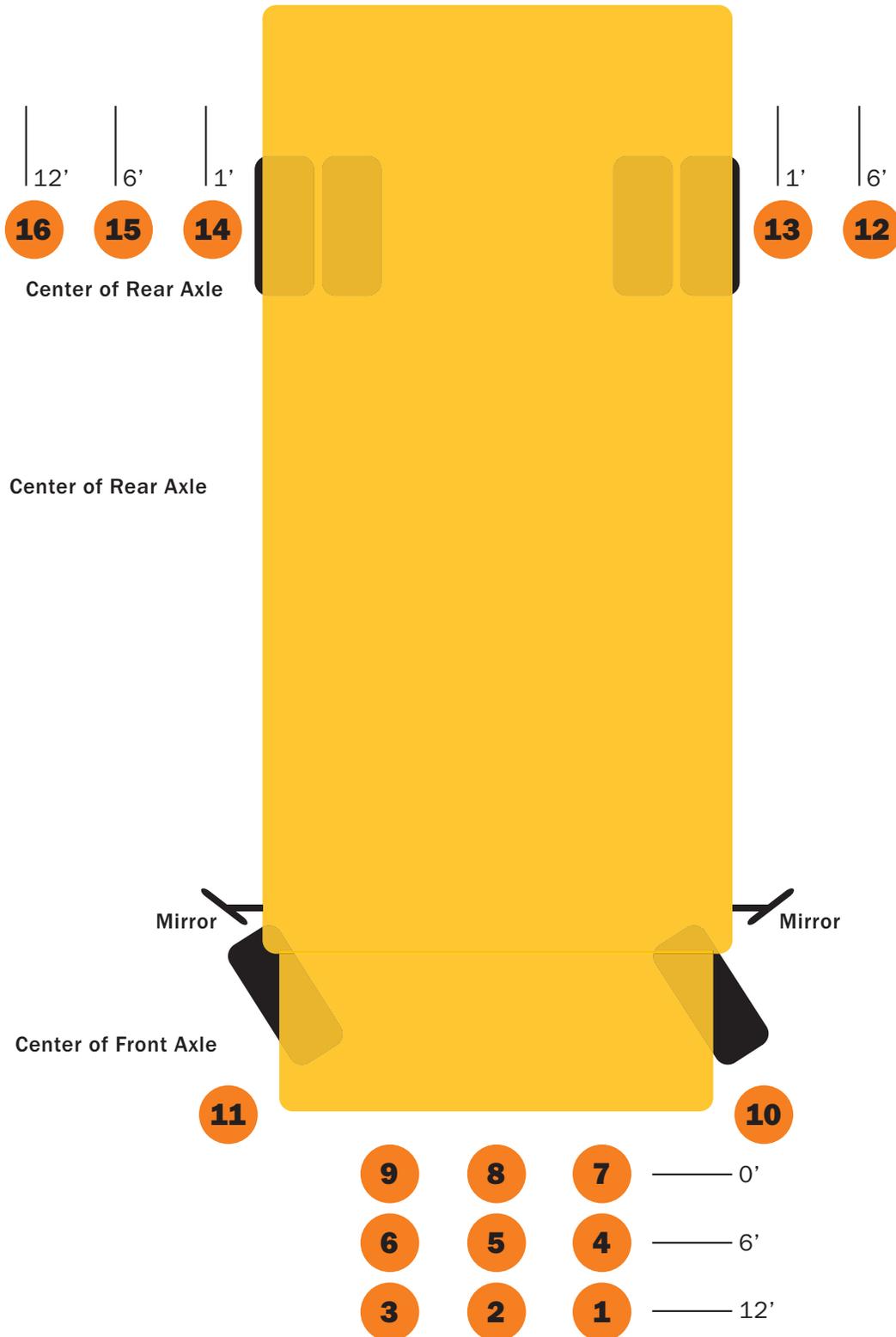
- Cone 10.** Place Cone 10 next to the right rear tire(s).
- Cone 11.** Place Cone 11 at the right of the rear bumper.
- Cone 12.** Place Cone 12 at the left of the rear bumper.
- Cone 13.** Place Cone 13 next to the left rear tire(s).
- Cone 14.** From the bus driver seat, have the driver look in the inside rear view mirror. Move Cone 14 back until the driver can see the cone through the lower window panel of the rear emergency door.

Bus mirrors should be adjusted until all 14 cones are visible from the driver seat. If the driver cannot see all of the cones after adjusting the current bus mirrors, the bus should not be used until extra mirrors are installed, or the current mirror brackets are remounted to enable seeing all of the cones as set in this demonstration.

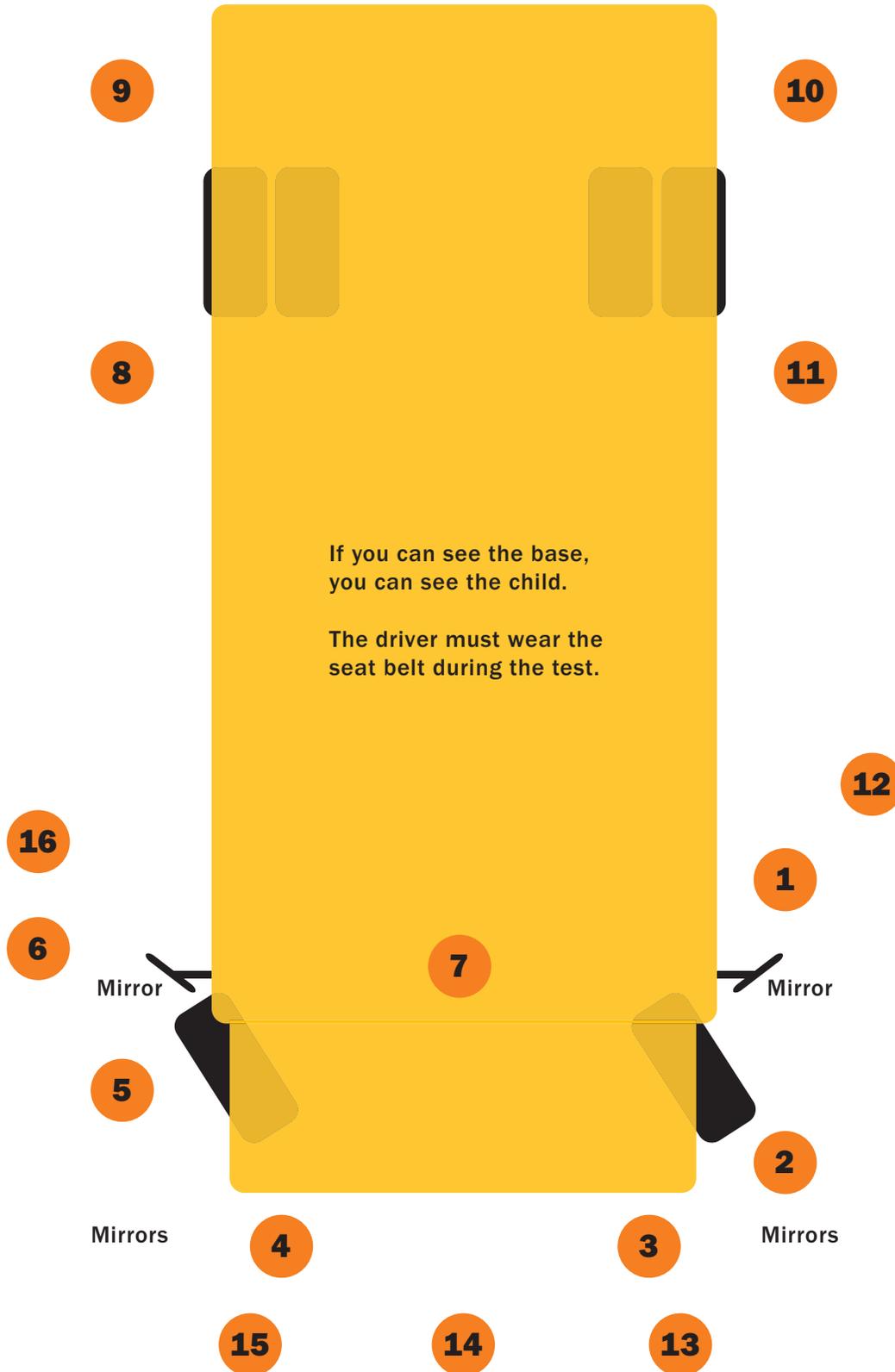
To properly adjust bus mirrors, repeat this procedure for each type of school bus used.

Location of Cylinders for School Bus "Field of View" Test

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) #111



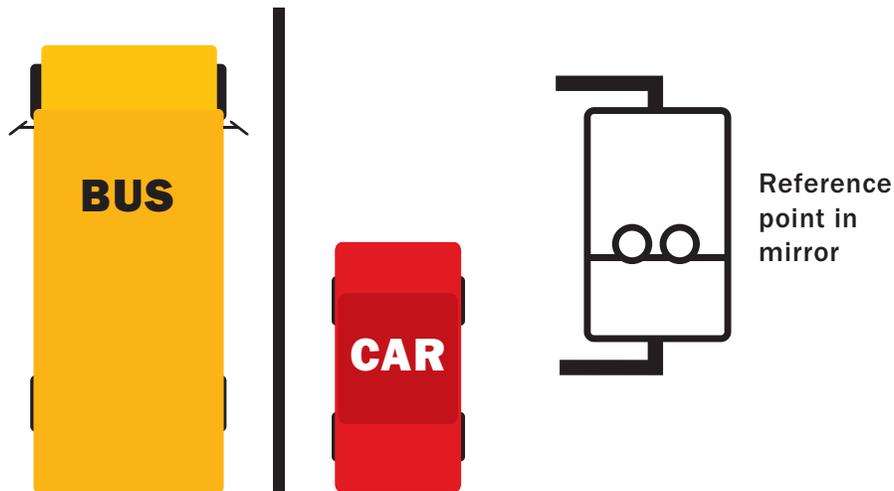
Is a Child's Life Worth the Cost of the Extra Mirror?



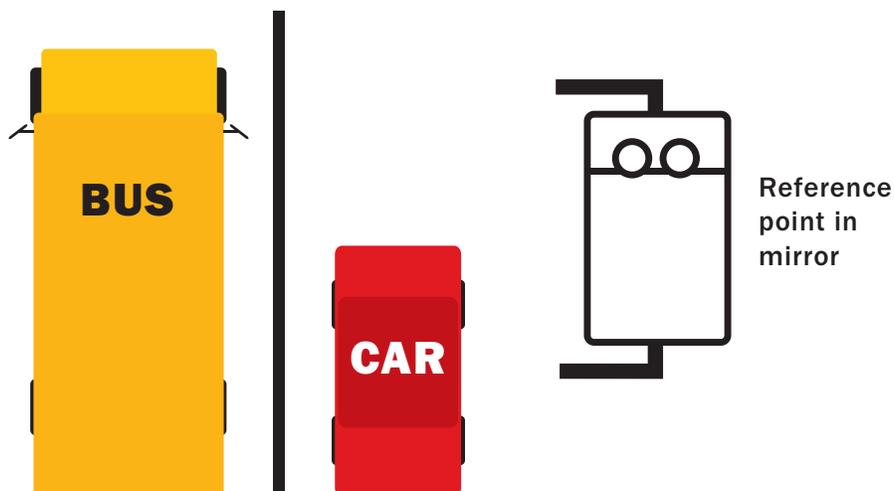
B. A Rearview Mirror Technique for Passing Vehicles Safely

If you have ever been driving on a two-lane road at night in the rain, and had to pass a car or truck, you may have looked into the rearview mirror and wondered, “Is it safe to move back into my lane?” The following demonstration will show a way to estimate when it is safe to proceed back into your lane of traffic. For this demonstration you will need a bus, car, two people, and water-based marker.

1. Park a school bus in an open area such as a parking lot.
2. Park a car three (3) feet away, to the right of the bus. The car’s driver-side rear bumper should be even with the bus’s right rear bumper (car lights off).
3. Sitting in the driver’s seat of the bus, look into the right rearview mirror and find the headlights of the car.



4. Direct someone outside the bus to mark the exact spot on the bus mirror where the bus driver sees the car’s headlights (car lights off). Using a water-based marker, have the person to draw a horizontal line across the mirror at that spot. This is the reference point for the bus driver.
5. The bus driver should look at the line on the mirror, while a second person slowly drives the car forward. The bus driver will see that the car’s headlights will move above the reference point (line on the mirror) as the car approaches and is side-by-side to the front of the bus.



V. Picking up and Discharging Passengers

The one area of student transportation in which a child is at the greatest risk of injury or death occurs when the bus is stopped for the purpose of picking up and discharging students. The two greatest risks of injury/death to student passengers are from (1) traffic around the bus, and (2) the bus itself.

A bus driver's **blind spots** are greatly increased due simply to the large size of a school bus. If a student enters a blind spot, the school bus driver cannot see the student from their driver's seat by direct vision or even by use of their bus mirrors. The most hazardous blind spot areas are:

- Directly in front of the bus
- Directly behind the bus
- Areas close to each side of the bus
- And *especially* all areas near the rear wheels

Statistics show that injuries and fatalities that have occurred while children are entering or exiting a school bus are more likely to be related to the school bus, not the other vehicles/traffic.

The two visual responsibilities of a school bus driver during every pickup and discharge are:

- Observe the *traffic* that may pass the bus when the student is in the danger zones.
- Observe the *student's movements* as they approach and leave the bus.

If a school bus driver is to accomplish these safety goals, it is imperative that he/she follow the proper procedures every time they pickup or discharge student passengers.

A school bus driver must also follow the proper procedure to adequately warn traffic of their intentions, and allow the motorist time and space to bring their vehicle to a complete stop when the red loading lights are displayed. Motorists cannot be expected to stop for a bus picking up or discharging passengers unless the **selection of the bus stop area** assures traffic will afford them the time and distance to bring their vehicles to a complete and safe stop.

“The driver of a vehicle meeting or overtaking a school bus that is stopped to take on or discharge school children, and on which the red loading signals are in operation, *is to stop his vehicle before it reaches the school bus and not proceed until the loading signals are deactivated*, and then proceed past such school bus at a speed which is reasonable and with due caution for the safety of such school children and other occupants.” (47 O.S. § 11-705)

If a school bus driver witnesses a driver failing to stop when a school bus's red flashing warning lights are activated, he/she shall within twenty-four (24) hours of the alleged offense, file a report which includes the vehicle's color and license tag number and the time and place of the occurrence. **This shall be reported to the law enforcement authority of the municipality where the violation occurred.**

The law enforcement authority of a municipality shall issue a letter of warning of the alleged violation to the person registered as the owner of the vehicle. (*No report to the SDE.*)

The Office of the Attorney General shall provide a form letter to each municipal law enforcement agency in this state for the issuance of the warning provided for in this subsection. Such a form letter shall be used by each law enforcement agency in the exact form provided for by the Office of the Attorney General.

The school bus's loading signals (*flashing red warning lights*) are to be used only when the school bus is stopped to pick up or discharge student passengers. The use of a school bus's red light signals is prohibited for any other purpose. (Refer to “15-step Procedure” on page 18)

A school bus driver must perform a 15-step procedure every time a stop is made for picking up or discharging students. Keep in mind that when estimating distances, three-hundred (300) feet usually equals one block (300 feet=1 block).

The “15-Step Procedure” for student pickup or discharge is as follows:

1. Start the amber warning lights within 300 to 100 feet before the bus stop.
2. Turn on the right directional signal.
3. Pull completely off the road and stop (or as far to the right as possible).
4. Set the parking brake, then shift gear to neutral.
5. Turn off the right directional signal.
6. **Visual search.**
7. Slightly open the bus door, starting the red light warning signal.
8. **Visual search.**
9. Open the bus door.
10. **Visual search** and then direct students (on to or off of the bus).
11. Close the bus door.
12. Shift to appropriate gear, then release parking brake.
13. **Visual search.**
14. Turn on the left directional signal.
15. **Visual search.**

When approaching each bus stop, the driver should allow traffic conditions to dictate the distance and time required for adequate warning to activate the amber lights accordingly. The driver shall activate the right directional signal at least 100 feet before stopping. Next, the driver should pull the bus completely off the road if a secure pullout area is provided, or stay as far to the right as possible. To secure the bus so that it cannot roll out of control, the driver must shift to neutral and set the parking break. The driver may then cancel the right directional signal.

A visual search must be made to determine if any vehicles are passing the bus or attempting to stop. The visual search shall also include observing the number of students approaching the bus and their positions at the bus stop. The driver may then slightly open the service door if traffic conditions permit. (The amber lights will automatically cancel and the red loading lights will be activated.) The driver must again conduct a visual search to determine if traffic has stopped, that students inside the bus have remained seated, and that students outside the bus are awaiting the driver’s commands. The service door may then be opened.

Safety precautions when discharging passengers from the bus:

- **Students should remain on the right side of the road at least ten (10) feet in front of the bus to await further instructions from the driver.** It is essential that the driver keep track of all students leaving or waiting to board the bus, to prevent them from entering the street too soon or standing in a blind spot.
- The bus driver should conduct a **visual search prior to directing students to cross the street.** The bus driver should make certain no vehicles are attempting to pass the bus, and when safe, keeping their hand inside the bus, give a designated hand signal, easily visible to students outside, to direct them to proceed safely across the street. The bus driver should *never extend his/her arm or hand outside the bus*, as that type of signal could confuse motorists that are stopped for the bus.

As the students leave the bus stop to enter the bus, the driver should determine if the correct number of students has entered the bus, and when being discharged, should see that all students leaving the bus stop are a safe distance from the roadway. The driver may then close the service door, which will automatically cancel the red light warning signals. Traffic may then proceed and flow normally.

The driver should prepare the bus for movement by selecting the proper gear and releasing the parking brake. The bus must be under control and not allowed to roll/creep forward or backward. A visual search should be conducted to determine the movement of any vehicles or pedestrians around the bus. Then when traffic conditions permit, the driver should activate the left directional signal and perform a thorough visual search before leaving the bus stop.

This step can save a child's life: It is essential that the bus driver's *last visual search* utilizes the "crossover mirrors" and includes a visual check of the service door area to determine if any students have entered the blind spot areas. Clothing, coats/coat strings, or backpacks can easily be caught in the handrail or door mechanism. When all students are a safe distance away from the school bus, the driver may proceed to drive.

The school bus driver should frequently remind student passengers of the importance of orderly behavior and safety precautions at their bus stop. Safety rules may be forgotten by students who ride daily and could get into a habit of assuming they are always safe.

All bus stops should be carefully selected with safety the first consideration in choosing their locations. Insofar as possible, buses will be approved to go within one-half mile of a pupil's home.

All children should be picked up and discharged **from the right side of the road** to eliminate the possibility of a child stepping directly into traffic when exiting from the bus door.

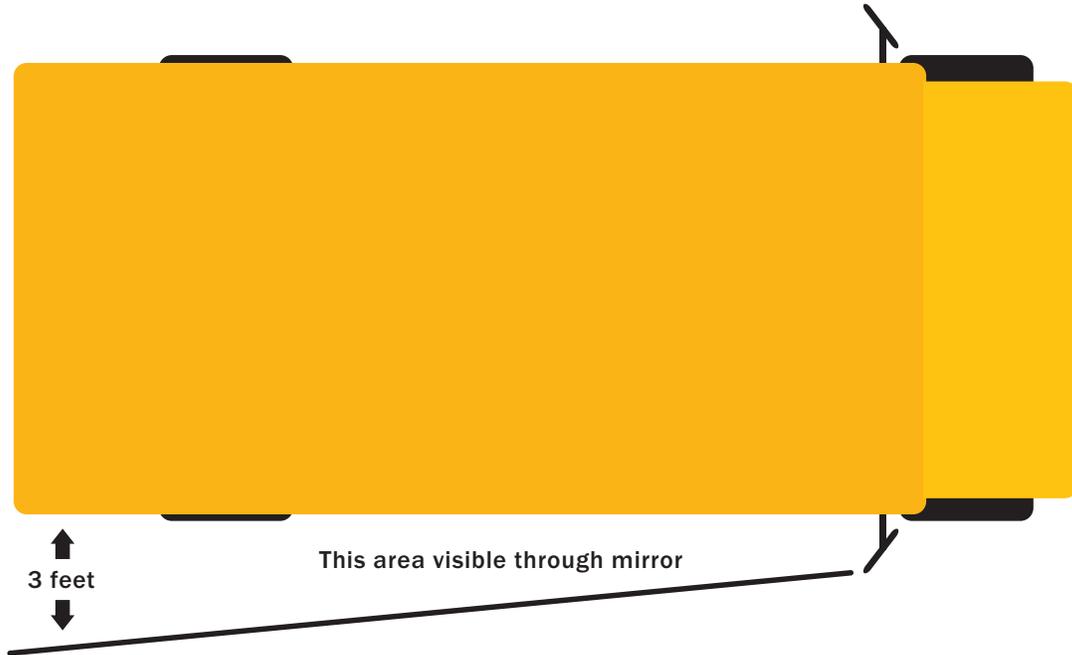
Loading zones at the school site should be located so that **the bus door will be on the curb side** nearest the school building entrance. It is recommended that a zone be assigned to each bus for loading in the afternoon and these buses be placed in their individual zone well in advance of the dismissal of school in the afternoon. The bus that occupies the front zone should leave first, number two next, and so on. A bus driver should never pull out from behind another bus.

School bus loading zones must be kept open/clear at all times. Pupils should be properly instructed how to use the bus zone areas by classroom instruction. Bus loading zone signs may be posted to keep other motorists from parking in the designated student loading/unloading areas.

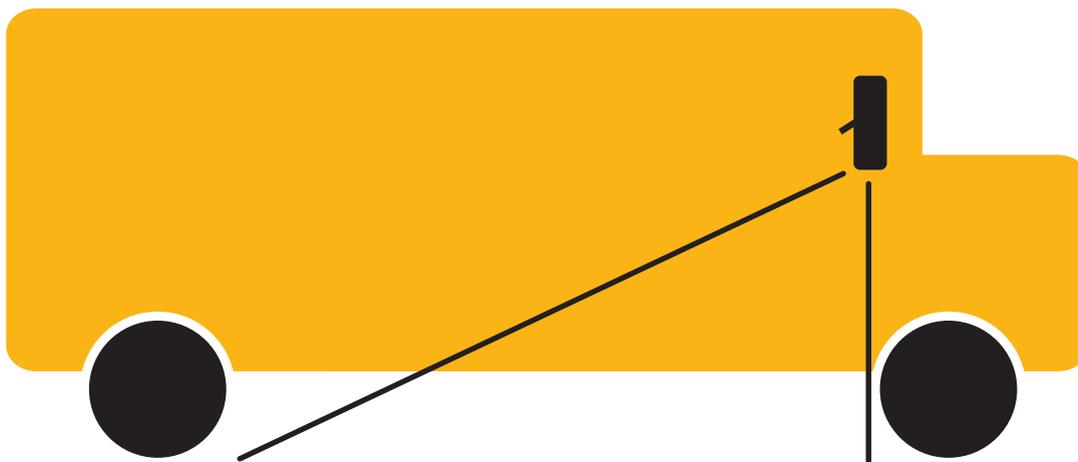
Another important safety issue in the zone is the bus driver's ability to **stay alert to the possibility of students entering blind spots surrounding the bus**. The following pages illustrate the blind spots and how the bus mirrors must be adjusted to assure complete vision. If ever in doubt, an adult may be assigned outside the bus to indicate a safe driving path.

Remember, all types of mirrors can distort distances and proportions. If you see anything in the bus mirrors that you think should not be there, look again! Then stop and get out of the bus if need be, and see exactly what and where the object is. When in doubt, taking an extra minute to stop and verify what you are actually seeing may help to avoid an accident or possible injuries.

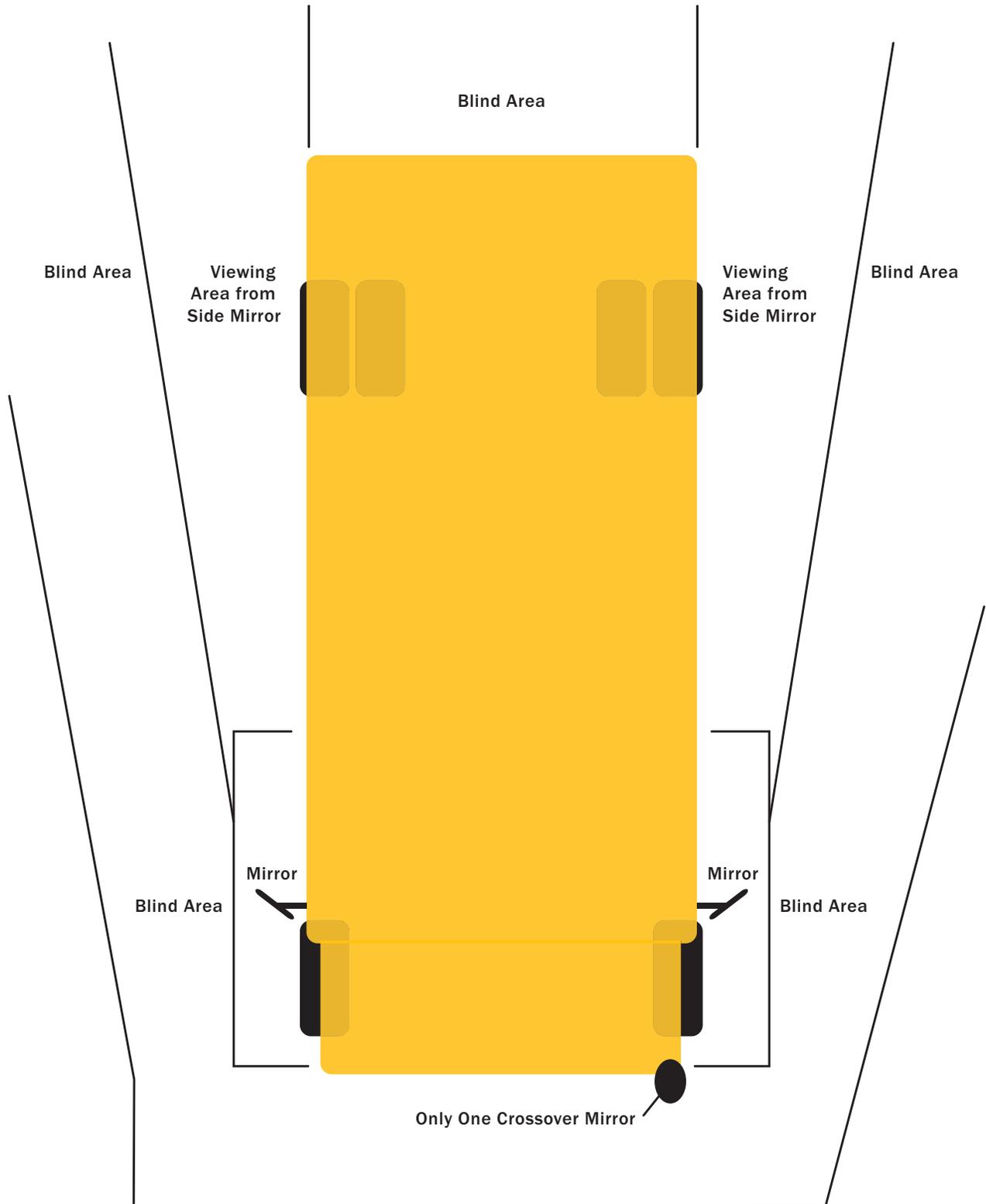
Horizontal Blind Spot



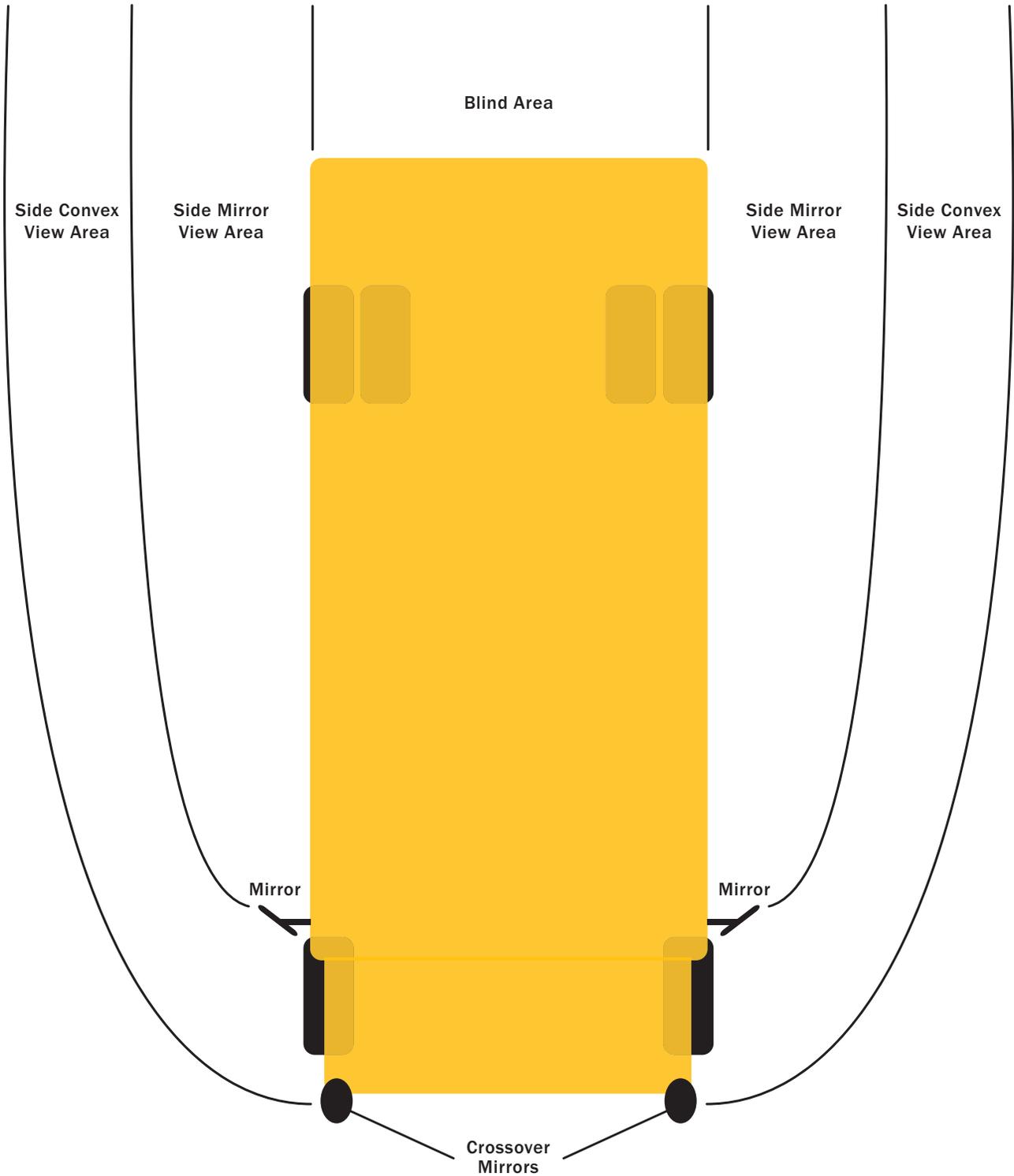
Vertical Blind Spot

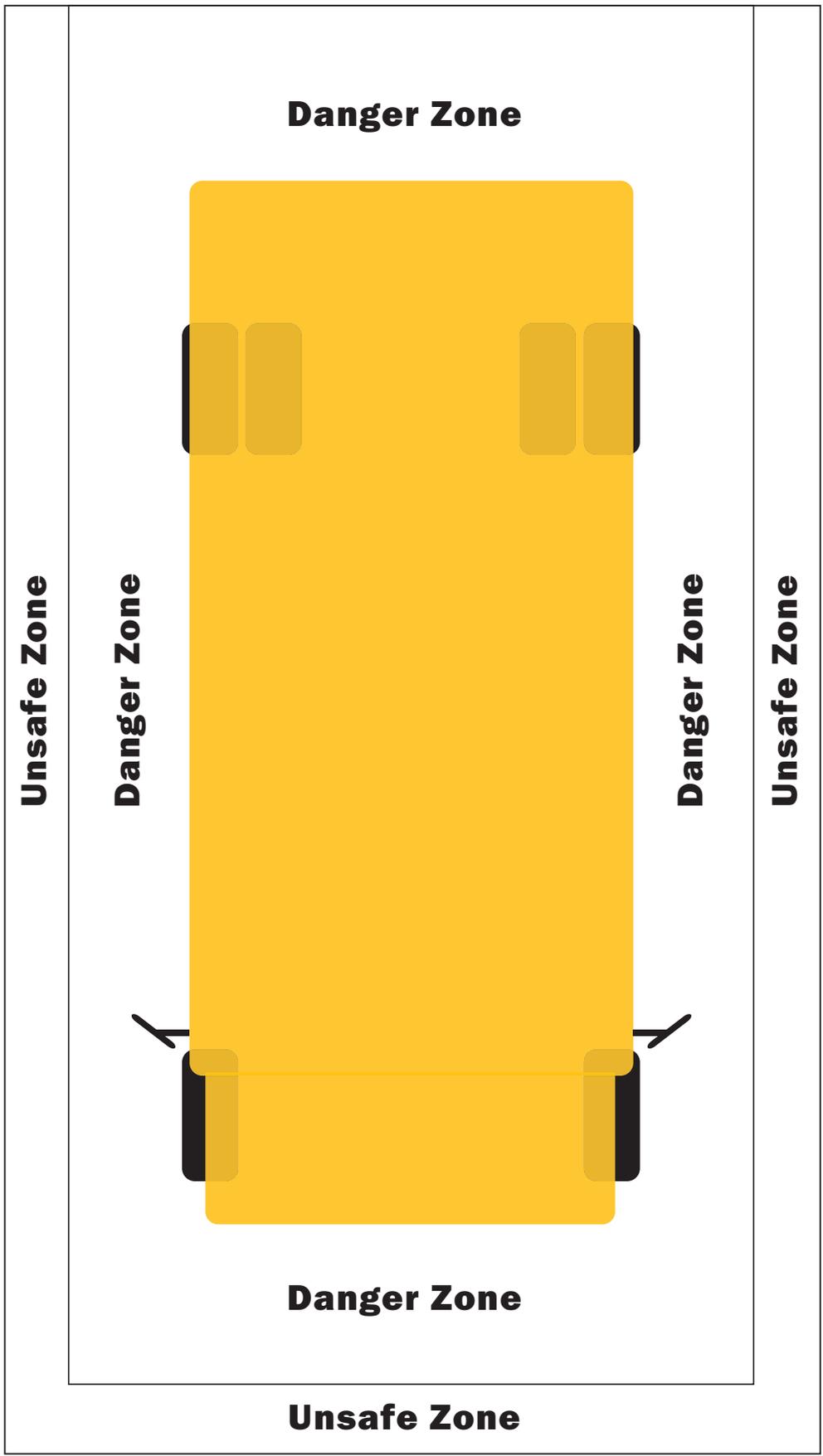


Mirrors Have Big Blind Areas



Mirrors Have Big Blind Areas





VI. Turnabout Maneuver and Backing the Bus

Driving in reverse/backing any vehicle is a risky and dangerous maneuver even under the best conditions. Backing a school bus should be avoided unless there is absolutely no other alternative. Improperly backing a school bus is historically the second most common cause of accidents involving a school bus. The contributing factors for accidents involving backing a school bus are:

- The size of the bus.
- The driver's limited vision causing "blind spots."
- The driver not following proper techniques for backing/driving in reverse.

The limited view from the driver's seat may create as much as a 45-foot blind spot behind a bus moving in reverse. Most school bus backing accidents are preventable when the proper safety procedures are followed and the driver has designated an assistant.

To safely back a bus (drive in reverse) when circumstances require so, the bus driver must use the following safety procedures required both in the bus and outside of the bus:

1. Assure there is a **clear sight distance of at least 500 feet** as required prior to deciding if it is possible to safely proceed for a turnabout.
2. **Before the bus moves**, designate a passenger to be the inside assistant. Direct him/her to walk to the back window and look behind the bus. The assistant must speak loudly to advise the bus driver of any hazards behind or near the back of the bus (people, structures, animals, other vehicles, poles, trees). A dependable student chosen at the discretion of the driver is acceptable. The bus driver may also choose to do a visual inspection, but always have the inside assistant continue to watch behind the bus while it is in reverse motion.
3. The bus driver must **assure that all student passengers are inside the bus** before backing the bus during any turnabout maneuver. Conduct an outside visual check and take a passenger count inside the bus.
4. **On school grounds, always designate an adult outside the bus** to visually check all areas around the bus and have the outside assistant to safely direct the bus driver both verbally and with hand motions. *Never back a bus on school grounds unless it is absolutely necessary.*
5. Always turn on the bus's four-way hazard warning lights before backing/driving in reverse. The light switch is usually on the steering column, similar to on a car.

A *turnabout* maneuver is usually conducted at an intersection of two roads/streets, or at an intersection of a road and a private driveway. The first rule to observe in a turnabout maneuver is to always back the bus from a primary road onto a secondary road.

A *primary road* is one on which traffic has the right-of-way. A *secondary road* usually has traffic control devices such as a stop or yield sign. However, if the intersection is a public road and a private driveway, the public road is the primary road. In completing the turnabout maneuver, the driver should remember the Oklahoma traffic law concerning backing a vehicle on a public road. A vehicle may be backed only as far as is necessary to enter the proper lane.

A bus driver should never back the bus across a lane of traffic.

To complete a turnabout from a primary road, a driver should reduce the speed of the bus to less than ten miles per hour, check for traffic approaching the intersection, and check for traffic in the intersection. When it is safe, proceed cautiously through the intersection. When the bus has passed through the intersection, the driver should bring the bus to a complete stop in the right lane of traffic with the rear of the bus clearing the intersection. When the backing portion of the maneuver is completed, the bus must remain stopped until the driver's assistant is safely seated.

It is illegal for a driver to put a school bus in motion when any person is standing in an aisle.

When the helper has been seated, the driver may select the proper gear, check traffic on the roadway, signal for a left turn, and when traffic permits, turn left to proceed.

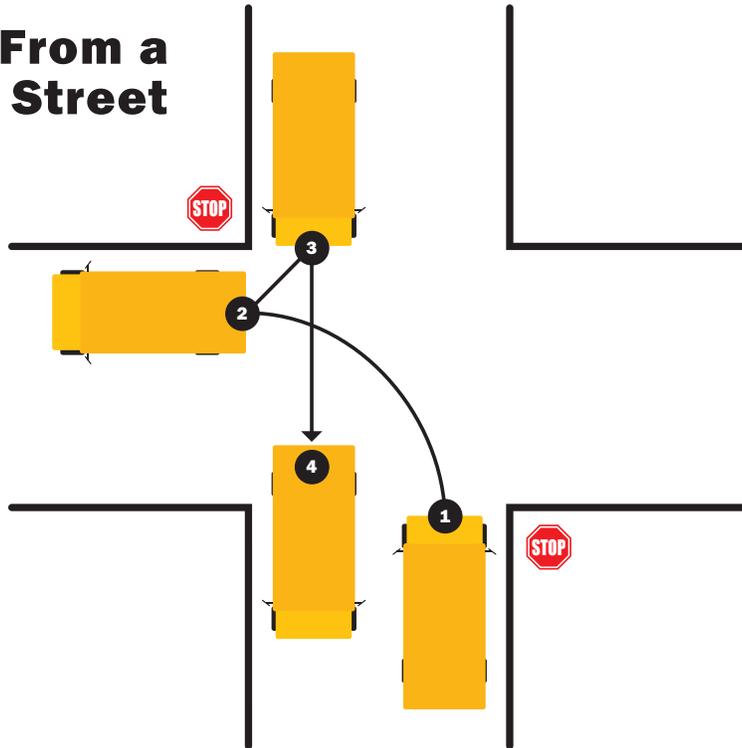
When a driver approaches an intersection in which a complete turnabout must be made, and the street is regulated by a traffic sign, it should alert the driver that they are on a secondary road. The driver should then reduce speed, signal a left turn, and obey the traffic sign. If there is no traffic present, the driver may then turn left, bringing the bus to a complete stop after clearing the intersection.

The driver should then ask the helper to go to a rear seat of the bus to assist in directions. Now the driver can shift to reverse gear and await backing instructions.

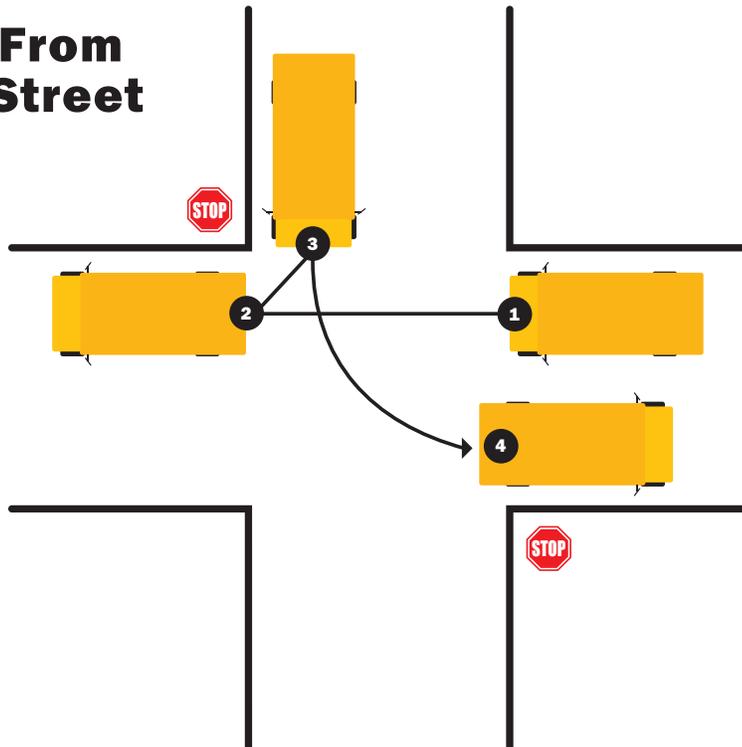
The backing portion of the maneuver will be conducted the same as instructed in the proceeding turnabout. When the backing is completed and the helper is seated, the driver may select the proper gear and when the traffic permits, proceed on the route.

It is important to remember to never drive a school bus in reverse unless it is absolutely necessary. If there is no other option but to move the bus in reverse, the bus driver must have someone to assist, both outside the bus and inside at a back bus window. In any circumstance, a school bus must never be driven in reverse across a lane of traffic, or out of a private road or secondary road.

Turnabout From a Secondary Street



Turnabout From a Primary Street



VII. Railroad Crossings

The worst school bus accident that can possibly occur is one involving a train. The tremendous size and massive weight of a train, at any speed, has the potential for a catastrophic collision. Statistics show that accidents involving a train and a school bus have resulted in serious injuries and/or death of the bus passengers. A moment's negligence by a bus driver at a railroad crossing could result in a tragic collision that costs many lives. At every railroad crossing remember: "Stop, look, and listen!"

Oklahoma state traffic law states that the driver of **any school bus carrying passengers** must:

- Stop at every railroad crossing (*with or without a train approaching*).
- Remain stopped until the school bus driver determines that there are no trains approaching the crossing, and it is safe to proceed.

The driver of a school bus carrying passengers must conduct the following steps at each train crossing:

- A. Three hundred (300) to one hundred (100) feet before approaching the nearest railroad crossing, the bus driver must activate the amber warning lights. Drivers of activity buses without amber warning lights shall use the 4-way hazard light.
- B. The driver must bring the school bus to a complete stop not closer than fifteen (15) feet and not farther than fifty (50) feet from the rail nearest to the bus.
- C. While stopped, the driver shall look and listen for any rail traffic. The driver must turn off any fans or blowers that may interfere with their ability to hear a train. All students must remain quiet at the crossing. The driver must open the window to his/her left and the student passenger's window in the first seat behind the service door must be lowered to assist the driver in looking and listening for a train. If a student is seated in that seat, he/she should be instructed to assist the driver in looking and listening for a train.
- D. **If the rail crossing is occupied by a train**, the driver must set the parking brake and place the gear shift in the neutral position until the rail crossing is clear.
- E. **If a train is in visual sight, or if any warning signals are activated, a school bus carrying one or more passengers shall not attempt to cross the tracks.** In poor visibility such as fog, a school bus driver shall not attempt to cross railroad tracks unless someone outside the bus checks for the presence of rail traffic. If a warning signal is activated, it is not legal for a school bus to cross a track unless a representative of the railroad, or a police officer, directs the school bus driver that it is safe to proceed.
- F. **If a train is not in visual sight, and no traffic signals indicate an approaching train**, the driver shall deactivate the amber warning lights and proceed with caution. School bus drivers driving a manual transmission are prohibited from shifting gears while crossing a railroad right-of-way, as it could cause the bus to stall on the tracks during a gear change.

If a school bus "stalls" on train tracks and there is a train approaching, the bus driver must:

1. Evacuate the bus immediately, using both the service door and the emergency exit.
2. Direct the children to walk at a 45-degree angle away from the tracks, in the direction of the approaching train. (*It has been proven that any debris from the impact of an accident would travel in a direction away from the children who are standing at this location.*)

If a school bus "stalls" on train tracks and there is no train approaching, the bus driver must follow these safety procedures:

1. Do not attempt to restart the bus engine after it stalls.
2. Immediately evacuate all passengers/children from the bus (following drill procedures).
3. Contact the school district for assistance with the disabled bus and transporting passengers.

In poor visibility such as fog, heavy rain, or sleet and snow, a school bus driver shall not attempt to cross railroad tracks unless/until someone outside the bus checks for the presence of rail traffic/train.

If a railway warning signal is activated, it is never legal for a school bus to be driven across the track unless a representative of the railroad or a police officer directs the school bus driver that it is safe to proceed. (This could only happen if a signal is activated in error due to a technical problem.)

VIII. Sound Driving Practices

A. The Driver

Good drivers not only watch their own actions, but also see what other drivers are doing that might cause problems. Well-trained school bus drivers must consider all vehicles and pedestrians within their vision as potential hazards. The bus drivers must know what to do to compensate for the mistakes of others. Skilled and efficient drivers are seldom involved in an emergency because of the ability to compensate for any and all errors, regardless of who makes the error.

There are at least six (6) factors that may require a bus driver to reduce bus speed, or increase the following distance: The conditions of the *driver and vehicle, traffic and road, and weather and light*.

The *condition of the driver* is the most important of these, as an alert driver should be able to adjust his/her driving adequately to meet each or all of the other five listed conditions.

B. School Bus Speed Limits

A school bus driver shall never exceed the speed limit prescribed by law, and should remember school bus drivers are subject to the *Oklahoma Vehicle Laws* which states:

“Any person driving a vehicle on a highway, shall drive the same at a careful and prudent speed, not greater than nor less than is reasonable and proper, having due regard to the traffic, surface, and width of the highway, and of any conditions then existing; and **no person shall drive any vehicle upon a highway at a speed greater than will permit him/her to bring it to a stop within the assured clear distance ahead.**”

No person shall drive a school bus exceeding a maximum speed of:

- ▶ 55 Miles per hour on a two-lane state highway
- ▶ 65 Miles per hour on a Turnpike, Interstate, or Multilane Divided Highway

A school bus driver must never exceed the posted speed limit. Many school bus routes will warrant a speed of no greater than 25 miles per hour. Whatever the posted speed limit, a school bus driver:

- Must always adapt driving to the conditions.
- Always drive at a speed that will allow the bus to stop safely within the clear distance ahead.
- Always approach intersections, curves, and hills at a speed that allows the bus to come to a safe stop within the clear distance ahead.

Remember that a bus carrying passengers has considerably more momentum than does a car with passengers; therefore, it will take considerably more force to come to a stop.

C. Following Distance and Stopping the Bus Safely

The *Oklahoma Vehicle Laws* states: "FOLLOWING TOO CLOSELY—The driver of a motor vehicle shall not follow another vehicle more closely than is reasonable and prudent, having due regard for the speed of such vehicles and the traffic upon and the condition of the highway." (47 O.S. § 11-310)

The area required for the stopping distance of a bus can be called a danger zone. Traffic law sets a minimum following distance, if conditions allow. School buses are included in the "truck following distance law" that states:

- When traveling on any roadway, the driver of a vehicle with **more than six tires** must maintain a following distance of 300 feet (about one block).
- A bus with **six or less tires** should maintain a distance of at least 200 feet.

It is recommended that **school buses traveling in a convoy** should maintain a distance of more than 300 feet between buses due to the nature of the cargo, the children. However, there are circumstances when road and traffic conditions may not allow such a distance to be maintained between buses traveling in a convoy.

The degree of difficulty and distance required to stop a bus safely are influenced by:

1. Condition of the road.
2. Size and weight of the bus.
3. Tires and brakes on the bus.
4. Speed of the bus.
5. Alertness of the bus driver.

Reaction time is the time it takes to *respond* to a given situation. The average adult driver's reaction time is approximately 1.5 seconds. When an object moves into the path of a moving bus, the driver's reaction time to stop the bus includes these steps:

1. Recognize the danger.
2. Remove foot from the accelerator.
3. Apply the brakes.

Force of impact is determined by weight and acceleration. If a soft yielding object (such as a hedge) is hit rather than a comparatively solid fixed object (such as a concrete wall), the force of impact is much less, even though the vehicle speed at impact is the same. If the bus strikes an object that has the same resistance, such as a car moving about the same speed as the bus (or a concrete post or utility pole), the force of impact varies at the "square of the speed."

The striking force increases by four times for a bus traveling at twice the speed under the same conditions. Triple the bus's speed and the bus's striking force will be nine times greater.

The force of impact calculation example to remember is: (*miles per hour = mph*)

- ▶ Weight x Acceleration at the time of impact = Force of Impact
- ▶ Driver Weighing 100 lbs x 30 mph = 3,000 lbs of Weight upon Impact

The striking force builds up very rapidly with increased vehicle speed. Although a driver may have little or no control over the resistance of an object hit in an accident, they can reduce the severity of an accident by reducing the bus speed before impact.

D. Seat Belt Laws

According to Oklahoma state law, a seat belt must be worn by school bus drivers anytime they are driving a bus. A seat belt will prevent the bus driver from being thrown from the driver's seat, which will result in loss of control of the bus. Passenger seat belts in a school bus are not required by law, but are allowed.

E. School Bus Head Lights

Night driving is a concern to every school bus driver. Even if the driver is not required to drive for extracurricular evening activities, during winter months the daylight hours are shorter, so a route driver may be required to pick up children before sunrise in the mornings, and will be taking them home after sunset. Therefore, all school bus drivers should be concerned about how well they see at night. Many people who normally have good vision during the daytime can become vision impaired at night if their eyes do not adjust well to dim lighting. The driver should notify a supervisor of any vision changes or problems before continuing to drive a school bus for any reason. (A vision test is part of the required annual physical.)

As state traffic law requires when driving in the dark, a bus driver must dim their bus lights at least 1,000 feet (about three blocks) before meeting an oncoming-vehicle. If the oncoming driver "signals" for dim lights at even a much greater distance, it is always the safest thing to do to respond to their signal. The oncoming driver could be affected to the extent that the glare cannot be resisted even at one-half mile. Refusal of the other driver to dim his/her vehicle lights is no excuse for a bus driver not to dim the bus lights. In fog or heavy rain or snow, the bus's low-beam lights should be utilized.

Do not use high-beam lights in fog, rain, or snow, as the bright lights can actually reflect back.

F. Passing Other Vehicles

Driving on the left-hand side of the road is permitted for (1) passing and overtaking when it is safe to do so, or (2) when the right side is closed for repairs.

A school bus should never pass another vehicle when driving on hills, curves, in school zones, or in crosswalks. When a driver's view is obstructed, it is illegal to pass on a hill or curve or within 100 feet of any bridge, viaduct, or tunnel. It is also illegal to pass **within 100 feet** of any railroad crossing or intersection. When a vehicle appears and overtakes another vehicle, the driver of the vehicle being overtaken should keep to the right and not increase vehicle speed.

G. Steering Techniques

The steering technique called *shuffle*, or *push-pull*, is used by placing the left hand at the nine o'clock (9:00) position and the right hand at the three o'clock (3:00) position on the steering wheel. Both hands stay on the steering wheel at all times and never cross over each other while steering to make turns.

The shuffle steering method is approved by the Department of Public Safety (DPS) for the Oklahoma Commercial Driver License driving test.

Not recommended is the *hand-over-hand* steering technique, as it can frequently result in loss of vehicle control due to over-correction. If this happens, a driver must be prepared to counter-steer in the opposite direction, to attempt to keep the bus safely on the road.

If the front bus wheels accidentally get on a rough shoulder of the road, the driver should steer straight ahead and gradually return safely to the roadway. (Do not suddenly jerk the steering wheel.)

H. Traffic Control Devices

Traveling roads with no traffic signs may be common for many school bus drivers, although highways and city streets do have signs and signals to regulate traffic. Consequently, the bus driver must be the judge as to when it is safe to pass. School bus drivers will be on all types of roads which require their full attention.

When at an intersection with no traffic controls, the *Oklahoma Vehicle Laws* states:

“When two vehicles approach an intersection at approximately the same time, and there are no traffic signs or signals, the vehicle on the left shall yield to the vehicle on the right.” (47 O.S. § 11-401)

“When two or more vehicles stop at stop signs at an intersection, at about the same time, the vehicle on the right would have the right-of-way.” (47 O.S. § 11-403)

A traffic signal red light blinking off and on always means to bring the bus to a complete stop. The driver should then check traffic in all directions and proceed only when it is safe to do so.

Statistics show that approximately 70% of all accidents happen at intersections, and that the left turn is the most hazardous of all intersection maneuvers.

I. Right and Left Turns

Making right and left turns with a large school bus is a difficult maneuver. The position of the bus on the roadway is the first concern of the bus driver when making a turn. For a right turn, the bus should be in the lane next to the curb; for a left turn, the lane nearest to the center of the road.

Accident statistics show that many school bus accidents have occurred within an intersection while the bus is making a turn. A proper turn signal is essential. Oklahoma law requires a bus driver to:

- Signal at least 100 feet before making a turn in an urban area.
- Signal at least 300 feet before making a turn in a rural area.
(Most vehicles commonly travel at higher speeds in rural areas.)

A bus driver should signal well in advance of a turn so that other drivers close by will know what to expect. In Oklahoma, **the speed for a school bus to make a turn** should not exceed ten (10) miles per hour. In keeping the bus speed at ten miles per hour or under, the bus driver is not only observing sound rules of safety, but is also conserving bus equipment.

If a street or road has no visible lane markings, the driver should always try to mentally envision marked lanes, and stay in their correct lane area. To avoid collisions, the safest habit is to drive every road as if it has marked lanes.

School bus drivers carry small packages of live cargo, precious children, which can “shift” easily. Turning faster than ten miles per hour (10 mph) may cause all of the weight to shift to one side which can be instrumental in the bus driver losing control of the bus. It also may cause a child to be thrown against the interior side of the bus, causing injury.

Before actually making a turn, the bus driver should shift to the gear required to make the turn. A bus driver should **never shift gears in the process of turning**. Also, remember that with oversized vehicles such as school buses, it is often necessary to make wide swings in executing a turn.

To safely make a **right turn** when driving school bus too long to stay in the proper lane:

- Approach the intersection with the bus in the lane next to the curb, signal in advance.
- Make a wide swing after the bus is in the intersection, so that when the bus is outside the proper lane, the bus driver will be facing any possible interfering traffic. (This should prevent other vehicles from passing on the right while the bus is making a turn.)

To safely make a **left turn**, take the same precautions that apply for the right turn. A left turn should be made only when oncoming traffic does not constitute a hazard.

- Drive/place the bus into the proper lane for a left turn; execute the left turn signal in advance.
- Do not shift to a higher gear until the turn is completed.
- After the approaching traffic has passed and the way is clear, proceed to turn left. (Most left turns will be made from the bus being in a stopped position.)
- A completed left turn should place the bus in the lane nearest the center, and should be completed without interfering with any other lane of traffic.

J. Avoiding Accidents

Accidents occur most commonly on straight roadways, contrary to the popular belief that the hilly country roads are more susceptible to accidents. One possible reason for a high number of accidents on straight roads could be that drivers can become complacent with the monotony of staring down a long stretch of road over a long period of time. The lines on a road can have a hypnotic affect. Mental and physical fatigue of the driver can also be a contributing factor.

Intersection accidents are mostly avoidable, and fall into one of two categories:

1. Collision when turning right or left. The alert school bus driver is aware that the size of the bus requires a greater turning radius and will not attempt to turn until assured that the traffic situation affords the bus adequate space to safely complete a turn.
2. Collision from failure to obey the traffic control devices, or failure to yield.

An alert school bus driver will “read” every intersection before proceeding to determine if it is safe. An alert bus driver should be aware of approaching vehicles driven with a distracted driver who may not obey the traffic signals.

Skidding can be caused by many types of conditions including:

- gravel roads
- rough pavement
- rain, snow, ice
- narrow bridges

The best way to counteract an adverse condition is to make the appropriate reduction in speed. Although, in bringing the bus out of a skid, the driver should keep their foot on the accelerator and not on the brake. Turning the front wheels in the direction that the rear wheels are skidding will help also. The chief reason for a vehicle skidding on any surface is from driving the vehicle too fast for the existing conditions.

Before entering an intersection, the bus driver should always:

- Reduce the bus speed.
- Check the traffic from all directions.
- Expect the unexpected and never let their guard down.

A good driving motto to remember is: “Drive defensively, not offensively.” If an accident does occur and a child is injured, it will not be any consolation to the bus driver to be “in the right.”

IX. Accident Procedures

Accidents are caused by human error ninety percent (90%) of the time. Poor roads and vehicle defects account for the remaining ten percent (10%).

Prior to any other responsibility at any accident scene, the school bus driver must always take care of the children first. Postponing first aid at an accident scene could turn a minor accident into a fatal one for the injured person(s).

A. Definition of a School Bus Accident

1. A motor vehicle accident resulting in any personal injury, death, property damage, or damage to one or more motor vehicles. Incurring disabling vehicle damage as a result of the accident, requiring the vehicle(s) to be transported away from the scene by a tow truck or other vehicle.
2. A collision involving any vehicle, any pupil, or a school bus at any time during the loading or unloading process.

B. Accident Report Terminology

Driver – The person driving or in physical control of the vehicle.

Intersection – An area that contains a crossing or connection of two or more roadways not classified as a driveway access, and is embraced within the prolongation of the lateral curb lines or, if not, the lateral boundary lines of the roadways.

Where the distance along a roadway between two areas meeting this criteria is less than ten meters (33 feet), the two areas and the roadway connecting them are considered to be parts of a single intersection (American National Standards Institute, ANSI D16.1, Classification of Motor Traffic Accidents).

Passenger loading and unloading area – Any location the school bus stops to load or unload pupil passengers.

Pupil – A person who attends an educational institution.

School bus types – There are two basic ways to determine whether a vehicle is a school bus: (1) by the vehicle’s function, and/or (2) by the vehicle’s structural design.

All school bus drivers should use the following procedures if involved in an accident:

1. **Stop the bus, secure the accident scene, and render aid.** To some drivers it may seem unnecessary to state the requirement to “stop the bus.” There have been many serious and even fatal accidents where an involved driver never stopped at the scene of the accident. Remember, if the school bus is stopped in a hazardous position, it may require evacuating the students from the bus and directing them to a safe location away from the scene. The primary responsibility of the driver is always the welfare of the students. If it becomes necessary to move the bus, the location of the bus should be marked by placing the emergency reflectors as prescribed by the *Oklahoma Vehicle Laws*.
2. Call/send for the nearest police officer immediately if the accident results in damage, injury, or death, and remain at the scene until an officer arrives. Notify local police if the accident is within a town; if in a rural area, call the state highway patrol. If possible, do not move the vehicles involved in the accident; leave them as they are until the police arrive. However, if the vehicles are creating an extreme hazard, mark the position of the tires before moving the vehicles and wait for the arrival of police.
3. The bus driver should be prepared to provide the following information: name, age, residence address, and driver license number. Also provide the make, model, and year of the bus, license plate (tag) number, and the bus’s registered owner and address, which is normally the employing school district.

State law requires only that this information be furnished *upon request*. Law does not require the bus driver to force the other driver to accept/take their information. Many drivers do not know that they should exchange information. A driver involved in an accident may become excited or upset and simply forget to request the information. If a parked vehicle is involved and you cannot locate the owner, you should always leave your written information where the owner will find it. Also write down the parked vehicle’s description, tag number, and location for your records.

C. Placement of Emergency Reflectors

It is important for school bus drivers to remember where the reflectors are stored in their bus. Normally they will be kept in a compartment near the front or rear of the bus. When the school bus is involved in an accident or disabled for any reason, the bus driver must appropriately place the required emergency reflectors on the roadway as soon as possible, whether it is day or night.

On a **two-way road or undivided roadway**, use three reflectors which must be placed as follows:

- **First reflector** must be 100 feet in front of the bus, in the same lane as the bus.
- **Second reflector** must be 100 feet behind the bus (about forty paces) in the same lane.
- **Third reflector** must be as near to the bus as possible on the traffic side, within 10 feet of the bus’s bumper *closest to approaching vehicles/traffic*. Reflector must face toward traffic.

On a **one-way road or divided roadway**, use only two reflectors (no reflector in front of the bus):

- **First reflector** must be 100 feet behind the bus, approximately forty paces.
- **Second reflector** must be 200 feet (2/3 of a block) from the bus in the center of the same lane as the bus, with reflector facing traffic approaching the bus.

On a **curve, hillcrest, or other such obstruction**: Should a bus become disabled within 500 feet of a curve, a hill or other such visual obstruction, the bus driver must place a reflector facing the curve or hill at least 100 feet from the disabled bus, but not more than 500 feet. Keep in mind that approaching drivers on a hill or a curve will need ample warning to avoid the disabled bus.

X. Bus Evacuation Procedures and Evacuation Drills

Each year approximately 7,500 Oklahoma school buses travel a total of about seventy (70) million miles. It is imperative that each school district in Oklahoma have an emergency procedure policy for a school bus accident situation. Every pupil who rides a school bus, whether daily or occasionally should receive instructions for safe emergency evacuation procedures. (*Bus evacuation procedures for Special Needs students are in the back of this manual.*)

The Oklahoma statewide school bus average daily haul of K-12th grade public school children has consistently exceeded 350,000 pupils. Due to the large number of pupils being transported and the ever increasing number of highway accidents, there is a real need to instruct pupils on how to properly evacuate a school bus in an emergency. Bus evacuation drills can save children's lives.

An Oklahoma State Board regulation governing public school buses states: "At least twice during the school year, each pupil who is transported in a school vehicle *shall be* instructed in safe riding practices and participate in emergency evacuation drills. This instruction *should be* conducted during the first two weeks of each semester."

Not knowing what to do in an emergency situation on a school bus could result in injury or death of the passengers and/or driver. Pupils who have not received evacuation instructions may panic in an accident situation and unknowingly block a bus's emergency door. Pupils should be shown the safest way to exit by jumping from the rear emergency exit door of the school bus. A demonstration on safely exiting through a bus window should also be included. School bus dealers and bus manufacturers should be a good source for additional guidance.

Reasons for Emergency Evacuation of a School Bus

- A. Fire or danger of fire:** If you are near an existing fire and unable to move the bus, or are near the presence of gasoline or other combustible material, it is considered dangerous and pupils should be evacuated. The bus should be stopped and evacuated immediately if the engine or any portion of the bus is on fire. Pupils should be moved to a safe place away from the bus, at least 100 feet or more, and instructed to remain there until the driver has determined that the danger has passed.
- B. Unsafe bus position:** When the bus is stopped because of an accident, mechanical failure, road conditions, or human failure, the driver must determine immediately whether it is safer for pupils to evacuate or remain on the bus.
- C. Mandatory evacuations:** The driver must evacuate the bus when:
1. The final stopping point is in the path of a train or adjacent to railroad tracks.
 2. The stopped position of the bus may change and increase the danger (e.g., a bus comes to rest near a body of water or at a precipice where it could still move and go into the water or over a cliff). The driver should be certain that the evacuation is carried out in a manner which affords maximum safety for the pupils.
 3. The stopped position of the bus is such that there is danger of a collision.
- D. Visibility:** Evacuate if the bus is not visible to other drivers for 300 feet (1 block). In normal traffic conditions, or when a bus is positioned over a hill or around a curve, the bus should be clearly visible to others for a distance of at least 300 feet.

E. Important Factors Pertaining to School Bus Evacuation Drills

All bus evacuation drills should be supervised by the principal or by persons assigned to act in a supervisory capacity. Safety of the student passengers is of the utmost importance and must be a school bus driver's first consideration. Every school bus driver is responsible for the safety of their passengers.

Bus Evacuation Procedures for School Bus Drivers:

- a. Turn off ignition switch/shut down engine.
- b. Set emergency brake.
- c. Summon help when and where needed.
- d. Use kick-out windows or emergency escape exits.
- e. Set warning devices.
- f. Open and close doors, and account for all pupils passing his/her station.
- g. Help small pupils out of the bus.
- h. Use electronic voice equipment to summon help.
- i. Perform other assignments as required.

Guidelines for School Bus Evacuation Drills

1. Bus evacuation drills should be scheduled regularly, similar to scheduling school fire drills. Within the first two weeks of each semester is recommended. A convenient time is when the bus arrives at school with the pupils still aboard.
2. Bus evacuation drills should be restricted to school property and conducted under the supervision of school officials.
3. Methods of bus evacuation should be varied during drills. Practice with students exiting the front door only, the rear door only, and using both doors.
4. The driver should stay in the bus during a drill. The bus driver must set the parking brake, shift to the proper gear, and turn the engine off.
5. Pupils should leave all personal items such as lunches and books *on the bus* when they exit during a drill. The objective is to get pupils off the bus safely, in the shortest time possible and in an orderly fashion.
6. Pupils should travel a distance of at least 100 feet from the bus in an emergency drill and remain there until given further directions.
7. All pupils should participate in the drill including those who ride only occasionally on special trips (sports activities, field trips, etc.).
8. Each pupil should be instructed in proper safety precautions. Pupils should be instructed how and where to obtain adult assistance in an emergency.
9. Written emergency instructions and telephone numbers should be posted in the bus and be easily accessible to students.
10. Utilize three different scenarios of school bus emergency evacuation drills:
 - a. Everyone exits through the front entrance door.
 - b. Everyone exits through the rearmost emergency door.
 - c. Passengers in the front half of the bus exit through the front door; and the passengers seated in the rear half of the bus exit through the rearmost bus door

All rear engine buses are equipped with a left side emergency door (in lieu of a rear emergency door). Some states also require side emergency doors in addition to rear emergency doors. Students should be familiar with the operation of both side and rear emergency windows, and roof hatches. During bus evacuation drills, all pupil passengers should practice opening all bus exits (doors and windows) to ensure their ability to operate such devices. Every school bus driver shall ensure that the assigned pupils are familiar with the emergency exit setup of the student's assigned bus.

XI. Bus Evacuation Procedures on Activity Trips

In order to ensure the safety of school bus passengers in an actual emergency, every school bus driver assigned to transport students on activity trips or field trips, shall assign a passenger evacuation team prior to each trip. The team may consist of teachers, coaches, students, or any other passenger.

Passengers assigned to evacuation teams must be seated where they can effectively carry out their responsibilities in an emergency. Each evacuation team will consist of at least the following:

- A. A passenger assigned to set the parking brake, turn off the engine, turn on warning flashers and to call in on the radio or other means, and report the incident to the Transportation Department, in case the driver is unable to do so.
- B. A passenger assigned to lead passengers to a safe location at least 100 feet from the bus and for taking the first-aid kit off the bus.
- C. Two passengers assigned to stand outside the bus, next to the front door, to help students exit the bus and to take the fire extinguisher from the bus for possible use.
- D. Two passengers assigned to stand outside the bus next to the rear door, to help students exit the bus.
- E. Prior to each activity/field trip, the evacuation team shall be shown the following:
 1. Location and instructions for use of the fire extinguisher.
 2. Location of the first-aid kit.
 3. Location of the roadside warning reflectors.
 4. Location and instructions on use of all emergency exits.
 5. How to shut off the bus engine and set the parking brake.

XII. Student Discipline

A. Student Discipline on a School Bus

Well-behaved student passengers are a necessity for the safe operation of any school bus. Disruptive student passengers could ultimately be the cause of injury or death if an accident occurred due to distracting the bus driver. Serious student discipline problems on the bus should be immediately reported to a supervisor.

The method of negative discipline known as “thou shall not,” has proved to be an effective method of maintaining control inside a school bus. But if the negative approach is all that is utilized, the bus driver may soon lose the control needed to be a safe driver. The most effective method is to incorporate the positive disciplines, “thou shall,” as well. The district policy should clearly define what students cannot do and should do while riding a school bus, whether it be for a daily bus route or an activity trip. The same basic rules of acceptable student behavior for the classroom can be applied to a school bus. Bus passenger rules should be provided in writing.

B. Purpose of a Discipline Policy

1. To provide an orderly environment inside the bus in order to eliminate distractions that could interfere in the safe operation of driving the school bus.
2. To assure pleasant and safe conditions to student bus passengers at all times.
3. To seek the means to resolve possible student conflicts on the bus before they occur. Specific seat assignment is useful in many cases to control student behavior. The driver can administer corrective measures as far as district policy allows, but they should not administer corporal punishment.

4. To establish a chain of command within the district to handle student behavior problems occurring on a bus. The bus driver should report any problems that require student discipline to their supervisor and/or principal.
5. To make certain all bus drivers know how to correctly handle situations that happen on a route or trip. Before dealing with a major discipline problem, the bus driver must always bring the bus to a *complete stop* in a safe location.
6. To establish acceptable student punishment guidelines. Keep in mind, all students should not be punished for the offense of one or two.
7. To encourage a positive attitude for all school bus drivers. The driver must be able to assure orderly behavior but should avoid being overly negative in dealing with students. A positive friendly attitude is helpful; sarcasm is not.

C. School Bus Passenger Rules

There are fifteen school bus rider rules. Remember, riding a school bus is a privilege for students that may be taken away for not abiding by the school bus rider rules.

Prior to the school bus arriving, students should:

1. Arrive on time at their designated school bus stop; it keeps the bus on schedule.
2. Stay out of the road or street at all times while waiting for the bus.
3. Respect other pupils, residents, and property while waiting on the bus.
4. Approach the bus stop area with caution.
5. Wait until the bus is at a complete stop before attempting to walk toward it or begin to enter the bus.
6. Provide written school authorization when asking to be discharged at a location other than their assigned regular bus stop.

While on the school bus, students should:

1. Keep all body parts inside the bus.
2. Refrain from eating and drinking on the bus.
3. Never use any form of tobacco, alcohol, or drugs.
4. Assist in keeping the bus safe and clean at all times.
5. Remember that loud talking, laughing, or unnecessary confusion diverts the driver's attention and may result in a serious accident. (The life they save may be their own.)
6. Treat all bus equipment with respect. (Any damage to bus seats, windows, etc., should be paid for by the offender.)
7. Never tamper with the bus or any bus equipment.
8. Keep the aisles clear of books, lunches, coats, etc.
9. Be considerate of the safety of smaller children passengers.
10. Never throw objects out of or inside the bus.
11. Remain in their seat while the bus is in motion.
12. Refrain from horseplay and fighting.
13. Show courtesy to fellow pupils, the bus driver, patrol officers, and bus driver assistants.
14. Remain very quiet when the bus approaches a railroad crossing.
15. Stay in the bus during a road emergency, except when it could be hazardous to their safety.

After leaving the bus, students should:

1. Walk to an area at least ten (10) feet in front of the bus, stop, check traffic, wait for the bus driver's signal, then cross the road.
2. Go home immediately, making certain to stay safely away from traffic.
3. Help look after the safety of any younger children they accompany.

School Bus Passengers on Extracurricular Trips

The school bus passenger rules apply to all trips under school sponsorship. According to State Board of Education policy, adult sponsors riding a school bus for extracurricular trips should be designated and approved by the local district school officials.

XIII. Transportation for Special Needs Students

An orientation for transporting students with special needs should be scheduled at the beginning of each school year. Attendees should be the district employees responsible for children with special needs, including bus drivers, teachers, school nurses, principals, and other personnel responsible for adapting the school program to meet the educational needs of students.

The transportation orientation should include special needs student information pertinent to the school bus driver regarding the student's physical, mental, and emotional needs to assure a successful bus ride for their assigned students.

The district's special needs staff should be aware of the individual concerns of those students riding a school bus and should share such information with the bus drivers. Some common concerns are listed below, but it is not an all-inclusive list.

- A. A communication system must be clearly defined so that information can be shared quickly and efficiently, even on a day-to-day basis if necessary, between drivers and personnel responsible for the educational program of students with special needs. A two-way radio system is good for communication between the driver and school.
- B. Prior to the first bus run, drivers should be told of students with any type of disability who may require a driver's assistance to get on/off the bus due to braces, prosthesis, vision, hearing, etc.
- C. **The parent (or their designee) is responsible for "door-to-curb," "curb-to-door," and "street crossing" of the child to the loading and unloading point, and should be advised to use extreme caution.**
- D. The bus driver needs to be told of their passengers with epilepsy, diabetes, cerebral palsy, etc. Specific procedures for pupils with such conditions should be clearly outlined and understood by the driver in case of a medical emergency on the bus.
- E. Bus drivers should be trained in the proper way of lifting students with orthopedic braces, etc., and the techniques for strapping such students in the bus seat to assure a safe ride in consideration of their specific needs. Techniques should conform to what is **required or recommended by the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP)**. Drivers should also be aware of the objectives of the IEP. For example, if the child can walk independently but prefers the luxury of being carried, the driver should abide by the program established for the benefit of the child.
- F. If there is a student riding a school bus who needs social support or emotional support (for any reason), their district's teachers should communicate the student's needs with the bus driver and develop techniques to ensure the daily commute to and from school is safe and successful. Teachers should also reinforce the educational objective for that particular student.

G. Socialization is necessary for all children. Bus drivers should share in the responsibility of assisting children and youth with disabilities to remain as “normalized” as possible with other students by developing a posture of expectation, kindness, and understanding of each individual’s need while under their responsibility to and from school or other school-related activities.

XIV. Evacuating a Special Needs Students School Bus

A. Nonemergency Evacuation Procedures

1. Bus drivers must notify the school of their location as soon as possible via their two-way radio or by cellular phone.
2. When a replacement “back-up” bus arrives, the driver and assistant should transfer the ambulatory students from the disabled bus into the usable bus sent by the district.
3. One at a time, each student in a wheelchair should be unloaded from the disabled bus and taken to and secured into the usable bus, before the next wheelchair student is transferred bus to bus. It is not safe to unload every wheelchair passenger from a disabled bus, and then begin loading them into the usable bus.

B. Emergency Evacuation Procedures

1. The bus driver must notify the school of their location and the exact nature of the problem as soon as possible via their two-way radio or by cellular phone.
2. The special needs bus assistant should open the rear door and spread a fire blanket on the floor of the bus.
3. The driver must help the assistant in releasing the students from their seat belts.
4. In some emergency situations, **seat belt cutters** must be used to facilitate a quicker removal of students from a wheelchair or from a Child Safety Restraint System (CSRS).
5. Students in wheelchairs are placed on a blanket one at a time and moved to the emergency door.
6. The driver should stay in the bus and pass each student, one at a time, to the assistant standing outside the bus. This procedure is repeated until all wheelchair students are off the bus.
7. The driver and assistant can then assist any ambulatory students that have not previously been able to evacuate the bus.
8. Move all students at least 100 feet (1/3 block) away from the bus to a safe location.
9. Next, account for all students being transported.
10. Only if it is safe to do so, the driver or assistant can return to the bus to retrieve the First-Aid Kit and the Body Fluid Cleanup Kit.

■ EMERGENCY EVACUATION DRILL FOR SCHOOL BUS PASSENGERS

(This form should be kept on file at the local district for one year.)

COUNTY _____ DISTRICT _____ SITE _____

DATE _____ DRILL BEGINNING TIME _____ DRILL ENDING TIME _____

- ▶ A school bus emergency evacuation drill is to be conducted **twice a year** according to the Oklahoma State Board of Education Regulations (OAC 210:30-5-1).
- ▶ It is recommended that a bus evacuation drill be conducted during the **first two weeks of each semester**, once in the fall semester and once in the spring semester.
- ▶ Evacuation drill procedures are on pages 34-36 of the Oklahoma School Bus Driver Manual.

BUS NUMBER _____ BUS TAG NUMBER _____ ROUTE (if applicable) _____

_____ NUMBER OF STUDENT PARTICIPANTS
(Optional: Student names can be attached to this form.)

This report verifies that students received instruction on safe bus riding practices and emergency bus evacuation procedures as required by the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER IN ATTENDANCE (SIGNATURE) _____

ADMINISTRATOR(S) IN ATTENDANCE (SIGNATURE) _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS: _____

ATTACH AN ATTENDANCE LIST (Optional: Students can be identified by classroom, teacher, etc. below.)

STUDENTS IN ATTENDANCE WERE FROM: _____

■ NOTES

■ NOTES



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