

Emergency Safety Bus Drill Best Practices

[Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-807](#) requires each school safety team, private school, and church-related school to conduct an emergency safety bus drill annually. Each emergency safety bus drill must be conducted without students present and must prepare school staff and law enforcement agencies on what to expect in the event of an emergency situation on a school bus. Since the emergency safety bus drill requires a discussion between the school safety team and local law enforcement to prepare for what to expect in the event of an emergency, the emergency safety bus drill can be completed by conducting a tabletop exercise among the school safety team and local law enforcement (without students present).

The [Tennessee Emergency Management Agency \(TEMA\)](#) states that “a [tabletop exercise](#) is intended to generate discussion of various issues regarding a hypothetical, simulated emergency. They can be used to enhance general awareness, validate plans and procedures, rehearse concepts, and/or assess the types of systems needed to guide the prevention of, protection from, mitigation of, response to, and recovery from a defined incident. Generally, they are aimed at facilitating conceptual understanding, identifying strengths and areas of improvement, and/or achieving changes in perceptions. During a tabletop exercise, players [safety teams along with their first responders] are encouraged to discuss issues in depth, collaboratively examining areas of concern and solving problems. The effectiveness is derived from the energetic involvement of participants and their assessment of recommended revisions to current policies, procedures, and plans.”

Tips and Best Practices:

- **Determine the appropriate tabletop exercise.** Since the emergency safety bus drill requires a discussion between the school safety team and local law enforcement to prepare for what to expect in the event of an emergency, the emergency safety bus drill can be completed by conducting a tabletop exercise among the school safety team and local law enforcement (without students present).
 - Below are some tabletop exercises that can be used for the emergency safety bus drill:
 - **Sample Tabletop Exercises developed in collaboration with [Safe and Sound Schools](#)**
 - [Transportation Weather](#)
 - [Bus Accident 1](#)
 - [Bus Accident 2](#)
 - [Transportation Threatening Situation](#)
 - [TEMA Tabletop Exercise Scenario Template \(T.E.S.T.\) Program](#)
 - [Customizable Scenario](#)
- **Determine who is on the school safety team that needs to participate.** [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-806\(b\)](#) specifies each building level school safety team shall be appointed by the building principal and the team shall include, but not be limited to, representatives of teacher, administrator and parent organizations, and school personnel including school safety personnel, as well as community members, local law enforcement officials, local ambulance and other emergency response agencies, and any other representatives the district’s director of schools deems appropriate. For this drill, it

will also be important to have someone from transportation participate in order for all parties to understand how they will communicate and work together in a transportation related emergency.

- **Schedule the emergency safety bus drill on a day when students are not present.** The drill could be held during a professional development or in-service day. It may be helpful for the district to call in all school safety teams and first responders to a meeting to conduct the emergency safety bus drill.
- **Ensure the school [emergency operations plan](#) is up to date.** [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-8-804\(a\)](#) requires that emergency operations plans be reviewed at minimum on an annual basis. Best practice is for the plan to be a living document that is adjusted as needed when lessons are learned from drills and exercises.
- During the emergency safety bus drill, **ensure the [school emergency operations plan](#) is accessible to all** participating in the drill. Participants will need to refer to their roles and responsibilities according to the plan as well as functional procedures and hazard sheets that may correspond with the hypothetical, simulated emergency.
- **Have a facilitator** that is not on the school safety team to guide the exercise and ensure the participants remain focused so all issues are thoroughly explored during the exercise. TEMA provides a [tabletop exercise facilitator guide](#).
- **Have an evaluator take notes** during the tabletop exercise. TEMA provides [a sample form for an evaluator](#) to take notes and document essential information during the exercise.
- **Request Feedback from participants.** TEMA provides a sample [feedback form](#) to collect feedback on how well the exercise went.
- **Create an after-action report** to capture strengths, areas for improvement, and lessons learned. TEMA provides a [sample after-action report](#).
- **Assess the evaluator notes, participant feedback and after-action report to develop a corrective action plan.** The corrective action plan outlines emergency planning actions identified following the exercise. TEMA provides a sample [corrective action plan template](#).
- **Incorporate any changes that need to be made into the Emergency Operations Plan.**
- [Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-807](#) requires the results of the drill be maintained by the school for a minimum of five years and requires the results be made available to your local law enforcement agency and the department of education.