



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION REPORT

Issue 4//2012

Protective Insurance Company



Back to school reminders for bus drivers

With the school year underway, it can be easy for bus drivers to settle into a routine on the road. This is a great time to remind your drivers about safety tips for the school year to make sure they keep safety at the forefront of their minds at all times.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) created the School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series to help drivers increase their knowledge on several key areas of concern, including student management, highway-rail grade crossing safety, loading and unloading, adverse conditions and transporting students, among others. Share the following tips with your drivers.

+ Managing student behavior

Your bus drivers sit behind the wheel but it is critical that they maintain control of the entire bus at all times. If a student's behavior gets out of control, it can distract your drivers and make them more vulnerable to accidents. Drivers have to set the tone early in the school year and clearly establish what behavior will and will not be tolerated. They should be friendly and fair but also firm and consistent when enforcing rules.

If a student's behavior escalates to a point where verbal reprimanding from behind the wheel isn't stopping the situation, drivers should pull over to a safe, legal location, turn off the bus and take the keys with them. They should stand up and tell the student in a courteous but firm voice that the behavior is unacceptable. If a seat change is necessary, drivers should move the student closer to the front of the bus for safety and security. >>


Your drivers should never allow a student to exit the bus unless they are at school or at the student's bus stop. For additional guidelines on managing student behavior, your drivers should refer to the school district's policies and procedures.

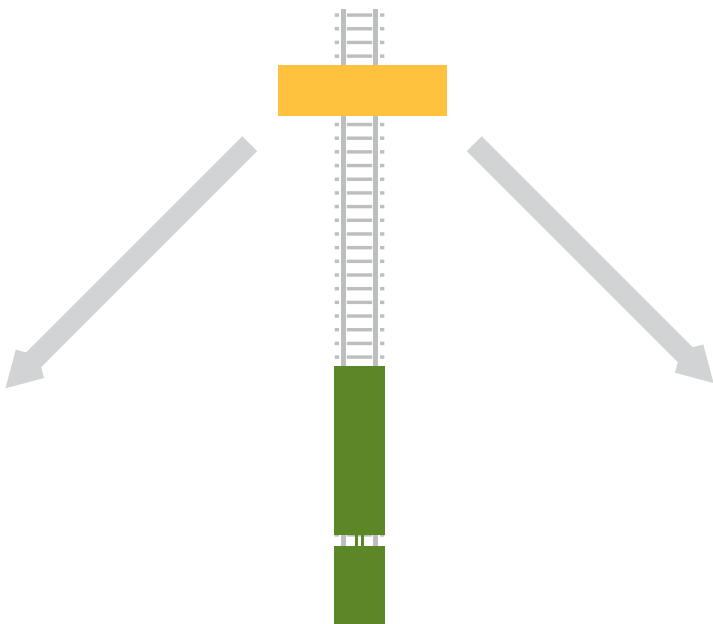
>> + Railroad crossings

School buses are required to come to a complete stop at railroad crossings. Operation Lifesaver, oli.org, provides the following tips and reminders for bus drivers:

- Slow down, test your brakes and turn on your four-way hazard lights 200 feet before the crossing or farther out if required by local laws.
- Check for traffic around your bus and make sure your intentions are clear. Watch for drivers who may try to speed up and pass you to get through the crossing.
- Turn off your radio and ask students to be quiet. Put the transmission in neutral and press down on the brake.
- Stop no closer than 15 feet and no farther than 50 feet from the nearest rail.
- Open the service door and driver's window. Look and listen for approaching trains in both directions.
- When you are sure there are no oncoming trains, cross the tracks. If you are driving with a manual transmission, start out in a low gear and do not change gears while crossing.

If a bus stalls or gets stuck on the tracks, your driver should get everyone off the bus immediately and run as far away as possible in the direction of and at angle away from where the train is coming (see diagram below). This will help shield your drivers and their passengers from flying debris as the train collides with the bus.

 IF A BUS STALLS OR GETS STUCK ON THE TRACKS, RUN IN THE DIRECTION OF AND AT AN ANGLE AWAY FROM WHERE THE TRAIN IS COMING



STOP
15-50'
FROM THE RAILROAD

+ Loading and unloading students

Students are most at risk of being injured when entering and exiting the bus. Your drivers should instruct them to walk 10 feet in front of the bus and never behind it so drivers can keep them in eyesight as long as possible. If students have to cross the road to board the bus, they should stay on the side of the road until the bus stops and the driver signals for them to cross. After checking both ways for oncoming traffic, they can cross. When exiting the bus, students need to remain seated until the bus comes to a complete stop. They should immediately move 10 feet away from the bus upon exiting. The same steps should be repeated if they have to cross the street to get home.

Your drivers also must take precaution when approaching or leaving a bus stop. They need to be sure traffic has stopped on both sides of the road before letting students exit. They should wait until students are at least 10 feet away from the bus before pulling away from the stop and avoid backing up near stops if possible.

It's important for drivers to know how many students are supposed to get on or off at each stop. If anyone is missing, drivers should ask the other students if the missing student was at the stop that morning or if the student is still outside. Drivers should also count students as they exit the bus and count them again as they walk away to make sure no one is close to the bus before pulling away. ■

The complete School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series is available on the NHTSA website: nhtsa.gov. The series includes modules and handouts, and covers the aforementioned topics as well as driver attitude, vehicle training, knowing a route, adverse conditions and transporting students with disabilities. Keep safety on the forefront of your drivers' minds by reminding them of these key areas of concern.

Are you hiring the safest drivers?

An efficient motorcoach operation relies on quality drivers. Good hiring decisions are critical to ensure you have the best possible drivers behind the wheels of your buses. But how can you be confident you are selecting the best potential drivers? One tool that many carriers are still not taking advantage of is the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Pre-Employment Screening Program (PSP). It supplies motor carriers with drivers' safety performance histories so they can make better-informed hiring and qualifying decisions.

The PSP records come directly from the FMCSA Motor Carrier Management Information System and include three years of roadside inspection data and five years of DOT-recordable accident data. You can also use data from the program to determine what areas of training and education drivers might need should you choose to hire or contract them. Additionally, the data can help you verify employment history of carriers the drivers may not have disclosed on their applications.

If records show a lack of compliance, it could indicate that drivers performed poorly on pre- and post-trip inspections or that the company they drove for had a limited focus on driver safety. Regardless, the results are a history of the driver's performance that may continue if employed by your company. It's up to you to decide if the PSP results meet your driver eligibility criteria, and how you must train and monitor your drivers. ■

Enroll in the program by visiting www.psp.fmcsa.dot.gov. Carriers pay \$10 for each requested driver history, after receiving written consent from the driver. There is also a subscription fee, with a discount available for small fleets. Keep in mind, you will not be able to look up reports on current employees. You can only use the program for pre-employment screenings.

Incorporate the PSP into your existing screening process and be confident you are taking an extra step to qualify the safest drivers.

New tools promote consumer awareness



Before booking a bus trip, consumers now have two tools available to make sure they are picking a safe company. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) created the SaferBus app and the Bus Safety Consumer Checklist to encourage consumers to look at the safety performance, safety rating and consumer complaint history of a company before doing business with them.

Available for free on the iPad and iPhone, the SaferBus app allows users to easily access a bus company's safety performance record and file a complaint on the spot. The database contains safety records for nearly 6,000 commercial passenger carriers, including privately operated motorcoach, school bus and tour bus companies. Consumers can search for a company by its name or USDOT registration number. More information about the SaferBus app is available online at fmcsa.dot.gov/saferbus.

More groups and organizations are learning about this app and making decisions about your company based on the information provided. FMCSA and the public transportation industry are making positive strides to increase public awareness of their ratings. Enabling passengers to file complaints on the spot creates a record of both regulatory and non-regulatory

related complaints. With this information now more accessible to the public, you should place an emphasis on developing compliance and safety initiatives to improve your CSA scores by providing concentrated training on regulatory compliance, safe driving and customer relations.

The Bus Safety Consumer Checklist advises the public to check bus companies' safety performance results, their FMCSA safety rating operating authority and insurance requirements. It also provides instructions for making a safety violation complaint. The checklist, available in English and eight other languages, can be accessed online at fmcsa.dot.gov/safety-security/pcs/index.aspx.

In the same section on the FMCSA website, there is a guide to help consumers decide what type of transportation best meets their needs among motorcoaches, mini-buses, school buses, limos and passenger vans. For each type of vehicle, the site lists passenger capacity, driving time limitations, restroom facilities and storage capacity. After selecting the appropriate vehicle type, consumers can enter their zip code to find a carrier near them.

Both tools are designed to encourage riders to put their safety first but also to make the industry more transparent. Your company should promote the app and checklist to prospective customers and let your safety record stand for itself. ■



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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION **CLAIMS+** **SAFETY** 2012 ROUNDTABLE

*We invite you to share this
information with others in
your company.*

Can't wait to see you there!

Hosted by Protective Insurance Company, the Claims + Safety Roundtable is an opportunity for our industry partners to get together to discuss hot topics and current trends. Leaders in their respective fields will join us to talk about special issues including:

- Bus Accidents
- Rapid Response Procedures
- New Technology
- Driver Retention

We'll wrap up the event with a roundtable discussion with the experts.
For your convenience, a room will be provided at the JW Marriott.



To register for this **FREE** roundtable,
visit www.claimsandsafety.com

- or contact -

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