

WATAUGA COUNTY SCHOOLS

Transportation Department

Bus Driver Manual

TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

Bus Driver Manual

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Acknowledgement

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FORWARD

SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

– A DRIVING FORCE IN EDUCATION

The mission of the Transportation Department is to provide safe and on time transportation to and from school for all eligible Watauga County students as efficiently and effectively as possible. Without the School Bus Driver, this mission will never be accomplished. As a Bus Driver, you are the first and last member of the school system a student meets each day. You often have a major impact on the students' day.

This handbook provides information, suggestions, and guidelines to assist you in performing your duties. While we have attempted to address the major items you may need, this handbook does not cover all the things you will encounter. Be sure to direct any questions and concerns to Transportation Administration, your school Principal, and fellow drivers.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS	2
– A DRIVING FORCE IN EDUCATION	2
THE SCHOOL BUS DRIVER.....	1
EXPECTATIONS OF WATAUGA COUNTY BUS DRIVERS	2
THE WATAUGA COUNTY SCHOOL BUS DRIVER	3
RULES, REGULATIONS & GUIDELINES.....	5
BUS DRIVER RULES, REGULATIONS AND GUIDELINES	5
SPEED LIMITS	6
SUSPENSION FOR FAILURE TO APPEAR IN COURT.....	7
SUSPENSION FOR CITATION OF A MOVING VIOLATION WHILE OPERATING A SCHOOL BUS <i>OR</i> ARREST	7
UNAUTHORIZED PASSENGERS	8
BUS SECURITY AT NIGHT	8
BUS CLEANLINESS	9
CELL PHONES AND OTHER TWO-WAY DEVICES	10
CLASS I OFFENSES	10
CLASS II OFFENSES	12
CLASS III OFFENSES.....	13
ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES	15
I. ATTENDANCE.....	15
II. TARDINESS	15
III. LEAVES	15
SCHOOL BUS DISCIPLINE	17
ENTITLEMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL.....	17
SCHOOL BUS DISCIPLINE	18
TEN WAYS TO MAINTAIN PASSENGER DISCIPLINE	18
SEATING ASSIGNMENTS	19
BUS OPERATIONS AND INSPECTIONS	20
INCLEMENT WEATHER GUIDELINES	20
WHEELCHAIR LIFTS	21
PRE-TRIP INSPECTIONS.....	22
POST TRIP INSPECTIONS	23
BUS ACCIDENTS.....	24
BUS ACCIDENT PROCEDURES	24
ACCIDENTS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY	25
THE TORT CLAIMS ACT AND ACCIDENTS.....	25
SCHOOL BUS EVACUATION	26
SUGGESTED EVACUATION PROCEDURE	26
SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES.....	27
FORMS USED BY BUS DRIVERS	28

The School Bus Driver

The Professional Bus Driver...

- Maintains professional and ethical conduct at all times
- Conducts herself/himself in a responsible manner
- Is dependable and reliable: uses self-control in handling his/her emotions
- Shows common courtesy and respect for the rights, feelings and opinions of others
- Develops and maintains a good team relationship with the school administration
- Has a caring and positive attitude towards administration, co-workers, students, parents and the public
- Uses discretion when speaking to colleagues and students
- Follows Transportation's philosophy, objectives, federal, state, and local rules and procedures
- Ask questions and discuss problems with the appropriate supervisor; follows proper channels when making suggestions or initiating activities

- Is continually learning effective ways of driving a bus and working with students
- Accepts helpful comments for improving work performance
- Exhibits a professional image through appropriate dress

Expectations of Watauga County Bus Drivers

1. To transport all eligible and assigned students to and from school in the safest possible way, on time, every day.
2. To treat the students on the bus with dignity and respect while maintaining a firm and well disciplined approach.
3. To come to work on time everyday, AM and PM.
4. To maintain a professional demeanor at all times.
5. To work with the administrators at the schools as a team member to provide fair and consistent transportation to all students.
6. To remain drug free at all times.
7. To do a complete pre-service check every time the bus is to leave the bus lot.
8. To do a complete post-trip inspection after every route to ensure no damage, mechanical problems or children and other items left on the bus.

Please strive to meet these expectations on a daily basis.

The Watauga County School Bus Driver

The school bus driver is one of the most important people in the Watauga County School system. The tremendous responsibility of transporting students to and from school safely and on schedule every day, as well as ensuring the safety of your passengers is in your hands. A driver's dedication and commitment are essential to safe school bus transportation. A school bus driver must be of high moral character and is expected to always conduct him or herself in a professional manner. Because the bus driver is a model for passengers and a representative of the school system, conduct and appearance should contribute to the mutual respect and pleasant relations developed with your passengers, school staff, parents, and other drivers on the road.

A driver must be defensive and careful not to commit driving errors. It is essential to make allowances for the lack of skill and knowledge or behavioral and attitude concerns on the part of the other driver. All precautions should be taken to prevent accidents due to hazardous weather, road conditions, or the actions of pedestrians and other drivers. You must be continually alert in order to recognize a potential accident-producing situation far enough in advance to take preventive action when possible. Self-control, alertness, foresight, judgment, and skill in handling and maintaining control of the bus are required at all times.

Possessing a sound, mature demeanor toward the responsibilities of school bus driving makes the difference between a mediocre driver and an excellent one. A person with a positive approach frequently qualifies a good driver, while the opposite attitude may result in negative skills and performance.

Job performance, adherence to the rules, regulations and requirements of the school bus driver, are constantly evaluated for each driver. Compromising any part of your job performance jeopardizes the safety of your students and possibly your career. Along with job performance, demeanor and behavior are equally important to your job. This involves conducting yourself in a professional manner at all times. Occasionally, as a bus driver, you may be subjected to constructive criticism concerning your job performance. This criticism is not intended to berate or put you down. Instead, it is intended as a means of addressing and correcting a problem. Response to all criticism in a positive manner is a sign of a true professional.

As a bus driver, you will be responsible for dealing and communicating with the following individuals: transportation employees, principals, secretaries, parents and students. Your behavior should be professional and positive. Gestures such as honking your horn unnecessarily or shouting remarks at other

drivers are unprofessional and unacceptable behaviors. Remember, as a role model for your students, when positive professional behavior is exhibited by you, it is easier to encourage your students to exhibit the same behavior as passengers.

Rules, Regulations & Guidelines

Bus Driver Rules, Regulations and Guidelines

BUS DRIVER RULES, REGULATIONS, AND GUIDELINES

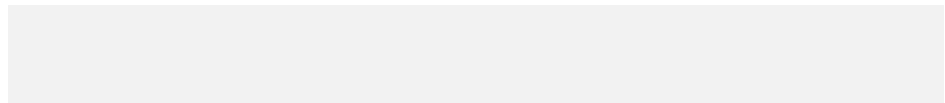
DIVISION OF MOTOR VEHICLES, CANCELLATION OF CERTIFICATION

The DMV shall cancel the school bus driver certificate of any driver for the following reasons:

1. Any determination that the certificate was issued on the basis of misinformation, false statement or fraud.
2. A suspension, revocation or cancellation of the driver's license.
3. Conviction of a motor vehicle moving offense, to the following extent:
 - a. Driving while impaired.
 - b. Passing a stopped school bus
 - c. Hit and run
 - d. Reckless driving
 - e. Speeding more than 15 mph above the posted limit
 - f. Two convictions within a period of 12 months
 - g. Any conviction of violation committed while operating a school bus

4. A determination of physical or mental inadequacy under the provision of the physical requirements as defined by the Department of Motor Vehicles.
5. Exceeding the maximum speed of 45 miles per hour in a school bus.
6. Failing to stop and use proper procedures at all railroad crossings.
7. Tampering with or failing to report difficulties with the governor or accelerator linkage on the same day it occurs.
8. A driving record which in its overall character arouses serious questions about the reliability, judgment or emotional stability of the driver.
9. A local recommendation of cancellation of certification is the discretion of the local administrative unit, the violation of local regulation, submitted formally to the DMV Trainer for cancellation at the state level.
10. Upon recommendation of the DMV Trainer or local school official, the DMV may require re-examination of any certified driver whose qualifications become questionable or who exhibits evidence of improper or unsafe driving practices and driving procedures. If such a re-examination reveals a significant problem, the DMV Trainer shall have the authority to suspend the certified driver from driving any school bus pending re-training of the driver. If the problem cannot be corrected, the DMV Trainer shall have the authority to cancel the certification of the school bus driver.

Please keep in mind that the DMV may suspend your pocket card at any time if there are violations of any of the standards required of school bus drivers.



Speed Limits

The maximum speed limit for yellow school buses is 45 mph. Drivers are instructed to drive their bus a speed that is reasonable and prudent under the conditions existing. On many of the routes, it is not possible to drive 45 mph. A driver can receive a citation for exceeding the maximum speed limit.

1. The basic speed law requires that a driver maintain a speed that is "reasonable and prudent under the conditions then existing". Under unfavorable conditions, reduce speed.
2. The maximum speed limit for a school bus is 45 mph unless a lower limit is posted.
3. On the school grounds, a school bus must never be driven faster than 10 mph.
4. **Maximum speed for activity buses is 55 mph.**
5. Drive with the speed of traffic if you can without going at an illegal or unsafe speed. Speeding in a school bus is illegal and irresponsible. The safety of all students is important.

Suspension for Failure to Appear in Court

A driver who fails to appear in court as scheduled to answer charges shall be suspended without pay pending the actual appearance in court of the driver and the disposition of the case.

Suspension for Citation of a Moving Violation While Operating a School Bus *or* Arrest

A driver who is cited for a moving traffic violation while operating a school bus or charged with a criminal offense that violates Watauga County School policy may be suspended without pay pending the outcome of the court case. Conviction of the charges or citation could result in termination and loss of bus driver certification.

Suspension will result for an arrest in a criminal investigation when the crime may indicate a threat to the safety of students, a violation of Board of Education policies, or Transportation guidelines. Conviction of the crime could result in termination.

Unauthorized Passengers

Any individual not assigned to your bus is an unauthorized passenger -- this includes the driver's spouse, children or friends -- and is not permitted to ride your bus. Should an adult attempt to board, ask them to leave and inform them that they are trespassing. If the person refuses to leave, attempt to avoid confrontations and if necessary call the police or school authorities.

Occasionally an adult is permitted to ride the bus, but must be authorized to do so by the principal or the Transportation Department. The school or a Transportation Department representative will provide you with the information.

Students not assigned to your bus but wishing to ride must have written permission of the school or parents before boarding your bus. Ensure you have seen the written permission and are aware of the stop location where the student is to be released.

Children not attending school and riding school buses are not covered by insurance or state law. Therefore, children who are not school age and/or not assigned to a bus serving Watauga County Schools or affiliates are not authorized to ride a school bus at any time. This includes children of bus drivers or other school employees. Any bus driver allowing an unauthorized passenger to ride a school bus, either child or adult, is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Bus Security at Night

Please park your bus in the location indicated on your TIMS route. Any new parking location must be approved by Transportation.

1. Bleed down air brake until parking brake pop-out is released; park to prevent rolling.
2. Empty all trash boxes every afternoon. Place the trash in provided cans or dumpsters. Do not sweep trash onto the parking lot.
3. Remove all paper towels, items of clothing, books and notebooks left by students.
4. Check for any students remaining on the bus.

5. Close all windows, including the driver's window.
6. Check the bus carefully before you leave it; be sure there is nothing that a person could steal or use as fuel to burn the bus.
7. Do not leave any personal items on the bus at all; this includes watches, ink pens, etc.
8. Close the front door after you leave the bus.

Bus Cleanliness

Bus cleanliness is indicative of a professional bus driver who has pride in herself/himself and the position. You are encouraged to keep your bus clean inside and outside. Time is provided for your daily maintenance. Buses will be periodically inspected by the Transportation Department. A copy of the inspection sheet will be provided.

1. If your bus has been vandalized with writing on the outside of the bus, this should be removed before starting your route. Please contact the garage if you need assistance.
2. All mirrors should be cleaned and adjusted before starting your route.
3. Windshields, side glass, rear windows and entrance door should be clean and free of ice before starting your route.
4. All lights, including overhead lights and stop arm lights, should be cleaned before starting your route.
5. Each driver is required to clean the inside of bus each day. Drivers who provide trash containers will receive cooperation from their students in using the container.
6. Remove objects from the driver's area that might interfere with visibility of the operations of the bus.

Cell Phone/Two-Way Communication

Unless there is an emergency situation, it is a Class 2 misdemeanor to use a cell phone or other two-way device while operating school or activity bus. If a driver is observed using a two-way device while operating a bus, the result will be at least a three month suspension of driving privileges. If a driver is cited by law enforcement for using a two-way communication device, there will be a fine of no less than \$100 and at least a three month suspension of driving privileges. If you do need to use a two-way device to communicate with the bus garage or school, you must first find a safe place to pull the bus over, place the bus in neutral, and set the parking brake. Only when the bus is parked and the parking brake set should a bus driver use a cell phone or radio.

Class I Offenses

Class I offenses are the most severe offenses. These offenses are violations of established Federal, State, and local laws and policies. Violations could result in serious injury or death of a student, loss of license, and will lead to disciplinary action up to and including a recommendation for termination. This list does not attempt to cover all offenses, which may result in similar disciplinary action.

- A. Endangering the safety and well being of a student.
- B. Failure to use proper procedures at all railroad crossings.
- C. Violation of the WCS Drug Free Workplace policy.
- D. Allowing unauthorized persons to operate a school bus.
- E. Permitting students to ride in unsafe locations on the bus such as the stairwell or aisles.
- F. Discharging a passenger in such a manner as to jeopardize the safety and well being of the student.
- G. Discharging a passenger at a location other than the assigned stop without written approval from the school and parent.
- H. Leaving the scene of an accident.

- I. Striking or otherwise making physical contact with a student or adult unless in self-defense.
- J. Insubordination- failing to comply with the directions of a supervisor or principal.
- K. Possession of a weapon.
- L. Conviction or observed by police or Transportation management of a moving violation as defined by the Motor Vehicle Codes, while operating a school bus. A moving violation includes, but is not limited to, failing to stop at a traffic control device, making an unsafe movement, speeding, failing to maintain proper following distance, etc.
- M. Conviction of the following while operating a private vehicle:
 - Driving while impaired
 - Hit and run
 - Reckless driving
 - Speeding in excess of 15 mph over posted limit
 - Passing a stopped school bus
 - Two convictions of moving violation within a calendar year
- N. Sexual misconduct
- O. Sexual harassment of student or other employee.
- P. Failure to report any conviction to your supervisor within five days of disposition of charges.
- Q. Knowingly operating a school bus with a major mechanical or safety failure.
- R. Failure to complete a proper post-trip inspection resulting in leaving a student on the bus.
- S. Knowingly operating a bus for personal use in violation of North Carolina Public School Law.
- T. Falsifying time and pay records.
- U. Failure to appear in court for traffic citation.
- V. Transporting unauthorized passengers.

- W. Repeated violation of Class II or Class III offenses within the school year.

Class II Offenses

Class II offenses, while of a less serious nature than Class I, are offenses that indicate a behavior that is unacceptable. Class II offenses may result in a suspension without pay of at least one day and not more than 14 days. Violations of Class II offenses will result in placing the job in jeopardy. This list does not attempt to cover all offenses, which may result in similar disciplinary action.

- A. Using a mobile telephone or other two-way device while operating a yellow school bus or an activity bus.
- B. Violation of the smoking and use of tobacco products policy.
- C. Failure to report an accident.
- D. Driving at a speed faster than conditions permit.
- E. Making an unauthorized stop.
- F. Failure to follow approved bus route, stops, and times as defined by TIMS unless directed otherwise by transportation or authorized traffic control personnel or devices.
- G. Excessive absenteeism without an authorized and signed doctor's statement or other excused absences as defined by policy.
- H. Overtaking or passing another school bus traveling in the same direction.
- I. Knowing and failing to report major mechanical warning indicators or failure of components of the bus such as brakes, steering, suspension, lights, or engine.
- J. Abusing the equipment through improper starting procedures or driving technique.

- K. Tampering with or failing to report difficulties with the bus engine governor or accelerator linkage.
- L. Falsifying or deliberate inaccurate reporting of information.
- M. Repeated violation of Class III offenses within the school year.

Class III Offenses

Class III offenses are the least serious in nature and are violation of established work performance guidelines and expectations. Violations of Class III offenses may result in verbal and written counseling. This list does not attempt to cover all offenses, which may result in similar disciplinary action.

- A. Failure to remain on the bus while engine is running, unless operating a lift and/or failure to follow the WCS No Idling Policy.
- B. Failure to use proper backing procedure.
- C. Failure to report students departing the bus without permission at an unassigned stop.
- D. Failure to report discipline problems and physical or sexual harassment of other students to school authorities.
- E. Failure to be on the bus during loading and unloading unless approved by school administration.
- F. Failure to report vandalism.
- G. Failure to keep the bus and windows clean.
- H. Playing a radio or other audio equipment while on the bus.
- I. Failure to follow proper bus stop procedures.
- J. Excessive tardiness.

- K. Use of abusive, derogatory, or profane language or gestures toward students, parents, school employees and the general public while operating a school bus.
- L. Failing to complete a proper pre and post trip inspection of the bus.
- M. Failing to comply with the directives of authorized school officials regarding bus operations on the school grounds.

Attendance Guidelines

I. ATTENDANCE

1. Bus drivers are expected to be available for work on each day that students are in attendance.
2. Bus drivers may be absent from work only in accordance with the provision of the Board of Education policies. Policy notebooks are located in each school.

II. TARDINESS

1. Bus drivers should not be tardy. Drivers who will be delayed must notify the Principal or designee as soon as the delay occurs.
2. Any failure to report for work at the designated time may be considered a late arrival and subject to appropriate disciplinary action.
3. Failure to notify the Principal or designee will result in disciplinary action.

III. LEAVES

1. *Paid Legal Holidays* – Bus drivers who are employed four or more hours daily will be eligible for holiday pay. Holidays with pay shall include New Year's Day, Easter Monday, Memorial Day, Labor Day, Martin Luther King Day, Veterans Day, two days for Thanksgiving, two days for Christmas when Christmas falls on Friday, Saturday, Sunday or Monday, and three days when Christmas falls on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

2. *Sick Leave* – Bus drivers who are employed four or more hours will earn sick leave equal to their percentage of full-time employment. Sick leave may be granted for:
 - Periods of temporary disability caused by personal illness, injury or other temporary disability,
 - Illness in the employee's immediate family that necessitates the employee's attendance,
 - Death in the immediate family, and
 - Medical appointments.
3. *Annual Vacation Leave* – Bus drivers employed four or more hours earn annual vacation leave on a pro rata basis. Bus drivers who work less than 20 hours per week and who are not otherwise entitled to earn vacation are entitled to earn one day per year if
 - They are employed to drive a regular daily route (i.e., they are not substitute drivers) and
 - They were employed as regular not substitute drivers the entire previous school year.

A bus driver who is terminated or resigns before taking the leave day is not entitled to compensation for the annual vacation leave day.

Restrictions: Bus drivers may not take annual vacation leave at any time that students are scheduled to be in attendance.

School Bus Discipline

Entitlements and Responsibilities of the School

ENTITLEMENTS:

- To receive prompt and clear communication about students who continue to cause problems or cause severe problems
- To have the bus arrive at their school on time and in clean condition
- To have drivers on their bus when students are loading and unloading
- To have support of the Transportation Supervisor in dealing with drivers who are not meeting their responsibilities

RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Take appropriate action with students that cause a severe problem or continue to misbehave on the bus
- Be available on the bus lot to help drivers with problems when the buses are loading and unloading
- Involve parents, when necessary, in solving problems that their children are having on the bus.
- To direct requests for changes to the appropriate Transportation personnel

School Bus Discipline

The school bus driver is responsible for students on the bus just as the teacher is responsible for students in the classroom. If you explain the rules of riding the bus at the beginning of the school year, you will gain the cooperation and respect of your passengers. If they understand that you are fair and will enforce rules with their safety in mind, they will be more likely to follow the rules and accept your authority. Recognize each child's individuality. You cannot maintain discipline and respect if you are too harsh or too lenient. Drivers who handle discipline problems fairly and according to the rules earn the respect of their passengers.

Ten Ways to Maintain Passenger Discipline

1. Never give an order you do not intend to enforce.
2. Give a command to stimulate action, not to stop it. Say “do this” rather than “don’t do this”.
3. Have a reason for what you ask a passenger to do; and take time to give the reason.
4. Be fair and consistent. Injustice—not punishment—will cause a person to rebel against you.
5. Be courteous. Always show a positive attitude toward your passengers.
6. Never strike a passenger. Although it may seem necessary and the easiest solution, it will only aggravate the problem.
7. Do not take your personal feelings or prejudices out on your passengers.
8. Maintain poise at all times. Do not lose your temper.
9. Follow up on all discipline cases. Be certain that you still have the respect and confidence of the passengers.
10. Set a good example.

Seating Assignments

Seating Charts are required on all buses on all trips. The purpose is to try to make your job easier, not to create additional work for you. Some schools assist the driver in preparing the seating chart and placing the students. Other schools prefer the driver make those decisions based on the driver's experience. The most important thing is that, when it is done – **ENFORCE IT!!** Many problems have occurred when the driver lets the students move around as a reward for good behavior, or because it is Friday, or the driver is in a good mood.

Seating charts are crucial in case of an accident. Law enforcement authorities, school officials, and medics need to know who is sitting where when an emergency arises. Drivers must ensure everyone is sitting in the assigned seat and the seating chart is accurate before an emergency occurs.

Students need to understand that the purpose is to be in the seats all the time, everyday. Drivers need to understand that, if a student is not in his/her seat, reports need to be made to the principal, and if seating assignments are changed for discipline purposes, the principal should do it.

Bus Operations and Inspections

Inclement Weather Guidelines

Bus drivers should be prepared to drive in hazardous road conditions resulting from inclement weather. A chain clinic will be scheduled at each school in the fall. It is the driver's responsibility to be sure their chains fit the bus and do not need repair, before the onset of bad weather.

During the winter season, extremely bad weather sometimes causes some or all of the primary and secondary roads to become unsafe for travel. When the weather is a threat to safe travel, a decision shall be made as to whether to operate schools.

School officials shall make decisions based on the best information available at the time. This information will include reports from the US Weather Service, Department of Transportation, Highway Patrol, Sheriff's Department, school superintendents in adjoining counties, and personal observations from driving over representative primary and secondary roads.

No announcement concerning a change in schools' operational plans indicates that school will operate on a normal schedule. Any change in the school schedule will be announced by 6:15 a.m. The Watauga County Snow Line is 264-0200. Information is also available on the Watauga County Schools web page at <http://www.watauga.k12.nc.us> and follow Watauga County School on twitter.

Wheelchair Lifts

If your bus is equipped with a wheelchair lift, you will be given additional instructions on proper operation of the lift and securing students. If you have any questions, ask the Transportation Supervisor. You should be the one to operate the lift. **DO NOT ALLOW STUDENTS OR SAFETY ASSISTANTS TO OPERATE THE LIFT.**

The instructions below are applicable to many of the lift buses currently in use. These instructions supplement the instructions you should receive in training.

Prior to loading or unloading a student:

1. Make a passenger stop using the stop arm.
2. Open and secure the door.
3. Turn on the lift power.
4. Press the UNFOLD switch until the platform stops and actuator clicks.

Unloading

1. Press the DOWN switch until the platform reaches floor level.
2. Load the student onto the platform with the chair facing outward. Lock the wheels.
3. Press the DOWN switch until the entire platform reaches ground level. Release the switch when the platform is fully on the ground.
4. Press the DOWN switch until the outboard roll stop fully unfolds.
5. Unlock the wheels and unload the student.

Loading:

1. Load the student onto the platform, facing outward. Lock the wheels
2. Press the UP switch to fold outboard roll stop.
3. Press the UP switch until the platform reached bus floor level. Release the switch when the platform fully reached floor level.
4. Unlock wheels and unload the student.

After loading or unloading student:

1. Press UP switch until the platform is fully up.
2. Stand clear and press FOLD switch until the actuator clicks and the door is fully closed.
3. Close the door.
4. Turn the lift power off.

NEVER RIDE THE LIFT WITH THE STUDENT

Pre-trip Inspections

What to Look For

Each morning the “pre-trip” inspection should be performed to check the mechanical conditions of the bus. If you drive with faulty equipment, you may be responsible for an accident.

NOTE: The hood of the bus should never be opened without permission. The following items are of special importance and should be checked thoroughly and carefully:

1. Vehicle overview. Check the general condition of the bus from the outside. Look for obvious damage and leaning to one side or another. Look under the bus for fresh oil, coolant, grease, or fuel leaks.
2. Front of vehicle. Check passenger mirrors, lenses and walking control arm.
3. Right side of bus. Check right side view mirror, passenger door, reflectors and clearance lights and windows.
4. Under bus. Check the fuel tank, suspension, exhaust system and tires.
5. Rear of bus. Check all lights and reflectors, tailpipe and license plate.
6. Left rear and left side of bus. Check left side view mirror, stop sign, reflector and clearance lights and windows.
7. Passenger entry area. Check entrance door, stairwell and handrail.
8. Inside check of bus. Check seats, emergency door and buzzer, emergency windows' exits (if so equipped), all gauges and controls.
9. Hydraulic brake system checks. Pump brake pedal three times, apply brake pedal and hold for five seconds—see that the brake pedal does not move. If movement is noted, do no move until trouble is repaired.
10. Air brake system checks. Make sure the pressure gauge is between 90-120 psi; test the parking brake by setting the control and putting the bus in “D” and making sure the bus will not move; check for air leaks; make sure that the bus does not pull from one side to another when the first few brake applications are made.

Post Trip Inspections

A post-trip inspection should be conducted at the end of each day to check for vandalism, personal items left on the bus or even students asleep.

If your bus has been vandalized...

Clean the area, if needed.

Determine possible responsible person(s) through use of seating chart.

Report the damage to the garage.

For personal items left on a bus...

Secure the items and return them to the owner or school office

If you find a student asleep on your bus...

Call the school.

If no answer at the school, call the garage or the transportation director.

Bus Accidents

BUS ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

1. Immediately stop the bus if still moving. **Do not leave the scene.**
2. Remain calm and in control. Inquire if any one is injured and the nature of the injuries.
3. Evacuate the bus only if necessary.
4. If the situation is under control and you are uninjured, personally report the accident to the Transportation Office (264-6391). If not, give a student or passerby the pertinent information (below) to call for assistance:
 - a. Bus number
 - b. Caller name
 - c. Specific location (house number, intersection, landmarks)
 - d. Number of students, the school, and injuries
5. Attend to injured, if any.
6. Make no statements that indicate responsibility.
7. Do not make statements to any member of the press at the scene.
8. Provide clear and concise information concerning the events resulting in the accident.

Accidents on School Property

School parking lots. Too many needless accidents have occurred in school parking lots, primarily for two reasons, SPEED AND POOR JUDGEMENT!!! As you are aware, **the approved maximum speed for a school bus in a parking lot is 10 mph.**

- Parked cars. The bus driver often encounters cars that are parked illegally or in places that will not permit the bus to get into the area needed. Too often the driver, while either being inattentive or just trying to fit through will hit one of these cars. The solution is simple: IF YOU ARE EVER IN DOUBT OF WHETHER YOU CAN MAKE IT OR NOT, **DON'T MOVE!!** You can never get in trouble for waiting, but you can cost yourself and the state a lot of money by failing to wait. Go into the school and ask for help or to have the car moved. Anything you do is better than hitting a car in a school parking lot.
- Student pick-up. Be extremely careful on days when the weather is bad, because additional parents often choose to pick up their children on these days. There will normally be more cars and children than usual in the parking lots.

The Tort Claims Act and Accidents

Under the Tort Claims Act, the State Attorney General's Office handles claims for injury or damage arising out of the operation of yellow school buses.

So long as the school bus driver is certified to drive, is authorized by the principal or the designee to drive, is on the approved driver list, and is on the assigned route for that trip, they are unlikely even to have an accident, much less be called to court as a defendant. If the driver is in violation of any of these conditions, the state will not pay the claim. The driver is liable for damages.

Drivers are responsible for any traffic violation they may commit, while driving either assigned bus or their personal car. If a driver is convicted of a traffic violation, the driver pays all fines and costs.

School Bus Evacuation

From "A Guide for School Bus Drivers" issued by the School Bus Traffic and Safety Section of the NC DMV

Suggested Evacuation Procedure

1. Park the bus as close to the shoulder of the road as possible;
 - a. Turn hazard lights on
 - b. Set the parking brake
 - c. Turn engine off
2. Stand facing the rear of the bus;
3. Give the command: "Remain seated; prepare to evacuate."
4. Turn toward the front of the bus
5. Move backward to the first occupied seats
6. Starting with either the left or the right seat,
 - a. Touch the shoulder of the person nearest to the aisle to indicate that the passengers in that seat are to move off
 - b. Keep the passengers in the opposite seat seated by holding the hand, palm out in a restraining gesture, until aisle is clear
 - c. Move out the passengers in the opposite seat, using the same signal
7. Move backwards up the aisle, repeating this procedure at each seat until the bus is empty.
8. Check the bus from the very back seat to the front, making sure it is empty.
9. Have evacuating students move to a safe distance and keep them there as a group, away from any dangerous area.
10. Continue to check for students while removing the fire extinguisher or first-aid kit, if needed.
11. Call or have someone call the fire department, the garage, and the school, as necessary.

A fire at the front of the bus may make the regular entrance unusable and an alternate route of evacuation necessary. Normally the front entrance will be available, but the emergency door can be used as the primary exit. Evacuation through both doors is fastest, with the rear monitor working forward seat by seat and the driver working backward seat by seat. Newer buses also have emergency window exits in the middle of each side and an emergency door exit on the left side. The windshield and rear windows can also be pushed out to facilitate evacuation. If the bus is on its side, roof hatches can be used. Check on local policies on special education buses.

School Board Policies

Forms Used by Bus Drivers

The following pages are examples of forms commonly used by bus drivers. Please make copies as needed.

Accidents, 23, 24

Annual Vacation Leave, 15

ATTENDANCE, 14

**cancellation of the driver's
license, 5**

conduct, 1, 3

conviction, 5, 11

Conviction, 5, 7, 10, 11

Discipline, 17

DIVISION OF MOTOR

VEHICLES, 5

Evacuation, 25

**Expectations of Watauga
County Bus Drivers, 2**

Holidays, 14

Seating Charts, 18

Sick Leave, 15

smoking, 12

speed. See speed limit

speed limit, 6

Suspension, 7

TIMS, 8, 12

Tort Claims Act, 24

Weather, 19

wheelchair lift, 20