

When it Comes to Emergencies...



*School Bus Drivers
Can Never Have Enough Preparation*

***“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.



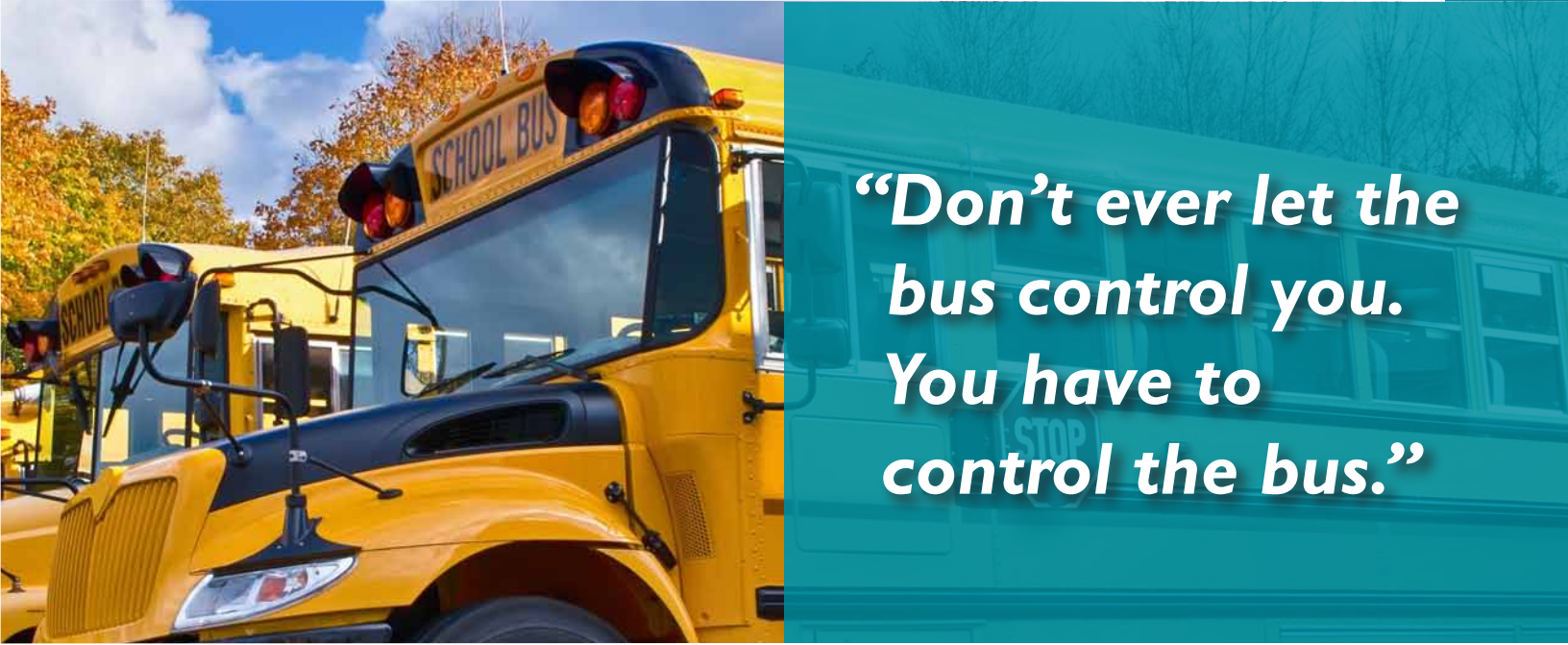
Road Hazards

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."

**"Calm down,
we're going
to be fine.
Don't worry."**





“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 Okoduwa, 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.


Red Cross Ready Rating Can Help

In addition to the required training that school bus drivers receive, the **Red Cross Ready Rating Program** is a new, free, self-guided program that schools can take advantage of to help them be better prepared for emergencies.



This program begins with an online, comprehensive assessment of your level of preparedness in **FIVE** essential areas:

- Commitment
- Knowledge of Hazard Vulnerability
- Emergency Planning
- Plan Implementation
- Community Resiliency



After completing the assessment, you receive a color-coded score card detailing your areas of strength and weakness. **RED** sections show areas where you have significant opportunities to improve; sections that are **YELLOW** show areas that could use some improvement; and **GREEN** areas show your strengths. After you receive your scores, there is a plethora of valuable materials available in the Ready Rating Toolbox to help you further develop your emergency plans.

A few of these tools include:



Emergency Response Planner

Will help you create or enhance an emergency plan tailored to fit your needs



Ready Rating Seal

A visible statement that shows your commitment to preparedness



Member Reports

A section to generate progress reports on employees



Resource Center

Contains printables you can use to educate your employees, worksheets to help develop and enhance emergency plans, and practice resources to help you develop and assess practice drills

Jerry Kindle, Executive Director of the American Red Cross of Northwest Florida, further details the merits of this program. “A large number of businesses either fail to reopen or later go out of business in the aftermath of a large disaster.

Ready Rating is a program that’s end goal is a more resilient community.

It starts with partnering with Red Cross to take a self-assessment of your business’s continuance of operations plan and ends with your business and Red Cross helping its employees to be better prepared and then your community be more resilient,” he states.

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.



A row of yellow school buses with blue accents parked in a lot under a clear blue sky. The buses are viewed from a side-rear perspective, showing their windows and rear sections. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. A teal-colored horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

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is a journey, not
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