

Evacuation Procedures

An emergency situation can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere. It could be a crash, a stalled school bus on a railroad-highway crossing or in a high-speed intersection, an electrical fire in the engine compartment, a medical emergency to a student on the school bus, etc. Knowing what to do in an emergency—before, during and after an evacuation—can mean the difference between life and death.

Determine Need to Evacuate Bus

The first and most important consideration is for you to recognize the hazard. If time permits, school bus drivers should contact their dispatcher to explain the situation before deciding to evacuate the school bus. As a rule, student safety and control is best maintained by keeping students on the bus during an emergency and/or impending crisis situation, if so doing does not expose them to unnecessary risk or injury. Remember, the decision to evacuate the bus must be a timely one.

A decision to evacuate should include consideration of the following conditions:

- Is there a fire or danger of a fire?
- Is there a smell of leaking fuel?
- Is there a chance the bus could be hit by other vehicles?
- Is the bus in the path of a sighted tornado or rising waters?
- Are there downed power lines?
- Would removing students expose them to speeding traffic, severe weather, or a dangerous environment such as downed power lines?
- Would moving students complicate injuries such as neck and back injuries and fractures?
- Is there a hazardous spill involved?
- Sometimes, it may be safer to remain on the bus and not come in contact with the material.

Mandatory Evacuations

The driver must evacuate the bus when:

- The bus is on fire or there is a threat of a fire.
- The bus is stalled on or adjacent to a railroad-highway crossing.
- The position of the bus may change and increase the danger.

- There is an imminent danger of collision.
- There is a need to quickly evacuate because of a hazardous materials spill.

Evacuation Procedures: Be Prepared and Plan Ahead

When possible, assign two responsible, older student assistants to each emergency exit. Teach them how to assist the other students off the bus. Assign another student assistant to lead the students to a safe place after evacuation. However, you must recognize that there may not be older, responsible students on the bus at the time of the emergency. Therefore, emergency evacuation procedures must be explained to all students. This includes ensuring that they know the location of and operation of the various emergency exits, and the importance of listening to and following all instructions given by you.

General Procedures

- Determine if evacuation is in the best interest of safety.
- Determine the best type of evacuation:
 - Front, rear, or side door evacuation, or some combination of doors.
 - Roof or window evacuation.
- Secure the bus by:
 1. Placing transmission in Park, or if there is no shift point, in Neutral.
 2. Setting parking brakes.
 3. Shutting off the engine.
 4. Removing ignition key.
 5. Activating hazard-warning lamps.
- If time allows, notify dispatch office of evacuation location, conditions, and type of assistance needed.
- Dangle radio microphone or telephone out of driver's window for later use, if operable.
- If no radio, or radio is inoperable, dispatch a passing motorist or area resident to call for help. As a last resort, dispatch two older, responsible students to go for help.
- Order the evacuation:
 1. Evacuate students from the bus.

- a. Do not move a student you believe may have suffered a neck or spinal injury unless his or her life is in immediate danger.
 - b. Special procedures must be used to move neck spinal injury victims to prevent further injury.
2. Direct a student assistant to lead students to the nearest safe place.
 3. Walk through the bus to ensure no students remain on the bus.
Retrieve emergency equipment.
 4. Join waiting students. Account for all students and check for their safety.
- Protect the scene. Set out emergency warning devices as necessary and appropriate.
 - Prepare information for emergency responders.

Safe Place to Evacuate (Tips)

- A safe place for the students will be at least 100 feet off the road in the direction of oncoming traffic. This will keep them from being hit by debris if another vehicle collides with the bus.
- Lead students upwind of the bus if fire is present.
- Lead students as far away from railroad tracks as possible and in the direction of any oncoming train.
- Lead students upwind of the bus at least 300 feet if there is a risk from spilled hazardous materials.
- If the bus is in the direct path of a sighted tornado and evacuation is ordered, escort students to a nearby ditch or culvert if shelter in a building is not readily available, and direct them to lie face down, hands covering their head. They should be far enough away, so the bus cannot topple on them.
- Avoid areas that are subject to flash floods.

Front Door Evacuation

- Set the parking brake, put on 4-way hazard lights, shut off engine, take the key, and instruct the students to evacuate the bus using the front door and to take nothing with them.

- The front door assistant leads the students off the bus to a safe place, 100 feet or 40 paces from the bus, or instructs the students exactly where to go. WARN ALL STUDENTS: Walk. DO NOT RUN. Use the handrails.
- The students follow the door assistant off the bus in numerical order (i.e., seats 1–24).
- After all the students are off the bus, the driver walks to the rear of the bus to make sure that all students have departed.
- Take the fire extinguisher, reflectors, and first aid kit with you off the bus.
- Make sure the students are in a safe area and behaving in an orderly manner.
- Set out the reflectors.
- Stay with the students until the emergency has been resolved.

Rear Door Evacuation

- Set the parking brake, put on 4-way hazard lights, shut off engine, take key, and instruct the students to evacuate the bus using the rear door and to take nothing with them.
- The two rear door assistants seated on the aisle exit the rear emergency door, and stand one on each side of the door to assist the rest of the students off the bus. The third rear door assistant leads the rest of the students to a safe area, 100 feet or 40 paces from the bus, or instructs the students exactly where to go. WARN ALL STUDENTS: Walk. DO NOT RUN.
- Instruct the students to sit on the floor with feet outside and ease out onto the ground when exiting the rear door of the school bus.
- The students follow the door assistant off the bus in reverse numerical order (i.e., seats 24–1).
- After all students are off the bus, the driver walks to the rear of the bus checking the bus to make sure that all the students have departed.
- Take the fire extinguisher, reflectors and first aid kit with you off the bus.
- Make sure the students are in a safe area and behaving in an orderly manner.
- Set out reflectors.
- Stay with the students until the emergency has been resolved.