

School Bus Driver Pre-Emergency Plan

The following are tasks that should be a part of any emergency plan:

1. The school bus evacuation plan - Successive pages will detail what information is needed to set up the evacuation plan itself and how to conduct emergency drills. It cannot be stressed enough that training of school bus drivers and pupils is paramount for success.

This encompasses the off-loading of the pupils so that they will know exactly what to do in the event of a real emergency. This should also include the evacuation of the pupils with special needs. Evacuation procedures for pupils with special needs should be well known and rehearsed. Planning is ineffective without practice.

2. The bus route - Know the location of fire stations, police stations and hospitals in the area. Most emergencies the bus driver faces entail the immobilization of the school bus and the determination of evacuating or not. Knowledge of the locations of fire and police departments and hospitals could save a life.

Knowledge of the route, even for the substitute or extra driver, helps the responding emergency personnel get to the school bus much faster. Whether the driver has radio contact with the dispatcher or must ask the assistance of others to telephone the request for emergency aid is of little good if the exact location is not given.

3. School bus emergency information - It is quite helpful, when the assistance of others is needed, to have the school bus information on a card. If you need to have someone else telephone for help, this basic information would not have to be repeated or written down.

The card should include the bus and route number and the school district name, address, and telephone number. This card information could have other supplemental data but only the most important data should be included so as not to confuse the person calling in for you. Many areas of the country have the type of pay telephones which allow an emergency telephone call to 911 or police and fire without cost. If your area does not have that arrangement, coins should be taped to this card to allow the caller to summon emergency aid in a timely fashion.

Another helpful piece of information would be the district policy regarding how school staff should respond to inquiries from news media. The information should include what information may be given out by staff members, what information can only be obtained from board members or administrators, and the names and numbers of district representatives from whom more information can be obtained.

4. The school bus - The driver should know the basics of the school bus components to allow them to better assess the seriousness of the situation. Just as one should not open the hood in the event of an engine fire, one should be able to assess an overheated motor or a broken radiator hose. The advent of a mandatory commercial driver's license with the expanded pre-trip inspection serves well in this instance, but does not cover everything and should not preclude additional training of the school bus driver to incorporate this type of school bus knowledge.

Route Plan - The school bus driver or any of the pupils (regular or special education) could have a medical emergency, and a procedure should be developed along local guidelines on how to handle this situation. Questions to be considered:

- Does the driver pull over and call emergency medical services?
- Should the driver proceed to the nearest school, medical facility, police or fire station?

Does the school [center] or school district have a medical consent form from the parents so that pre-hospital and hospital personnel can treat the pupil? Should that be considered or should you react only to the emergency phone numbers on the school health card?