



Emergency Evacuations Procedure

Best Practices

Ensure that instruction in passenger safety, including student participation in emergency evacuation drills, is an integral part of the school curriculum. Instruction should comply with state requirements and/or Federal Highway Safety Guideline 17 and with 45 CFR 1310, as may be applicable, and should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- (1) At least once each school semester, provide all students transported to and from schools in a school bus or multifunction school activity bus with instruction in the location and operation of all emergency exits. Also, provide supervised emergency exit drills to each student transported to or from schools in a school bus or multifunction school activity bus.
- (2) Before departure on each activity trip, provide all students transported in a school bus, school-chartered bus or multifunction school activity bus instruction on the location of all emergency exits and demonstrations of their operation. Instruction should include a general review of safe riding practices, rules and procedures (*SISBO 2018*).

Emergency evacuation drills are required and should be conducted at least twice during each school year. Records verifying that drills were conducted need to be kept on file. Students must be prepared to evacuate in the event of a real emergency, such as danger of fire, drowning, or if the bus is in an unsafe position. The emergency evacuation drills should be as close to the real thing as possible. The drill should be discussed with the students prior to the day of the drill. The drill should follow the evacuation procedures for the appropriate exits used. Stand facing students and tell them they are having an emergency evacuation drill. Remind students to leave books, lunches, etc. on the bus. The drill can be timed if you desire, but most important is that the students learn to exit the bus calmly, orderly, and as quickly as possible. It is important that they follow your directions. When the drill is over have the students get back on the bus. Spend a few moments discussing the drill. Point out the good things that occurred and discuss the ways to improve the drill.

Bus Evacuations

The primary responsibility of the school bus driver is to provide safe transportation for students. Being involved in a traffic collision is always difficult. No driver expects a traffic collision or vehicle breakdown. There is no such thing as an "on purpose" incident; almost every traffic collision is "an accident, to some extent." All school bus drivers are instructed in the safe operation of the school bus. Part of this operation is the safe evacuation of the bus in the event of a collision or emergency.

The driver will evacuate the bus if:

- There is any indication that the bus is on fire or in danger of catching fire.
- The bus cannot be moved to a safe place out of harm's way.
- A natural emergency requires evacuation.
- Any time the driver believes that the safety of the children is in jeopardy.

The most important part of a safe school bus evacuation is developing and practicing a safe plan before an emergency actually occurs. Bus staff should have an emergency evacuation plan which considers the individual capabilities and needs of each student; the type of behavior which might be exhibited during an emergency evacuation; and the type of wheelchair or support equipment being used for students.

Some issues to consider when establishing an evacuation plan:

- Which students are able to help, and to what extent?
- How to deal with individual emergencies such as seizures during the evacuation process
- Whether students should be evacuated in their wheelchairs or removed from their wheelchairs before evacuation
- How to disconnect or cut wheelchair securement and occupant protection equipment, including belts, trays, and other support equipment
- Identify students who may have a tendency to run away after an evacuations; evacuate these students last
- Know the survival time of a student that requires life support equipment or medical care procedures and if such a service can be interrupted or delayed during the evacuation process. Plan accordingly.

Three methods of evacuating a school bus in emergency situations:

- Front door evacuation
- Emergency exit evacuation (rear, side, and roof hatches)
- Front and rear door evacuation
- Individual district policies will determine which of the evacuation plans will be used during a drill.
- Evacuating Non-ambulatory Students from the Special Needs Bus
- Students who ride to and from school in wheelchairs or other mobile seating devices must be given special consideration when it is necessary to evacuate them from a school bus, either in a drill or in a real emergency.

- A good practice would be to develop written plans for the safe evacuation of students with unique and special needs who are transported by school bus. It is essential that everyone on the bus knows the plan of evacuation and clearly understands their role during an evacuation.

Resource: Idaho's School Driver Training Classroom Curriculum 2012, Sec. 11

Passengers on activity or field trips should receive emergency evacuation instructions prior to departure. When evacuating the bus follow these procedures:

Evacuating through the front door:

- Set park brake.
- Turn off engine.
- Put transmission in reverse (manual transmission) or neutral (automatic transmission)
- Turn on four-way hazard lamps (if operable).
- Driver should stand and face students.
- Test front service door to see if it is working before making announcements.
- Get the student's attention – speak clearly and loudly.
- Evaluate the situation. Determine if there are any injuries, and determine a safe waiting area to move students to.
- Announce to the students to exit through the front, give the first aid kit, fire extinguisher and reflective triangles to responsible students.
- Check to make sure all students are out.
- Assist the injured to the best of your abilities.
- Notify proper authorities.

Evacuating through the rear and/or side door:

- Steps 1 through 4 in the front evacuations need to be followed.
- Assign two "helpers" to assist students.
- Instruct the helpers to "sit" on the floor at the emergency door and "scoot" out of the door onto the ground.
- One helper is positioned so that the emergency door will not swing against the students. The other helper is positioned on the other side of door area.

- The helpers need to hold a hand open, palm upward and extended for the student to place his/her hand on it. The other hand will support the upper part of the arm of the exiting student.
- Students should “squat” at the rear door to eliminate the possibility of hitting their head.
- Have the student “drop” out of the bus. Never have the student “jump” out of the bus.
- Have them walk to the designated safe waiting area.
- Evacuate the bus, starting at the back row and continue to the front.
- Give first aid kit, fire extinguisher, and emergency triangles to the last two students after they are out of the bus.
- Have the helpers assist you out of the rear of the bus.
- Assist the injured to the best of your abilities.
- Notify proper authorities.

Evacuating through the front and rear doors:

When evacuating through both the front and back doors at the same time, the driver must determine which seats go out which exit and then follow the procedures outlined for both front and rear door evacuations. Evacuation of handicapped and special needs students is addressed in the section that deals with special needs children.

Resource: Idaho’s School Driver Training Classroom Curriculum 2012, Section 8

The driver should list the students that will be a problem in evacuation, by seat number, and list recommendations for handling these students. This list should be in writing and posted in a prominent location. Usually, outside help will be available very quickly and should assist only under the direction of the driver. The driver should always remain calm and show authority. This will greatly assist in handling the students.

Which students are able to help, and to what extent:

- Lower side lift halfway if operating.
- Release chairs one at a time and removed chair from bus by first lowering chair to the lift and then to the ground.
- Electric chairs are too heavy for this. Remove the student from the chair and carry the student out of the bus.

What can be done when rear or side emergency doors cannot be opened:

- Remove ambulatory passengers from the bus and send them to a safe location. Instruct them to sit in a group.
- Remove wheelchair passengers from their chairs and carry them from the bus to a safe location away from the bus.

Every bus staff person should be able to verbally articulate his/her emergency evacuation plan upon request without hesitation. Many emergencies only allow three to five minutes to complete an evacuation before possible serious injury to students might occur.

Evacuating Ambulatory Students from the Special Needs Bus:

Many states insist that all bus riding students experience a practical school bus evacuation drill as part of a yearly lesson on school bus safety. This means that ALL students that ride a school bus during the school year, for ANY reason, will usually take part in this drill.

- Such drills are usually scheduled by student transportation personnel and supervised by the school administrator or his/her designee.
- School bus drivers should never attempt to schedule or conduct a school bus evacuation drill on their own.
- Drills are usually conducted at school or on school property.
- All bus riding students, including those transported only on extracurricular trips, must participate.

All students with disabilities should participate in bus evacuation drills. However, some students with disabilities, because of their medically fragile condition, may not be required to physically leave or be taken from the bus during a bus evacuation drill. School staff should determine a suitable alternative preparation for the students, driver and school bus aide in these situations. Check district policy on this particular guideline.

- The most important part of any safe bus evacuation or evacuation drill is developing and following a plan of action in the event of an emergency, school bus collision, or vehicle breakdown.
- Make sure that everyone on the bus is aware of what must be done in the event of a real emergency.
- Always use extreme care during an evacuation or evacuation drill. Never allow students to push or run. Never force students to jump from the bus during a bus evacuation drill. A bus evacuation drill should be a learning experience for everyone.
- Remember, the planning and actions taken during a bus evacuation drill may one day save lives.