



SCHOOL BUS

Commitment to Safety

**“It will
never
happen
to me.”**



Training and Practice are Key

“It will never happen to me.” This statement is often thought or said by many when an emergency situation occurs. However, the harsh reality is these situations do occur, and you never know when or what might happen to you. One group that shoulders great responsibility to be prepared for any situation is **school bus drivers**. Each and every day the safety and well-being of students is in their hands. Besides having good situational awareness and remaining calm, drivers must have the proper training for emergency situations, and this training must be tested and practiced before a crisis occurs.



Every year almost 500,000 school buses carry approximately 26 million students across the United States twice a day.

Across the nation, school buses collectively travel an average of 4.5 billion miles each school year.

According to the National Safety Council, the national school bus accident rate is 0.01 per 100 million miles traveled, compared to 0.04 for trains, 0.06 for commercial aviation and 0.96 for other passenger vehicles.

Approximately 27 school-aged children die in school bus accidents every year.

There were 1,236 fatal school transportation-related crashes from 2001 to 2010, according to statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

School buses are one of the safest modes of transportation; however, one can never know what kind of issue may arise. By having the necessary knowledge and information, school bus drivers can have a substantial impact on preventing injury and death.

Types of Emergencies

The following are types of emergencies that school bus drivers may face, as well as some examples of how school bus drivers used their training and knowledge to keep those in their care safe.



Driver Distractions

Anything that distracts the driver from doing his or her job is considered a driver distraction. These distractions could be anything from a medical or behavior issue with a student to something that may seem minor, such as a snake or bee on the bus.

In a report by CBS13, when a special needs student began choking on his bus, California school bus driver, Danny Waldrum, pulled over, called 911, and successfully dislodged a pebble from the child's throat, saving his life. All of the school bus drivers in his district are reportedly trained in life-saving techniques.



Road Hazards

There are many things that school bus drivers could encounter in the roadways that present hazards and possible emergency situations. Downed power lines, flooded roads, and wrecks are just a few examples.

Dominique Charles, a bus driver in Palm Beach County, is another driver deemed "heroic" by many parents. He didn't panic when his bus was struck by a van and his bus veered off the road and came to rest suspended over a canal. He calmly and safely evacuated the 36 students. Charles told the Orlando Sentinel, "I did the best I could." He remembered something he learned during his training, "Don't ever let the bus control you. You have to control the bus."



Weather-Related Emergencies

These types of emergencies involve driving in dangerous weather, such as ice, snow, fog, rain, earthquakes, floods, and tornadoes.

According to ABC station RTV6, Angel Perry, an Indiana school bus driver, safely guided eleven children on her bus to shelter when an EF4 tornado touched the ground close to her bus. She calmly turned the bus around, drove to a nearby school, and safely evacuated her students into the building. Minutes later, her empty school bus was lifted off the ground and thrown into a nearby diner.



Physical Driver Emergencies

Driver illnesses, such as heart attacks, seizures, and coughing fits are all types of physical driver emergencies.

5NEWS reported that Fayetteville Public School Officials commended one of their school bus drivers for safely stopping his bus before a busy intersection while experiencing a heart attack. The driver steered into a retaining wall to avoid a power pole and the intersection ahead. None of the students were injured.



Mechanical Issues

Emergencies of this type include brake failure, tire blow-outs, accelerator problems, steering issues, headlight failures, and bus fires.

Students in Boca Raton credit their school bus driver with saving their lives, as she was able to safely stop her bus on a busy street following a brake failure. According to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, she did all of this while still maintaining order on the bus, and reassuring the students, "Calm down, we're going to be fine. Don't worry." No one was injured.



Security Issues

Sadly, in today's world, acts of violence – threats, hostage or kidnapping situations, and even acts of terrorism – are becoming more and more prevalent. Therefore, this is another potential emergency situation that school bus drivers must be aware of.

North Carolina school bus driver, Evans Okoduma, was able to thwart a potential hijacking on his bus. ABC News reported that he successfully talked a seventh grader into giving him his gun. The student planned to hijack the school bus in order to shoot government officials in Washington D.C.



“Don't ever let the bus control you. You have to control the bus.”

“Calm down, we're going to be fine. Don't worry.”



School Training Solutions Online Courses Can Help

School Training Solutions (STS) can help your transportation department take employee training to the next level by incorporating an online training component into your existing training program. **STS** offers an array of courses that schools can take advantage of to help them be better prepared for emergencies.



Courses dealing with pre- and post-trip inspections, sound driving practices, emergency evacuations, and inclement weather driving are all available and can provide instrumental preparation for dealing with all types of transportation emergencies. **School Training Solutions** also offers online courses detailing how to handle emergency situations with special needs students, life-saving-techniques, driving safety, and how to handle crisis situations, all of which can help further develop and improve emergency plans.

“Online training from School Training Solutions offers numerous advantages over the traditional approach for conducting training.”

Tailored Solution

For states and school districts, STS will work with you to develop a customized, tailored portal to meet the training needs of your school district.

Flexibility & Availability

Available 24/7/365, online training can be conducted when and where time permits. No more waiting for classes to form, traveling, make-up classes, or taking time away from other activities!

Online Documentation & Reporting

Up to the minute reporting is available to your portal administrator on the mandatory training status of the employees in your school district.

Cost & Value

Online training is significantly less expensive than classroom based instruction. Furthermore, as we develop other mandatory training courses for school employees we will add them to your catalog at no additional cost.

Consistency

Information presented to each employee is consistent and presented in the same way each time.

Instant Feedback

Students know exactly how they are doing as they progress through the course, as feedback is instant.



Preparedness is a Journey

Even though most school bus drivers have emergency plans, preparedness is a continuous cycle of assessing and planning. This invaluable tool makes emergency preparedness measurable and visible and will help improve plans already in place to achieve a higher level of preparedness. As the site states,

***“Preparedness is a journey,
not a destination.”***

Patrick Willi, Director of School Training Solutions says school bus drivers can never be too prepared. “In these emergency situations, drivers have to decide ahead of time what their options are. Their actions can mean life or death for many. Training and practice are the only ways to be prepared for these types of situations,” Willi states.

***School bus drivers have one of the
most vital roles in education –
to transport students safely to and
from school.***

They must be prepared for anything – the students and their families are counting on them.



***“Preparedness
is a journey, not
a destination.”***



www.schooltrainingsolutions.com

Brooke Neal, Staff Writer
Stefany Townsend, Layout and Design

© Smart Horizons

All images used according to license permissions or courtesy of defense.gov.
© 2015 I23RF Limited. © 2015 Clipart.com.