

Vermont School Bus Drivers Manual



Revised 2006

WHAT IS A SCHOOL BUS DRIVER?

A school bus driver is a person who smiles in the morning and smiles in the evening and eats Roloids in between.

A school bus driver is a person who smiles in the morning and smiles in the evening and eats Roloids in between.

A school bus driver gets there when nobody else can. Can find houses which don't exist and children with no names.

A school bus driver dries tears, dispels fears and finds lost notebooks.

A school bus driver has eyes in the back of the head and hears every word, even in sign language.

A school bus driver is immune to noise.

A school bus driver's favorite words (besides "good morning" and "good night") are "sit down."

A school bus driver's worst apprehension involves five-year-olds with motion sickness - especially in the winter when the windows are closed and the heater is on.

Sometimes a school bus driver gets tired, but seldom gets mad; and always, most faithfully, gets there.

*****Cover design courtesy of Mathieu Enterprise***
Photographed by Rose Bailey**

Message from the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles

The task of safely transporting children to and from our schools is a tremendous responsibility. We hope this manual will assist school bus drivers to better perform their duties and will also serve as a guide for others involved in school bus transportation.

School bus drivers must at all times obey traffic laws such as speed limits, traffic control signs and special regulations pertaining to interstate highways.

Drivers convicted of violating any motor vehicle laws or regulations are subject to a loss of license as well as any fines that are levied. Conviction could mean your job!

One's success as a school bus driver depends largely on knowledge, attitude, good driving habits and caution behind the wheel.

Bonnie L. Rutledge
Commissioner

VERMONT STATE HOLIDAYS

NEW YEAR'S DAY	January 1
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY	3rd Monday in January
WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY	3rd Monday in February
TOWN MEETING DAY	1st Tuesday in March
MEMORIAL DAY	Last Monday in May
INDEPENDENCE DAY	July 4
BENNINGTON BATTLE DAY	August 16
LABOR DAY	1st Monday in September
VETERANS' DAY	November 11
THANKSGIVING DAY	4th Thursday in November
*DAY AFTER THANKSGIVING	*****
CHRISTMAS DAY	December 25

* State offices are usually closed the day after Thanksgiving as well.

Any legal holiday which falls on a Saturday shall be observed on the preceding Friday. Any legal holiday which falls on a Sunday shall be observed on the following Monday.

At times only one individual may staff our offices. The examiner may not always be present due to road testing. Please be patient. The examiner will assist you as soon as possible.

On occasion it may be necessary to cancel or postpone driver testing due to poor road conditions. Call Central Scheduling at 1-802-828-2085 for information and to reschedule, if necessary.

LOCATIONS FOR SCHOOL BUS ENDORSEMENT EXAMINATIONS

If you already hold a valid Commercial Driver's License with a passenger endorsement or you are applying for a Type II endorsement, which does not require a Commercial Driver's License, examinations may be taken at one of the sites listed below.

If you wish to obtain a Type I School Bus endorsement, please refer to the additional procedure listed in the Commercial Drivers Manual under Class B Passenger endorsement.

**The telephone number for scheduling appointments at all locations is: 1-802-828-2085
(8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.)**

For general information please call: **1-802-828-2000**

Telecommunications Relay Service **TTY/TDD #: 1-800-253-0191**
(For use only by those with a hearing or speech impairment.)

WRITTEN TESTS

Bennington

215 North Street
Monday – Friday
7:45 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Burlington

Monday, Tuesday,
Thursday & Friday
7:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday 7:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Montpelier

120 State Street
Monday, Tuesday,
Thursday & Friday
7:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday 7:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Newport

100 Main Street
Monday – Friday
7:45 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Rutland

State Office Complex
101 State Place
Monday, Tuesday,
Thursday & Friday
7:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday 7:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Springfield

100 Mineral Street, Ste. 103
Monday, Tuesday,
Thursday & Friday
7:45 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Wednesday 7:45 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

SKILLS TESTS

BENNINGTON – AOT Garage, Bowen Road

COLCHESTER – VTRANS Garage, Barnes Ave., Fort Ethan Allen

RUTLAND – State Office Complex, 101 State Place

ST. JOHNSBURY – State Office Complex, Route 5

SPRINGFIELD – Hartness Road – Fire Station

For further information relative to dates, times and a list of services, please call
1-802-828-2000 or check the Vermont DMV Web Site at: <http://www.aot.state.vt.us/dmv/dmvhp.htm>

THE DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST INDIVIDUALS
WITH DISABILITIES IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES, PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES OR
EMPLOYMENT.

**23 V.S.A. § 202 - IMPERSONATING ANOTHER IN AN APPLICATION, OR AIDING AN
APPLICANT BY FALSE REPRESENTATION.**

A person who falsely impersonates another in an application for operator's license or learner permit, or in an application for a non driver identification card, or in an application for motor vehicle registration, all-terrain vehicle, snowmobile or motorboat registration, or vessel validation, or who obtains a license to operate a motor vehicle by false representation, or who obtains a learner permit or non driver identification card by false representation, or who obtains a motor vehicle registration or a registration for any other type of vehicle or vessel by false representation, or who uses an assumed name or name not his or her own in an application for operator's license, or learner permit or in an application for non driver identification card, or in an application for motor vehicle registration, or registration for any other type vehicle or vessel, or who knowingly aids an applicant in obtaining such license, permit, registration or non driver identification card by false representation as to the age or identity of such applicant, shall be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned not more than two years, or both and shall have his or her privilege to operate suspended for 90 days.

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Note: This study guide is a supplement to Section 10 of the Vermont Commercial Driver License Manual.

PART 1 - SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

School bus transportation is one of the safest forms of transportation in the United States. Every year, our nation's 450,000 public school buses travel more than 4.3 billion miles to transport 23.5 million children to and from school and school-related activities

Students are nearly eight times safer riding in a school bus than with their own parents and guardians in cars. The fatality rate for school buses is only 0.2 fatalities per 100 million miles traveled compared to 1.5 fatalities per 100 million miles traveled for cars. An average of 10 occupants die each year in school buses, while an average of 600 occupants die each year riding to and from school in motor vehicles other than school buses.

Vehicles and drivers are the two key factors that contribute to this impressive highway safety record.

The Vehicle:

School buses are equipped with more safety equipment than any other vehicle on the road. Additionally, the size and design of the school bus gives it an important advantage in all but the most catastrophic circumstances. Both state and federal regulations set the standards for safety equipment.

State of Vermont regulations for school bus equipment are detailed in the "School Bus Laws" section of this manual. Additionally, Vermont school buses must conform to the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. The key federal safety requirements include:

- Well-padded, high back, energy-absorbing seats, as well as special requirements for wheelchair restraint systems.
- Brake systems that enable the school bus to stop in a shorter distance than other large vehicles.
- Lamps and reflective devices that indicate when the bus is loading and unloading passengers.
- Special mirrors that allow the driver to see critical areas directly in front of and along both sides of the school bus.
- A stop arm on newer buses that extends out to the left side of the bus to warn motorists when the bus is loading and unloading passengers.
- Several emergency exits.
- Rollover protection that reduces the likelihood of a roof collapse and allows for operable emergency exits even after the roof is subject to extreme forces.
- A passenger compartment designed to reduce the chances of injury to occupants caused by sharp edges of body panels that might tear loose in a crash.
- Protected fuel tanks and fuel pump, fuel delivery system, emissions control lines and connections to protect against fuel spills in severe crashes.
- Buses painted "national school bus glossy yellow."

The Driver:

School bus drivers are expected to meet the highest traffic safety standards. They must adhere to the many rules and regulations that ensure safety in and around the bus, and ensure the vehicle is in top mechanical condition. Their attention to safety is another key factor in the impressive safety record of school bus transportation.

This publication details the requirements and recommended practices of operating a school bus. It is designed to prepare the driver-applicant with the knowledge necessary to pass the DMV driver's test and to provide reference material for existing drivers, school bus contractors and others in the school bus transportation business.

PART II - BECOMING A SCHOOL BUS DRIVER

School bus drivers must possess special knowledge and skills in order to ensure the safe transportation of their passengers. In addition to the knowledge and skill requirements of operating commercial motor vehicles, school bus drivers must be aware of the risks that are unique to transporting school children. It is this responsibility that makes school bus operation a specialized driving task.

To become licensed as a school bus driver, you must meet certain training, testing and medical qualifications, and obtain a school bus endorsement that is valid for four years. Listed below are the basic steps that are required. A more detailed guide listing the requirements for various types of licenses follows this general information.

Type 1 Operation (designed to transport more than 15 passengers including the operator):

- Physical examination conducted by a licensed physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner.
- School bus driver training clinic.
- **Valid commercial driver license, passenger endorsement, and school bus endorsement, vision, written, and skills tests.**

Type 2 Operation (designed to transport fewer than 16 passengers including the operator, which are owned, leased, or hired by a school, or for which services are reimbursed by a school and if used to transport students):

- Physical examination conducted by a licensed physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner.
- School bus driver training clinic.
- Valid license, school bus endorsement, vision, written and skills tests.

The principle differences between Type 1 (CDL) and Type 2 (non-CDL) are the following:

- A CDL requires additional written tests based on the class and type of commercial vehicle being operated.
- A CDL requires an entire vehicle pre-trip inspection as part of the skills test.

Driver Qualifications

The physical and mental condition, and driving history of school bus drivers is of primary importance. For that reason, school bus drivers must submit to their employer, and to the Department of Motor Vehicles, certification that they meet the physical, mental and vision standards as required by law. The following are details of the reporting requirements.

The **Physical Examination Form** certifies the driver meets all three standards (physical, mental, vision). A licensed physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner must sign this form. If vision testing is done separately, a medical doctor, ophthalmologist, optometrist or nurse practitioner must sign a **Driver Eyesight Evaluation Form**. DMV offices and some school bus trainers and employers provide these forms.

Drivers must provide this information as follows:

To the DMV:

The Physical Examination Form when applying for a CDL and/or Type 2 School Bus Endorsement. *

To your employer:

1. A copy of the Physical Examination Form and Driver Eyesight Evaluation (if done separately) annually before the commencement of the school year. *
2. A copy of your 3-year driver operating record, prior to your first date of employment as a school bus driver.

Driving records can be obtained from the Department of Motor Vehicles. When submitting your request, provide your name, date of birth, driver license identification number, a check or money order for \$10.00 and mail it to the following address:

Department of Motor Vehicles
Driver Improvement Section
120 State St
Montpelier, VT 05603-0001

* Specifics about medical qualifications are detailed in state statute: **23 V.S.A. §1282 (2)** and **Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations 49C.F.R. §391.41.**

Training

To provide a foundation of knowledge about school bus statutes and recommended operating procedures, state law requires that each driver attend a training course that has been approved by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles. This must be successfully completed prior to being tested and licensed by the DMV.

The approved training known as the “school bus driver training clinic,” taught by certified instructors. Clinics are conducted by school districts, school bus transportation contractors, driving schools and independent instructors. It is important to understand this is a minimum requirement only. Drivers should obtain additional knowledge and skills training through other sources such as driving schools and employer training programs.

The training curriculum includes, but is not limited to the following subjects:

- The Role and Responsibility of a School Bus Driver
- Loading, Unloading, Passenger Control and Discipline
- Collisions and Emergency Procedures
- Vehicle Maintenance and Inspection
- Driving Fundamentals

Drivers are issued a “School Bus Driver Training Certificate” upon completion of the course. The certificate is valid for four years from the date of issue, and must be presented to the DMV at the time of license testing/renewal.

Drivers who wish to renew their school bus endorsement must attend a school bus driver clinic or a defensive driving course (DDC) for school bus drivers.

To obtain information about the dates and locations of driver clinics, contact a Department of Motor Vehicles office, or visit the website at <http://www.aot.state.vt.us/dmv/dmvhp.htm>

License Testing and Issuance

The type of license you now hold, and the type of school bus you will be operating determines what tests you have to take. The following guide provides those details.

Type 1 School Bus Endorsement – use the following chart to determine what tests are required.

Your Present License ↓	CDL General Knowledge Written Test	CDL Passenger Endorsement Written Tests	Vision Screening	School Bus Written Test	CDL/School Bus Skills Test
Operator License – no endorsement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Operator License – Type 2 endorsement	✓	✓			✓
CDL – no endorsements		✓	✓	✓	✓
CDL – Type 2 bus endorsement – no passenger endorsement		✓			✓
CDL – passenger endorsement			✓	✓	✓
CDL – Type 2 bus – passenger endorsement					✓

Note: If the school bus you will be driving is equipped with air brakes, a written air brake test, and a skills test in a school bus equipped with air brakes is required.

Type 2 School Bus Endorsement – use the following chart to determine what tests are required.

Your Present License ↓	CDL General Knowledge Written Test	CDL Passenger Endorsement Written Tests	Vision Screening	School Bus Written Test	CDL/School Bus Skills Test	School Bus Road Test
Operator License – no endorsement			✓	✓		✓
CDL with or without passenger endorsement			✓	✓		✓

Scheduling and Taking the Driver’s Tests

Scheduling:

Written and vision tests are administered at several DMV offices located throughout the state. Skills tests (pre-trip inspection, road test) are administered at locations that are designated as CDL test sites. The written and vision tests must be passed before taking the skills tests.

A \$20.00 scheduling fee must be submitted to the DMV prior to scheduling a CDL skills test. This fee can be paid at any office when you take the written test/s or can be mailed to DMV in Montpelier. After paying the fee, wait at least one full day before calling to schedule an appointment. **If you are adding a Type II endorsement, no scheduling fee is required.**

Test appointments for the entire state are made through the central scheduling service at 802-828-2085. All DMV locations are listed on page iii. When scheduling your appointment, the operator will ask you for the following information.

- The tests you wish to take.

- The DMV location that is most convenient to you.
- Your name as it appears on your driver's license.
- Your driver license identification number.
- Your date of birth.
- Your phone number.

Taking the Vision and Written Tests:

The vision test is administered using a vision-screening device that tests for visual acuity and field of vision.

The school bus written test is based on information provided in the School Bus Drivers Manual and Section 10 of the Vermont Commercial Driver License Manual. The test consists of 31 questions, which are a combination of multiple choice, 9 fill in the blanks, and 2 essay questions. The passing score is 80% or better. For information regarding CDL written tests (required for Type 1 drivers), refer to the Commercial Driver License Manual.

All the required written tests including CDL General Knowledge, CDL endorsements and school bus endorsement can be taken on the same day. The following checklist is provided to help you prepare for the test session. **Bring the following items with you:**

- Your driver's license/s and permit (if applicable).
- All required fees (see CDL manual for details). A test fee is not required for the school bus endorsement written test.
- Physical Examination Form (originals only).
- School Bus Driver Training Certificate.
- Receipt from previous testing (if applicable).

Taking the Skills Tests:

The skills tests for Type 1 drivers are based on information provided in the School Bus Drivers Manual **and** the Commercial Driver License (CDL) Manual. **Type 2 drivers do not need to study the CDL manual.**

To successfully complete the skills test, you must pass a vehicle pre-trip inspection (CDL only) demonstrate the proper procedures for stopping at a railroad grade crossing, discharging students at a bus stop, turning around; and obey other rules of the road in general.

The following checklist is provided to help you prepare for the skills test. **Bring the following items with you:**

- A properly equipped and inspected school bus of the type and size you will be driving.
- A licensed CDL Driver with a School Bus and Passenger endorsements. (No licensed CDL Driver is required for a Type 2 School Bus exam.)
- Your driver's license and permit (if applicable).
- Vehicle registration certificate.
- Vehicle insurance identification card.
- Physical Examination Form (original only) and medical card. The medical card is not required for drivers of municipal vehicles.
- Receipt from previous testing (if applicable), including the school bus application.
- School Bus Driver Training Certificate.

Non-Resident Drivers

Out of state school bus drivers must obtain and maintain a School Bus Endorsement in their home state.

Endorsement Renewal

The school bus endorsement is valid for four years. To renew your endorsement, you must first attend a school bus driver's clinic and then take the DMV school bus endorsement examination. The examination consists of the vision, written and road tests. This is the same examination that is required for a first-time endorsement, however, for renewal purposes, the examiner may waive the road test portion.

The endorsement expires at the same time as your operator license or CDL. Approximately 60 days prior to that deadline, DMV will send you a notice, which details the requirements for renewing the endorsement. The DMV must have your current mailing address on file to mail the notice to you. **It is the driver's responsibility to apply for the endorsement renewal, whether or not this renewal is received.**

Note: Because the endorsement expires at the same time as your operator license or CDL, the first endorsement may be valid for less than four years. Thereafter the endorsement will be valid for full four-year terms.

PART III - SAFE OPERATING PROCEDURES

Railroad Grade Crossings



Crossing railroad tracks represents one of the greatest hazards insofar as mass casualties and fatalities are concerned. STOP, LOOK and LISTEN. All school buses, loaded or empty, must stop for railroad crossings. This is an important safety procedure and it is the law.

The following procedures must be followed when approaching and crossing railroad tracks. Learn these procedures and practice them until they become automatic actions.

Procedures

Prepare to Stop:

- As the school bus approaches a railroad crossing, activate the four-way hazard lights.
- To reduce distractions, request silence and turn off radio and heaters.
- Get the “Big Picture” check all traffic control devices.
- Apply your brakes to give adequate warning to motorists behind the bus.

Stop the Bus:

- Place bus in neutral or park and set parking brake.
- Stop in a position that gives a clear view of the tracks in both directions. Stop no closer than 15 feet, nor further than 50 feet from the nearest rail.
- Turn off the master switch so the red lights will not come on when the door is opened. (Remember to turn it on when clear of the tracks.)

Look and Listen:

- Always anticipate a train.
- For Type 1 buses, open the service door and the driver’s window. On Type 2 buses, open the driver’s window.
- Look and listen thoroughly and carefully. Close the door before moving the bus.

If the Tracks are Clear:

- Shift into the proper starting gear, so that there is no need to shift gears while crossing the tracks. With automatic transmissions, select the lowest gear.
- Look and listen a second time, close the door and proceed quickly and smoothly. Activate the master switch for the warning lights system.
- Four-way hazard lights should be deactivated after the vehicle crosses the tracks.

If a Train is Approaching:

- Hold the bus in position. Use the parking brake if the waiting time is excessive.
- Once the train has passed, the gate is up, and the flashing lights are off, use proper procedure for crossing the tracks.

Multi-Track Crossings:

- Make sure a train is not approaching on any of the tracks.
- After the train passes, wait until other tracks become visible before proceeding. A second train might be approaching from the opposite direction.
- When clear, use proper procedure for crossing tracks.

Railroad Traffic Control Devices

Flashing lights and bells warn of an approaching train. If a train is stopped and a railroad attendant is directing traffic, you may cross with the attendant's directions.

All traffic must obey railroad-crossing gates. Vehicles may proceed around the gates **only** at the direction of a law enforcement officer or an authorized railroad attendant. If a railroad attendant is guarding a railroad crossing, make a safe stop and follow the directions of the attendant.

Important Note: When approaching a crossing where a stop sign or traffic control device is on the other side of the tracks, additional care must be taken.

At some of these locations, there might not be enough room available to stop for the traffic control device, and at the same time be clear of the railroad tracks. If this situation arises, the driver should not cross the tracks until they are clear of rail traffic, and when it is not required to make another stop at the traffic control device. If this type of crossing is on a proposed or existing school bus route, drivers and transportation administrators should work together to establish the safest procedure for the particular situation.

Exempt Crossings:

A school bus is not required to stop at a crossing marked "exempt." If a railroad wishes to use this type of crossing, a flagger must be present when the train crosses.

Railroad Grade Crossing Facts

- A 150-car freight train, traveling at 50 miles per hour and using emergency braking procedures, will travel 1-½ miles before coming to a complete stop. At 30 miles per hour, the stopping distance is 2/3 mile.
- It is difficult to judge the speed at which a train approaches. Because of its large size, a train appears to be moving slower than it is.
- If you race to reach a crossing before a train and it's a tie – **you lose.**

Passenger Loading and Unloading



One of the most important safety concerns for a school bus driver is the boarding and discharging of passengers. It is at this point that they are exposed to many potential hazards. Foremost among these hazards is other drivers disregarding or being inattentive to a stopped school bus.

By law, school buses must be equipped with an “eight-light system.” These warning lights are the primary method of controlling traffic at a school bus stop. The driver is responsible for the proper use of the light system, and must be attentive to the conditions that exist in and around the bus.

By law the warning lights must only be used when approaching a stop to load or unload passengers. When a school bus is being used for non-school use, the SCHOOL BUS sign must be covered or removed and the eight-light system must not be used.

The following procedures must be followed when loading or unloading passengers.

Loading Procedures

Prepare to Stop:

- Activate the warning light system. Before slowing down, turn on the amber warning lights.
- There is no set distance prior to the stop where the amber lights should be turned on. The driver must determine when to turn on the lights based on local speed limits, the amount of traffic on the road, characteristics of the roadway, and other factors that might affect a smooth and safe stop.
- Keep your bus in the center of the lane. Do not drive to the right side of the road and do not use the right directional light. Doing so might communicate to other drivers that you want them to pass the bus.
- Check all mirrors to see that traffic is clear and it is safe to stop. Approach pupils with extreme care, giving due consideration to road conditions.

Stop the Bus:

- Do not stop any closer than three feet from the pupils. They should wait five feet back from the shoulder of the road.
- Shift to neutral and hold the bus in position with the service or parking brake.
- Check all mirrors and note the location of any on-coming traffic. Unlatch the door (called “cracking the door”). This will activate the red warning lights, but will prevent students from attempting to enter the bus before the driver is sure it is safe.
- Check to be sure traffic has stopped. Open the door and signal the pupils to approach the bus entrance. If the pupils are waiting on the opposite side of the road, check to be sure traffic has stopped before signaling them to cross. Pupils should cross at least ten feet in front of the bus.

Proceed:

- Check to ensure all passengers are seated.
- Close the door (which turns off the red warning lights).
- Check traffic and accelerate smoothly.



Unloading Procedures

Prepare to Stop:

- Follow instructions in above section on loading.

Stop the Bus:

- Come to a complete stop. Shift to neutral and hold the bus in position with the service or parking brake. Pupils should remain seated until the bus has come to a complete stop.
- Check all mirrors and note the location of any on-coming traffic. Unlatch the door (called “cracking the door”). This will activate the red warning lights, but will prevent students from attempting to exit the bus before the driver is sure it is safe.
- Check to be sure traffic is stopped. Open the door and allow pupils to leave the bus. Continue to monitor the traffic situation.
- If pupils must cross the street, proceed as follows:
 1. Instruct them to stand at least ten feet in front of the bus and to wait for your signal to cross. Count the number of pupils who have left the bus.
 2. Check to be sure traffic is stopped.
 3. Give a signal for them to cross. Do not use a signal that might confuse motorists in front of you.
 4. Count the pupils that have walked to the other side of the street. Do not close the door (which will turn off the warning lights) or move the bus until all pupils are clear of the highway.
 5. If all pupils are accounted for, proceed as in above instructions under Loading. If they cannot all be accounted for, shut off the bus, set the parking brake, remove the key and get out to look for the missing pupil. Be sure to check under the bus.

Visual Search

It is important for the driver to get a clear, complete and accurate picture of the traffic scene. To find out what is happening around you in traffic, you must use your senses of sight, sound, and smell. Sight is the most important sense in driving. It is your best source of information about the traffic scene.

To know what you see quickly and correctly, you must use a visual search pattern or routine. This is called **systematic seeing**. It helps you know:

- What to look at
- What to look for
- Where to look

Look ahead of where you intend to travel. Search the traffic scene ahead of the bus and to the sides. Use your mirrors to see to the rear.

Looking Ahead

You should look ahead as far as you will travel in 10 or 12 seconds. This is called eye-lead time. In city driving, 12 seconds is equal to about one block. On the open highway, it is about ¼ mile. Looking far enough ahead will give you time to:

- Identify problems
- Prepare for trouble
- Decide how to avoid the problem
- Check for anything that might keep you from making the proper change
- Take the right action

Looking well ahead and having enough visual lead time increases safety, saves fuel, and saves time.

Looking at Intersections

After stopping at an intersection, it is important for you to know how to look before you move into and across traffic lanes. The following guidelines should be helpful.

- Move your bus forward very slowly. Give other drivers a chance to see you. The slow, controlled speed will also let you stop again before driving into the path of cross traffic.
- Look in the right order. Look left, right then left again as you begin to move forward.

The reason to look in this order is the first lane you cross carries traffic from the left. Until that lane is clear to enter, you cannot move forward. If your search shows the right lane is also clear, you can safely begin to move forward. At this point, the second look to the left assures you there are no changes in that direction. You can now go through the intersection.

Using Mirrors

Using mirrors properly is an important driving skill. The driver must properly adjust and use the mirrors to effectively search the traffic scene.

School buses come in different sizes and designs. Therefore, it is important for new drivers, or those getting behind the wheel of a different bus, to properly adjust the mirrors and practice visual search around the entire vehicle. Using mirrors is especially helpful when driving in heavy traffic, backing, and picking up and discharging passengers.

“Crossover” mirrors are required on some buses to provide the driver with a clear view of pupils who might be crossing in front of the bus. The size and design of the bus, and a formula in state statute determines if this type of mirror is required.

Communication

If travel is to be safe and smooth, highway users need to talk to each other. Bus drivers must do their share. Tell others what you intend to do as you move your bus through traffic. At the same time, be alert for messages from other highway users such as drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Tell your intent. Other highway users do not know what you are going to do unless you tell them. Therefore, whenever possible, you should signal what you intend to do before you do it.

Signaling for Turns

Signal Early: The best way to keep others from trying to pass you when you are turning is to turn on the signal one-half block before an intersection or about 500 feet on the open highway. Vermont statute requires that a turn signal be activated at least 100 feet prior to the turn.

Signal Continuously: You might find that after turning on your signal, you must stop and wait for a safe break in traffic. Keep the signal on. It tells everyone what you are going to do.

Cancel Your Signal: When you have completed the turn, cancel the signal. Do not cancel the signal until you have completed the turn.

Signaling for Lane Changes

Lane changes need the same early signals as turns. They also need one more signal – the motion of your vehicle. Once you have started your lane change, pause for a few seconds as you enter the new lane. This will catch the attention of those who did not notice your earlier signal. It will give them a chance to react.

Slowing Down

Highway users expect vehicles ahead of them to keep moving. Any time you slow suddenly, give the driver behind you some warning. Light taps on the brake pedal – enough to flash the brake lights should accomplish that.

You should give a warning when there is trouble ahead, when you are approaching a tight turn, when driving slowly and, especially, when approaching rail grade crossings or when stopping to pick up or discharge passengers.

Poor Visibility

Visibility is affected by the time of day (dawn or dusk) and by poor weather. If you are having trouble seeing oncoming vehicles, you must assume that other drivers are having trouble seeing you. Turn on your low beam headlights. Do not use high beams in these conditions as they can be as much of a problem in the day as at night.

Space Management

One of the most important things a good driver does is to keep a cushion of safety around his or her vehicle at all times. We call this space management.

You need space all around your vehicle – in front, to the sides, and to the rear. When things go wrong on the road, space gives you time to adjust. At times, other vehicles will stop unexpectedly or turn in front of you. You might need space to change lanes, stop or slow down. If, for instance, you must change lanes or swerve right or left, you will need to check your side-view mirrors. That takes time, and time requires space.

Space Ahead

Of all the space around your bus, the space ahead is the most important. This is the amount of space you need to be able to stop.

In normal road conditions, you should maintain at least a 4-second following distance. The distance must be increased when operating at higher speeds or when road and weather conditions are poor.

Another situation that requires increased following distance is when a vehicle is following you too closely. Increasing your following distance will allow you to brake more gradually, which will reduce the possibility of that vehicle colliding with the rear of the bus.

To measure your following distance, note when the rear end of the vehicle ahead passes a marking on the road or other landmark. Then count off the seconds; 1,001, 1,002, 1,003, and so on, until the front of your bus reaches the same spot. Compare your count with your desired following distance.

Space Behind

It is difficult to control the space behind your bus. However, there are some things you can do to control the space to the rear.

When changing lanes, leave plenty of space. Wait a little longer before pulling in front of the vehicle you have just passed.

Anticipate tailgating and respond safely to tailgaters. If you find yourself being tailgated, some actions can help reduce the chance of a collision.

- Avoid quick changes. If you have to slow down or turn, signal your intentions early and make the changes slowly.
- Increase your following distance. Arrange for more space in front of the bus. This will help you avoid having to make sudden changes in speed or direction. It also makes it easier for a tailgater to get around you.
- Do not speed up. Tailgaters often tend to stay close no matter how fast you go. It is better to be tailgated at a slow speed than a high speed.
- Avoid tricks. Do not flash your brake lights to shake up the tailgater. You could make the situation worse by angering or confusing the driver.
- When traffic begins to build up between bus stops, pull over to the side of the road and allow traffic to pass. This should be done only in a location where such a stop is both convenient and safe.

Space to the Sides

Controlling space to the sides is especially important when traveling on multi-lane roadways.

Maintain as much space to the sides as possible. Concentrate on keeping your bus centered whenever you are meeting, passing, or being passed by another vehicle.

Whenever possible, avoid traveling beside other vehicles. Two dangerous situations can develop any time you travel alongside other vehicles:

1. Another driver might change lanes suddenly and turn directly into you.
2. You might need to change lanes and find there is no opening. You are trapped.

The best way to avoid either situation is not to travel with the pack. Find an open spot where you have the road pretty much to yourself. Of course, there are times when traffic is so heavy you cannot find an open spot. Then you have no choice except to be alert and careful. If you have to travel near other vehicles, stay out of their blind spots. Drop back or pull forward so the other drivers can see you.

Speed Management

Managing speed is a big part of driving safely. The faster you go, the less time you have to react to what is happening around you. Conditions can change in a split second. Speed must be adjusted to each traffic condition.

Speed and Stopping Distance

The faster you go, the longer it will take you to stop. It takes over eight times more distance to stop at 50 M.P.H. than it does at 15 m.p.h. There are three factors to consider when calculating braking distance.

1. **Driver Reaction Distance:** The distance your bus travels from the time you identify a hazard to the time you apply the brakes.
2. **Vehicle Braking Distance:** The distance your bus travels from the time you apply pressure to the brake pedal until the bus stops.
3. **Total Stopping Distance:** The driver reaction distance plus the vehicle braking distance.

There is no speed that will always be a safe speed. Speed must be adjusted to the conditions. These conditions can and do change often during a trip – even a short one.

Road Surfaces

It takes longer to stop when the road surface is slippery. It is also harder to turn your bus. If you are to control your bus, slow down when the road is slippery. This is called **managing your speed**.

If your bus has antilock brakes, do not expect to stop any quicker. All antilock brakes do is allow you to stay in control while braking.

How much you slow down depends on the conditions. Refer to the following chart for approximate speed reduction under various road conditions.

Normal Driving Speed	Driving in Rain	Driving in Snow	Driving on Ice
55 m.p.h.	40 m.p.h.	28 m.p.h.	18 m.p.h.
50 m.p.h.	35 m.p.h.	25 m.p.h.	17 m.p.h.
45 m.p.h.	33 m.p.h.	23 m.p.h.	15 m.p.h.
40 m.p.h.	30 m.p.h.	20 m.p.h.	13 m.p.h.

Identifying Slippery Surfaces

Certain clues can help you identify slippery road conditions. When you see any of the following, slow down!

Shaded area: When the sun begins to melt the ice and snow, the shaded areas of the road stay icy long after the open areas are clear. Examples are around bridges and wooded areas.

Bridges: Because air circulates over, under and around bridges, they tend to freeze more quickly than other parts of the road.

Black ice: This is a thin layer of ice that is clear enough to let you see the road underneath. It makes the road look wet. Any time it is below freezing and the road looks wet, watch out for black ice.

Just after it begins to rain: When rain begins to fall after a period of dry weather, it mixes with dirt, grit, oil and other road particles. Then the road becomes very slippery.

Hydroplaning

When water collects on the road, your wheels might lose contact with the road. A thin film of water separates the tires from the road and your bus simply slides along the water. This loss of traction is called **hydroplaning**. Under these conditions, you lose much of your ability to steer, brake and control the bus.

If you sense this is occurring, gradually decelerate, but do not brake or turn the wheel.

Speed and Vision

You must adjust your speed when visibility is reduced. Driving at 45 M.P.H. on bare roads with good tires and brakes, you will need 310 feet to stop your bus. If, because of fog or rain, you can see ahead only 100 feet, you are in a dangerous situation. Imagine a stalled vehicle on the road just beyond the limit of your vision! A general guideline is you should always be able to stop within the distance you can see ahead.

You can apply the same general guideline to night driving. Low beams let you see about 250 feet ahead. If you drive faster than 40 M.P.H. at night with low beams, you will not be able to stop in time to keep from hitting something that suddenly appears on the road in front of you.

Speed and Field of Vision

Your **field of vision** includes everything you can see (front and both sides) while looking straight ahead. The faster you go, the less you can see to the sides. As your speed increases, your field of vision decreases.

Speed and Traffic

The safest speed in traffic is usually the same speed other vehicles are going. Collisions happen more often when vehicles are traveling at different speeds. As a general rule, it is best to blend in with other traffic. Adjust your speed to match the normal flow of legal traffic. Some drivers try to save time by speeding. This really does not work because:

- Speeding is risky and often leads to collisions.
- When there is other traffic, you usually cannot save more than a couple of minutes in an hour of driving.

It is simply not worth the extra risk to speed.

If you drive faster than the other traffic:

- You will have to pass many other vehicles. Each time you change lanes to pass, there is the risk of collision.
- You become more tired from driving.
- You will be more likely to attract the attention of the police.
- You will waste fuel and increase the wear on your brakes.

Going with the flow is safer, easier and cheaper.

Turning Around

At the end of a route, or any time when it is necessary to turn a school bus around, it should be done off the highway if possible. A circular turnaround, which does not require backing, is the safest way. When this is not possible, use the following procedure.



- Select a driveway or side street on the right.
- Signal to the right, drive past the driveway or side street and stop about 30 inches from the curb.
- Check traffic front and rear.

- Allow traffic to pass if necessary, and then back into the driveway or side street.
- When traffic is clear, signal to the left and re-enter the roadway.

PART IV - PUPIL MANAGEMENT

The bus driver must accept the responsibility for supervising and controlling pupils while on the bus route. The driver is the person in charge and, therefore, must establish and discuss acceptable discipline procedures for pupils on the bus. These procedures must be consistent with local policies.

A list of school bus rules for proper behavior should be available for pupils and their parents. These rules should be printed in school handbooks or as information sheets. Drivers should read and be familiar with state laws, district policies and guidelines in regards to who has the authority to discipline and what procedures they should follow.

The employer must ensure that all drivers are trained in proper pupil management practices, which also includes proper management during emergency situations.

Control and Disciplinary Action

Information:

All rules and regulations concerning pupil behavior should be well known and clearly understood by:

- Bus drivers
- Pupils
- Parents
- Teachers
- School administrators and transportation directors

Lists of school bus rules and regulations covering pupil behavior should be prepared by the school administration and distributed to pupils and their parents. The active participation of parents can be very helpful. The rules should also be posted at the front of the bus.

Desirable Pupil Conduct:

An informal atmosphere that encourages pupils to relax and enjoy the ride is desirable. However, there are certain limits within which pupil activity must be confined. Your control over pupils should be sufficient to ensure they:

- Will enter and leave the bus at school loading stations and at roadway bus stops in an orderly fashion and in accordance with state law and school policies.
- Will remain quiet enough so you are not distracted from the driving task.
- Will remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Will cross the roadway in accordance with instructions and the provisions of state law.
- Will neither purposely or carelessly destroy property.
- Will not extend arms or other parts of their body out the windows.
- Will not throw objects about in the bus or out through the windows.

- Will be on time at the bus stop location prior to the arrival of the bus, and on time at the school loading station.
- Will not get off at any stop except their own without written authorization from a school administrator.

Disciplinary Action:

There are many different types of disciplinary or corrective actions to take, depending on the type of behavior involved. Some of the most effective methods use psychology, which can be used without shouting, excitement, and threats of violence or evidence of irritation. It is important to remember the driver has no legal authority to put a pupil off the bus, except at the regular stop or the school loading station.

There are several programs on the market that can be used by contractors or school districts for in-service training for drivers. These offer effective, common sense approaches to various behavioral problems.

Reporting Discipline Problems:

It is important to have a system in place to report problems. It is the responsibility of the contractor or school district to establish the procedures, and for drivers to understand and properly use them. Proper and accurate documentation of repeat-offenders' actions is the best way to provide information to authorities.

Emergency Evacuation

Vermont state law mandates that pupils are to receive safety instruction at least twice a year and that school bus evacuations are to be included in these safety lessons.

Evacuation procedures should be explained to all pupils who ride school buses. It should cover in detail the procedure to be followed if it is necessary to evacuate a bus. The evacuation drills should be conducted on the school grounds with school personnel to aid in supervision. **The school bus driver must be the one to direct the procedure.**

Usually it is safer to remain on the bus during an emergency. However, in situations where this is considered to be too dangerous, pupils must be evacuated. Keep in mind it is more difficult to manage a large number of pupils off the bus than on the bus. Situations that require evacuation are fire or a danger of fire, the bus is in an unsafe situation (railroad tracks) or the bus is in a dangerous position (on a steep bank, near water and in danger of rolling or falling into it).

As with general pupil management, there are programs available for in-service driver training. Employers and drivers must work together to learn and practice the procedures.

PART V - SCHOOL BUS ROUTES

EVALUATION AND PLANNING

Establishing school bus routes and schedules is usually the responsibility of school administrators or their transportation directors. When developing these routes and schedules, it is essential that those responsible work closely with the bus drivers who know the roads and are aware of the hazards that may exist. Constant dialogue between school bus drivers and route planners is critical to ensure the continued safe transportation of pupils.

Identifying hazards is a primary concern when planning routes. School bus route hazards are grouped into two main categories. They are “driving hazards” and “loading zone hazards.” Hazards are also identified as “fixed” and “non-fixed.” A fixed hazard is one that exists, can be identified, and drivers can be informed and educated about the hazard. Non-fixed hazards are ones that occur without advance warning – examples: (1) black ice and (2) flooded roadways.

Transportation efficiency is another concern. An efficient route plan saves time, fuel and money; and reduces the amount of time pupils must spend on the bus.

Evaluation

Administrators should develop a system to identify route hazards. The objective should be to:

1. List potential driving hazards and;
2. Establish a specified procedure/schedule for conducting on-site reviews of school bus routes.

The following is a list of potentially hazardous locations/situations on school bus routes.

Railroad Grade Crossing

- Number of tracks
- Visual obstructions to determine type and travel speeds of trains
- Train schedules
- Presence or absence of grade crossing controls
- Unique characteristics of operation of grade crossing controls
- Presence or absence of traffic control signals, including interaction with grade crossing controls
- Size of queuing area before and after the tracks
- Expected traffic conditions at various times of the day
- Roadway design near the grade crossing

Bus Stops

- Excessive number of stops
- Visual obstructions
- Uphill or downhill grade
- Pupil waiting areas

Dangerous Intersections and Roadways

- High-frequency crash locations as defined by state transportation and/or law enforcement officials
- Uncontrolled intersections
- Curves and intersections with limited sight distances
- Areas with no shoulders
- Visibility of traffic control signals
- Coordination of traffic control signals with others in the immediate area

Bridges, Tunnels/Underpasses and Overpasses

- Weight capacity
- Height clearances
- Lane width

Queuing/Storage Areas

- Short acceleration/deceleration lanes
- Limited median areas crossing multi-lane highways
- Turning lanes

Industrial Intersections and Construction Zones

- Areas where heavy vehicles/equipment operate on a regular basis, and may be entering, exiting, or crossing the roadway

Steep Downgrades

- Mountainous areas where brake condition and braking operations are important
- Location of out-of-control vehicle run-off areas

Areas of Significant Speed Differences Between Vehicles

- On-off ramps to high-speed roads
- Farm vehicle areas, including non-motorized vehicles on the road
- Mountain terrain

Pedestrian Areas

- School bus loading/unloading zones
- Narrow streets with parked motor vehicles, and children running between vehicles
- Congested shopping and business areas

Unique Roadway Conditions

- Roadways without guardrails that are next to rivers, lakes etc.
- Dirt or gravel roads that could affect braking
- Areas with problems related to right-turn-on-red laws
- Areas with visibility problems due to air quality
- Areas near fire stations and hospitals where emergency equipment operate on a regular basis

INFORMATION AND PLANNING

Administrators should develop an efficient and effective means to inform all school bus drivers, including substitutes, of the presence of potential driving route hazards, and to work with the drivers to minimize the risks.

In addition to dealing with potential hazards, the route plan should address scheduling factors, such as the following:

- The school schedule
- Amount of time students must wait at the school loading zone or at stops
- Extra time that might be necessary for boarding disabled pupils.
- The number of pupils
- Walking distances for pupils

A copy of the final plan and of each route should become a part of the area school transportation map.

PART VI - PUBLIC RELATIONS

A school bus driver has many responsibilities, not the least of which is public relations. The importance of establishing and maintaining good public relations cannot be overemphasized. You must be constantly aware of your relations with pupils, parents, school officials and the community. Everything a school bus driver does is in the public eye.

Pupils on your bus are at an impressionable age. Your driving habits may have a profound effect on their practices on the highway when they learn to drive. You need to present a clean appearance and a good attitude. You need to be friendly, consistent, and fair and respond to the needs of the pupils. You may be the first school-related person some children meet when they embark on their school careers. This experience could affect their adjustment to the school situation for some time. The young child may hear about the school bus driver months before starting school.

Also consider the parents of the children who ride your bus. Promptness, and a courteous and polite attitude will be greatly appreciated. The school bus driver may also be the only person in the school system some parents meet. Good or bad impressions of the school can be created by the driver's attitude toward pupils and parents.

All members of your community frequently travel on the same roadways you do. Because their children are aboard your bus, you are no doubt the most observed driver on the road, whether in your school bus or your private vehicle.

Drive safely, properly maintain your bus, and present a good appearance and friendly attitude. Doing so will instill confidence in your ability as a driver and a respected member of the community.

PART VII - VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Pre-trip Inspection:

Vermont law requires a daily pre-trip inspection of your school bus. This is necessary to ensure equipment defects, which may prevent safe operation of the vehicle, can be identified, reported and repaired.

Before driving a school bus, the driver shall:

1. Be satisfied the school bus is in safe operating condition;
2. Review the last driver's vehicle inspection report; and
3. Sign the report, only if defects or deficiencies were noted by the driver who prepared the report, to acknowledge the driver has reviewed it and there is a certification the required repairs have been performed.

If defects or deficiencies are noted by the driver who prepared the report, sign the report only if there is certification that the required repairs have been performed.

A suggested driver's pre-trip inspection checklist is provided on the following page.

Cleanliness:

A school bus driver's workplace is, obviously, the school bus. As such, drivers should have pride in their workplace and make the necessary efforts to keep the bus clean and sanitary. However possible, drivers should seek cooperation of the pupils in this effort.

A dependable, daily inspection and cleaning routine will also help to identify vandalism, and which pupils may be responsible. The following are suggested cleaning routines.

Daily:

1. Sweep the floor.
2. Dust seats and inspect for damage.
3. Clean windshield, side windows and mirrors (this is also a safety measure).
4. Clean all light lenses.

Weekly:

1. Wash floors and seats.
2. Wash exterior of the bus to improve paint life and visibility.
3. Check and oil door hinges and door operating mechanisms.

First Aid Kits:

School Buses may be required to carry a standard first aid kit. A kit purchased from a regular supplier of this type of equipment is acceptable. For those assembling or refilling a kit, the following items must be included:

- 2 1" x 2½ yards adhesive tape rolls
- 1 Pair latex gloves
- 1 Pair plastic gloves
- 24 Sterile gauze pads 3" x 3"
- 100 ¾" x 3" Adhesive bandages
- 12 2" Bandage compress
- 12 3" Bandage compress
- 2 2" x 6" Sterile gauze roller bandages
- 3 Sterile gauze pads 36" x 36"
- 3 Sterile eye pads
- 1 Mouth-to-mouth airway
- 1 Rounded end scissors
- 2 Non-sterile triangular bandages approximately 40" x 36" x 54"
with two safety pins

These items shall be carried in a durable, dust proof container, plainly marked "FIRST AID KIT" and located in full view in the driver's compartment.

PRE-TRIP VEHICLE INSPECTION CHECKLIST

ENGINE COMPARTMENT

- OIL LEVEL
- COOLANT LEVEL
- POWER STEERING
(FLUID/BELT)
- WATER PUMP (BELT)
- ALTERNATOR (BELT)
- AIR COMPRESSOR (BELT)
- LEAKS
- HOSES
- WIRING
- WINDSHIELD WASHER
- STEERING BOX/LINKAGE

FRONT SUSPENSION

- SPRINGS
- SPRING MOUNTS
- SHOCK ABSORBERS

FRONT WHEELS

- RIMS
- HUB OIL SEAL
- TIRES
- LUG NUTS

FRONT BRAKES

- SLACK ADJUSTMENT
(AIR)
- BRAKE CHAMBER (AIR)
- BRAKE HOSES/LINES
- BRAKE DRUMS/LININGS

EXTERIOR

- WINDOWS/MIRRORS
- ALL LIGHTS AND
REFLECTORS
- FUEL TANKS/LEAKS
- BATTERY/BATTERY BOX
- SPLASH GUARDS
- PASSENGER ENTRY/LIFT
- STOP ARM
- "SCHOOL BUS" SIGNS

ENGINE START

- CLUTCH AND GEARSHIFT
- TEMPERATURE
- OIL PRESSURE
- AMMETER/VOLTMETER
- AIR BRAKES OR
HYDRAULIC CHECKS
- STEERING PLAY
- PARKING BRAKE
- LIGHTING INDICATORS
- HORN
- HEATERS/DEFROSTERS

REAR SUSPENSION

- SPRINGS
- SPRING MOUNTS
- SHOCK ABSORBERS

REAR WHEELS

- RIMS
- TIRES
- AXLE SEALS
- LUG NUTS
- SPACERS

REAR BRAKES

- SLACK ADJUSTMENT (AIR)
- BRAKE CHAMBER (AIR)
- BRAKE HOSES/LINES
- BRAKE DRUMS/LININGS

UNDER VEHICLE

- DRIVE SHAFT
- EXHAUST SYSTEM
- FRAME/BODY CLIPS

INTERIOR

- SEATS/FLOOR
ATTACHMENTS
- EMERGENCY EXITS
- CEILING LIGHTS
- FIRST AID KIT

APPENDIX - STATUTES AND REGULATIONS

MOTOR VEHICLE LAWS OF VERMONT

23 V.S.A. § 4 (34) (A) "School bus" means any motor vehicle used to transport children to or from school or in connection with school activities, except:

- (i) Buses operated by common carriers who incidentally accept school children as passengers;
- (ii) Private motor vehicles used to carry members of the owner's household. For the purposes of this section, private motor vehicle means a vehicle neither owned nor leased by a public school or an approved independent school;
- (iii) Private motor vehicles used to transport children without compensation. For the purposes of this section, compensation means payment in any form except reimbursement for mileage or the normal salary paid to a person otherwise employed by the school;
- (iv) Motor vehicles with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of fewer than 11 persons, including the operator, which are owned, leased, or hired by a school, or for which services are reimbursed by a school. However, if used to transport students, these shall be considered a Type II school bus for purposes of licensure, shall display an identification sign as prescribed in subdivision 1283(a)(1) of this title, and shall be equipped with a simple system of at least two red alternating warning lights;
- (v) Motor coaches provided with a driver to a school on a single-trip or multi-trip contract basis to provide transportation to or from, or to and from, athletic or other special events. A motor coach is a vehicle at least 35 feet in length with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of more than 30 passengers and is designed for long distance transportation of passengers, characterized by integral construction with an elevated passenger deck located over a baggage compartment. Pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 255, a superintendent or headmaster shall request criminal record information for a driver of a motor coach if the driver may be in unsupervised contact with schoolchildren;
- (vi) Multifunction school activity buses, as defined in section 1287 of this title, provided with a driver to a school on a single-trip or multi-trip contract basis to provide transportation to or from, or to and from, athletic or other special events. Pursuant to 16 V.S.A. § 255, a superintendent or headmaster shall request criminal record information for a driver of a multifunction school activity bus if the driver may be in unsupervised contact with schoolchildren;
- (vii) Other multifunction school activity buses as defined in section 1287 of this title.

(B) "Type I school bus," means a school bus with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of more than 15 passengers, including the operator.

(C) "Type II school bus" means a school bus with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of fewer than 16 passengers, including the operator.

23 V.S.A. § 921. Liability insurance

A motor vehicle owned or hired by a board of school directors shall not be operated in the transportation of school children at any time when the owner and operator thereof is not insured under a liability policy issued by an insurance company authorized to transact business in this state to indemnify against liability for damages for personal injuries or damages to property. The amount of insurance shall be a minimum of \$100,000.00 for injury to, or death of any one person in any accident, subject to a minimum limit per accident of \$300,000.00 for injuries to or death of all persons in any one accident if the vehicle has a seating capacity of nine passengers or less. If the vehicle has a seating capacity in excess of nine passengers the amount of insurance shall be a minimum of \$300,000.00 for injury to, or death of any

one person in any accident, and subject to a minimum limit per accident of \$500,000.00 for injuries to or death of all persons in any one accident. In addition, a minimum limit of \$50,000.00 per occurrence for property damage shall be required. It shall be the duty of the school directors to require the filing, by or with them, of proof that the insurance is in force prior to the opening of each school year and that it is kept in force so long as school children are being transported. A person who violates a provision of this section shall be fined not more than \$500.00 or imprisoned not more than six months, or both. This section shall not apply to any person who transports only his own children, whether with or without compensation.

23 V.S.A. § 1015. Authorized emergency vehicles

- (a) The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call or when responding to, but not returning from, a fire alarm and a law enforcement officer operating an authorized emergency vehicle in fresh pursuit of a suspected violator of the law:
 - (1) May park or stand contrary to the provisions of this chapter;
 - (2) May proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation;
 - (3) Shall come to a full stop when approaching a school bus which is flashing red lights and may proceed only when the flashing red lights are extinguished;
 - (4) May exceed the maximum speed limits;
 - (5) May disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.
- (b) The exemptions granted to an authorized emergency vehicle apply only when the vehicle is making use of audible or visual signals meeting the requirements of this title.
- (c) The foregoing provisions shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such provisions protect the driver from the consequences of his reckless disregard for the safety of others.
- (d) The operator of a school bus, upon the approach of an authorized emergency vehicle as described in subsection (a) of this section, shall take action immediately to get school children out of the public highway and to a safe place and shall thereafter extinguish the flashing red lights.

23 V.S.A. § 1072. Certain vehicles must stop

- (a) The driver of any motor vehicle carrying passengers for hire except for jitneys designed to carry not more than seven passengers including the driver, of any school bus or of any vehicle carrying explosive substances or flammable liquids as a cargo or part of a cargo, before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, shall stop within fifty feet, but not less than fifteen feet, from the nearest rail of the railroad and while so stopped shall look and listen in both directions along the track for any approaching train and for signals indicating the approach of a train and may not proceed until he can do so safely. After stopping as required herein and upon proceeding when it is safe to do so the driver of any said vehicle shall cross so that there will be no necessity for changing gears while traversing the crossing, and the driver may not shift gears while crossing the track or tracks.
- (b) No stop need be made at any crossing where an attendant, an enforcement officer or a traffic-control signal directs traffic to proceed.
- (c) The driver of a Type I school bus stopping as required under subsection (a) of this section shall open the door of the bus before crossing the railroad tracks. Drivers of Type II school buses shall open the left front window.

- (d) Except when required by section 1071 of this title, stopping is not required at a crossing that has been signed as "exempt" in accordance with a designation of the transportation board

23 V.S.A. § 1075. Passing school bus

- (a) The operator of a motor vehicle, including authorized emergency vehicles under section 1015 of this title, upon meeting or overtaking a vehicle marked and equipped as provided in section 1283 of this title which has stopped on the highway for the purpose of receiving or discharging public or private school children shall stop his vehicle immediately and shall keep it stationary while the flashing red signal lights are in operation.
- (b) The driver of a vehicle need not stop upon a highway with separate roadways upon meeting or overtaking a school bus which is on a different roadway, or upon a controlled access highway where the school bus is stopped in a loading zone which is a part of or adjacent to the highway at a point where pedestrians are not permitted to cross the roadway.

23 V.S.A. § 1281. Additional equipment

In addition to other equipment required by this title, any school bus as described in section 4 of this title shall be equipped as follows:

- (1) A door in the rear and a door on the right side for entrance or exit purposes.
- (2) At least one fire extinguisher of a type approved by the commissioner at all times in good and usable condition and easily accessible to the driver.
- (3) A standard first-aid kit of a type approved by the commissioner at all times filled with necessary articles.
- (4) A hot water heater at all times capable of keeping the interior at a comfortable temperature or other type of heater approved by the commissioner of motor vehicles.
- (5) Adequate ventilation facilities.
- (6) At least two windows of safety glass on each side to provide interior light and so secured as to afford protection against wind and rain.
- (7) Seats securely fastened to the floor or sides of the interior and providing at least thirteen inches of seat space for each child to be transported.
- (8) In addition to the foregoing, all motor vehicles in which the original seating equipment has been modified or added to must comply with the following:
 - (A) All seats must be readily accessible by use of an aisle or door without interference from any other seat or seats.
 - (B) Minimum of 36 inches headroom for sitting position above top of undepressed cushion line of all seats shall be provided.
 - (C) Minimum of 12 inches shall be provided from the top of the undepressed cushion line to the floor.
 - (D) Seats shall be covered with fire-resistant material.
 - (E) Jump seats or portable seats shall not be used.

- (F) Seat beside driver, if regular equipment or installed by vehicle manufacturer, may be used for pupil seating. It shall be securely fastened to body and shall be so constructed as not to interfere with pupils entering or leaving vehicle.
- (G) All seats shall be at least 12 inches overall depth.
- (H) If forward-facing seats are used, they shall be so placed that distance from center to center measured at top center of backs shall be not less than 26 inches.
- (I) If longitudinal seats are used, only two shall be installed against sides of vehicle and distance between

23 V.S.A. § 1281a. Optional equipment

In addition to equipment required under section 1283, any school bus as described in subdivision (34) of section 4 of this title may be equipped with a stop arm sign with flashing red lights, of a type approved by the commissioner, securely mounted below the left front window on the vehicle in an area approved by the commissioner and must be visible to the driver when extended. Such sign shall not be activated unless the vehicle has stopped on the highway for the purpose of receiving or discharging public or private school children. At no time shall the sign be extended when the vehicle is in motion.

23 V.S.A. § 1282. Operator, equipment and inspection

- (a) Before a person may assume the duty of transporting school pupils in either a Type I or Type II school bus, he or she shall as a minimum:
 - (1) For Type I, have a valid state of Vermont commercial driver license with a passenger endorsement and a school bus driver's endorsement or, for Type II, have a valid state of Vermont license with a school bus driver's endorsement or have a license from another jurisdiction valid for the class or type of vehicle to be driven;
 - (2) Furnish the department of motor vehicles or in the case of a person licensed in another jurisdiction furnish his or her employer a certificate signed by a licensed physician, or a certified physician's assistant or a nurse practitioner in accordance with written protocols, that he or she is, as far as can be determined by reasonable inquiry and examination, mentally and physically competent to perform his or her duties. Any newly diagnosed diabetic or established diabetic must be stabilized and must be certified by his or her personal physician that he or she has not had a hypoglycemic reaction (loss of consciousness or near loss of consciousness) for the last two years or since his or her last physical, whichever is longer. Any diabetic must be recertified every six months by his or her personal physician who must state that the patient has not had a hypoglycemic reaction during that time;
 - (3) Have completed training in school bus operation, including evacuation and emergency procedures, as the commissioner deems necessary;
 - (4) Be licensed for Type I or Type II or both, Type I being an automatic qualification for a Type II operator;
 - (5) Furnish to his or her employer prior to the first date of employment as a school bus driver, a copy of his or her three-year operating record.
- (b) A school bus shall not be operated in the transportation of children to and from school unless and until it is inspected at an inspection station designated as such by the motor vehicle department. The inspection shall thoroughly cover mechanical conditions, standard equipment, extra equipment and safety and comfort conditions all as provided in section 1281 of this title; and, if the inspected vehicle meets all of these requirements, the

inspection station shall give the owner or operator of the inspected vehicle a signed certificate so stating. This certificate shall be shown as soon as possible by the owner or operator to a school director in the town in which this vehicle is to be operated, and shall thereafter be carried in some easily accessible place in the vehicle. Thereafter, so long as this bus remains in this service, it must be reinspected as provided in this section during each of the following periods: July-August, November-December, and February-March. School buses of the pleasure car type, if regularly used in this service, shall display signs required in subdivision 1281(9) of this title when transporting schoolchildren.

- (c) (1) A school bus shall not regularly transport more passengers than seating space of thirteen inches for each child will permit.
- (2) Bus routing and seating plans shall be coordinated so as to eliminate standees when a school bus is in motion, and standees shall be permitted only in emergency situations.
- (3) There shall be no auxiliary seating accommodations such as temporary or folding jump seats in school buses.
- (d) (1) A person licensed by the department of motor vehicles to assume the duty of transporting school pupils in either a Type I or Type II school bus shall annually before the commencement of the school year furnish his or her employer, where he or she is employed as a school bus driver, the following:
 - (A) A certificate signed by a licensed physician, or a certified physician's assistant or a nurse practitioner in accordance with written protocols, certifying that he or she is, as far as can be determined by reasonable inquiry and examination, mentally and physically competent to perform his or her duties, and that he or she meets or exceeds the minimum hearing standards, based on voice testing, as prescribed by the commissioner; and
 - (B) A certificate signed by a properly registered and authorized medical doctor, ophthalmologist, optometrist, or nurse practitioner certifying that he or she meets or exceeds the minimum vision standards as prescribed by the commissioner.
- (2) Upon receipt of a certificate required by this subsection which indicates that the school bus driver is not mentally or physically competent or does not meet the minimum hearing or vision standards, the employer shall immediately notify the commissioner.
- (e) In the event the school bus driver is subject to 49 C.F.R. part 391, subpart E, the provisions of those regulations rather than the standards of this section shall apply.

23 V.S.A. § 1283. Identification and equipment of school buses

- (a) Types I and II school buses shall be:
 - (1) Identified with the words, "School Bus," printed in letters not less than eight inches high, located between the warning signal lamps as high as possible without impairing visibility of the lettering from both front and rear;
 - (2) Painted national school bus glossy yellow, except that the hood shall be either that color or lusterless black and the fenders shall be either that color or black. For Type II school buses, the requirements of this subsection and subdivision (a)(3) of this section shall apply to any new bus ordered on or after January 1, 2000;
 - (3) Equipped with bumpers of glossy black, unless for increased night visibility they are covered with a reflective material;
 - (4) Equipped with a system of signal lamps approved by the commissioner, including an eight light system on any new or used school bus ordered on and after July 1, 1976. The driver of a Type I or a Type II school bus shall

keep the alternately flashing red signal lamps lighted whenever school children are being received or discharged, and they shall be used only for that purpose. A school bus driver found in violation of this subdivision shall be guilty of a traffic violation;

(5)(A) Equipped with a system of mirrors, if such a system is necessary to give the seated driver a view of the roadway to each side of the bus, and of the area immediately in front of the front bumper, in accordance with the following procedure:

When a rod, 30 inches long, is placed upright on the ground at any point along a traverse line 1 foot forward of the forward most point of a school bus, and extending the width of the bus, at least 7 1/2 inches of the length of the rod shall be visible to the driver, either by direct view or by means of an indirect visibility system.

(B) In addition, equipped with an inside mirror so located as to give the driver clear vision of the interior of the bus, and an outside mirror located on each side of the bus located so as to give an unobstructed view of the road to the rear; and

(6) In compliance with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses as of the date of manufacture.

(b) Any school bus meeting the identification requirements of (a)(1)-(4) of this section that is permanently converted for use wholly for purposes other than transporting pupils to or from school, or transporting organized groups of pre-school or school age children, shall be painted a color other than national school bus glossy yellow, and shall have the stop arm, if any, and equipment required by this section removed.

(c) Type I and Type II school buses being operated on a public highway and transporting primarily passengers other than school pupils shall have the words, "School Bus," covered, removed, or otherwise concealed, and the stop arms and equipment permitted by section 1281a of this title shall not be operable through the usual controls.

(d) No motor vehicle other than a school bus shall display the identifying equipment and signs required by this section.

23 V.S.A. § 1284. Vehicle maintenance

(a) School buses shall at all times be maintained in a safe operating condition.

(b) A systematic preventive maintenance program shall be established and records kept, which at all times shall be available for inspection by any enforcement officer.

(c) School bus drivers shall perform daily pre-trip inspections of their vehicles and report immediately, in writing, to their supervisors, any defects or deficiencies discovered that may affect the safety of the operation of the vehicle or result in its mechanical breakdown.

23 V.S.A. § 1285. Pupil instruction

At least twice during each school year, each pupil who is transported in a school bus shall be instructed by school authorities in safe riding practices, and participate in emergency evacuation drills.

23 V.S.A. § 1286. Penalties

Any violation of sections 1283, 1284 or 1285 of this title shall be a traffic violation as defined in chapter 24 of this title.

23 V.S.A. § 1301. Emergency exits

The owner of a motor bus, designed to carry more than seven passengers and having a closed body, shall not operate such bus or permit the same to be operated, unless it has an exit in the rear end or an exit at the rear on the opposite side from the front door thereof through which passengers may pass in case of emergency.

23 V.S.A. § 1303. Flares required

A person shall not operate a motor truck, except those registered at pleasure car rates and those registered with a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 10,001 pounds, with or without a trailer or semi-trailer attached, or a motor bus, upon a highway outside the lighted area of a town or city, unless there shall be carried in such vehicle, ready at all hours for instant use, three electric flares or three reflector type flares of a type approved by the commissioner of motor vehicles. However, if the vehicle is used in the transportation of hazardous material as defined in 5 V.S.A. § 2001(a)(1), three electric flares or three reflector type flares of a type specified in this section shall be carried.

23 V.S.A. § 1304. Use

If such vehicle is disabled so that it is necessary that it remain on the roadway or shoulder of the highway, the driver or other person in charge of such vehicle shall cause operating flares to be placed upon the roadway or shoulder of the highway, one approximately 100 feet in front of such vehicle, one approximately 100 feet to the rear and one on the traffic side of the vehicle. Such flares shall remain in place until such vehicle is removed from the roadway or shoulder.

**ADMINISTRATIVE RULES OF DEPARTMENT OF
MOTOR VEHICLES**

Operator License Endorsements

(a) Requirements to Obtain a School Bus Endorsement.

Before a person may be licensed to assume the duty of transporting school pupils in either a Type I or Type II school bus, he or she shall comply with applicable provisions of 23 V. S. A. § 1282, and shall:

(1) Successfully pass the following tests:

- a. Vision test.
 - b. A written test based on the school bus manual and Section 10 of the Vermont Commercial Driver License Manual. The test consisting of thirty-one (31) questions, which are a combination of multiple choice, nine (9) fill in the blank, and two (2) essay questions. The passing score is eighty percent (80%) or better.
 - c. Road Test. The road test must be taken in either a Type I or Type II school bus. To pass the applicant must have less than 21 demerits. An accident, dangerous action, or serious violation would be cause for immediate rejection.
- (2) No person applying for a school bus endorsement will be permitted such endorsement unless he or she is physically qualified.

A person is physically qualified to drive a school bus only if he or she:

- A. Has no loss of a foot, a leg, a hand or an arm, or has been granted a waiver by the department following a determination that the loss/impairment will not interfere with his or her ability to control and safely drive a school bus. Such waiver will be subject to review upon renewal of the endorsement as described in section (b).
- B. Has no impairment of the use of a foot, a leg, a hand, fingers, or an arm, and no other structural defect or limitation, which is likely to interfere with his or her ability to control and safely drive a school bus, or has been granted a waiver by the department following a determination that the impairment will not interfere with his or her ability to control and safely drive a school bus. Such waiver will be subject to review upon renewal of the endorsement as described in section (b).
- C. Has no current clinical diagnosis of unstabilized diabetes mellitus. An applicant's physician must certify that the applicant has not had a hypoglycemic reaction for at least two years. Any diabetic who obtains a school bus driver endorsement must submit a statement from his or her physician every six months that the applicant has not had a hypoglycemic reaction during that period.
- D. Has no current clinical diagnosis of myocardial infarction, angina pectoris, coronary insufficiency, thrombosis, or any other cardiovascular disease of a variety known to be accompanied by syncope, dyspnea, collapse, or congestive cardiac failure.
- E. Has no established medical history or clinical diagnosis of a respiratory dysfunction likely to interfere with his or her ability to control and drive a school bus safely.
- F. Has no current clinical diagnosis of high blood pressure likely to interfere with his or her ability to operate a school bus safely. Based on medical recommendations the blood pressure reading must be at or below 140/90 with prognosis to continue at or below that level.

- G. Has no established medical history or clinical diagnosis of epilepsy or any other condition, which is likely to cause loss of consciousness or any loss of ability to control a school bus, except where the established medical history shows no seizures or use of medication within the last five years preceding application.
- H. Has no mental, nervous, organic or functional disease or psychiatric disorder likely to interfere with his or her ability to drive a school bus safely.
- I. Meets the same vision standards as required for obtaining a Vermont Learner's Permit, Junior Operator's license and Operator's license.
- J. Is not totally deaf but can perceive and understand, with or without a hearing aid, a conversation conducted in a normal tone of voice at a distance not to exceed five feet. However, a person unable to qualify as above can be granted an endorsement subject to the following restrictions:
 - (a) Left and right hand outside rear view mirrors, which give an unobstructed view to the rear on any school bus, he or she may operate.
 - (b) An inside rear view mirror which gives the seated driver clear vision of the interior of the bus.
 - (c) Must have at least one individual capable of hearing with or without a hearing device in the bus at all times when said bus is transporting school age pupils.
- K. Does not use an amphetamine, narcotic, or any habit-forming drug, and
- L. Has no current clinical diagnosis of alcoholism.
- M. Is not using any medication, the side affects of which would affect the safe operation of a school bus.

The waivers permitted under letters A and B of this section will be determined during the road test. Acceptance or denial on the basis of high blood pressure will be determined by the School Bus Driver Medical Evaluation Form submitted by applicant's own doctor and progress reports at intervals of 6 months can be required. The possible exception under letter G, epilepsy, will be determined on the basis of a School Bus Driver Medical Evaluation Form submitted by the applicant's own doctor. Determination under letter M above will be based on a recommendation by the person's own doctor or a School Bus Driver Medical Evaluation Form. Said forms as referenced in this paragraph are required by statute at T. 23 V. S. A. § 1282.

- (3) In the case of first time endorsement only, if the applicant's operator's license expires within one year, the endorsement shall expire coincidentally with the license's second expiration.

(b) School Bus Examination to Retain Endorsement.

A person who holds a license with a school bus endorsement is required to take an examination every four years.

- (1) The examination consists of:
 - a. Vision test.
 - b. A written test based on the school bus manual and Section 10 of the Vermont Commercial Driver License Manual. The test consisting of thirty-one (31) questions, which are a combination of multiple choice, nine (9) fill in the blank, and two (2) essay questions. The passing score is eighty percent (80%) or better.

- c. Road test required if the applicant has any physical disabilities, or at the discretion of the Examiner. The road test must be taken in either a Type I or Type II school bus. To pass, the applicant must have less than twenty-one (21) demerits. An accident, dangerous action, or serious violation would be cause for immediate rejection.
- (2) No person applying to retain his school bus endorsement under this section will be permitted to do so unless he or she is physically qualified pursuant to the standards set forth under section (a)(2) of this rule.
- (3) If an applicant's license with a school bus endorsement has been expired for six (6) months or more, it is required that the complete examination, as described in section (a) be administered. It is strongly recommended that an annual physical report be required by and filed with the school district.
- (4) When a school bus endorsement is being renewed, the endorsement shall expire coincidentally with the operator's license. A school bus clinic shall be required for renewal of an endorsement. Applicants must obtain a four year operator's license upon renewal.

EDUCATION LAWS OF VERMONT

16 V.S.A. § 1222. Pupils who may be furnished transportation

- (a) Each legal pupil, as defined in section 1073 of this title, entitled or required to attend an elementary school, or a secondary school may be furnished with total or partial transportation to school, or board, as in the opinion of the board of school directors is reasonable and necessary to enable him to attend school. Each board shall adopt a transportation policy for pupils required to attend school in accordance with the procedure specified in section 563(1) of this title. This policy must take into consideration the transportation needs of pupils supported by, but not limited to, such factors as age and health of pupils, distance to be traveled, condition of the road and type of highway. The policy shall be adopted by the board prior to September 1, 1971 and filed in the office of the principal of each school in the district. Any subsequent amendments in policy shall also be filed in the principal's office. Such compensation may be paid to parents or guardians, and shall be payable only in return for actual transportation or board as shall be stipulated by the school directors.
- (b) The provisions of section 376 of Title 23 relative to the use of motor vehicles for a municipal purpose shall apply to this section.
- (c) Expenditures by a school district for transportation or board under this act shall be included in computing current school expenses under chapter 123 of this title.



Notes

**Department of Motor Vehicles
Agency of Transportation
120 State Street
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TO: