

DRIVING HOME SAFELY:

A Health and Safety Tip Sheet for School Bus Drivers



As school bus drivers, you work hard every day to be sure that the students on your bus get to school and back home safely. When you take care of your own health and safety at work, you avoid disruptions in your life and on the bus, and can continue providing this important service to students.

A little planning will go a long way toward making your work environment safer. These three steps will help you get started:

1. Identify job hazards
2. Work towards solutions
3. Follow up and share your successes

Step 1. Identify job hazards

The chart on the following page lists many of the common hazards that affect bus drivers. Use this chart to identify the hazards relevant to your work. Talk to your co-workers to find out if they have similar concerns. Report any hazards to your supervisor.

Step 2. Work towards solutions

The chart also offers tips for reducing hazards. Develop a plan to implement the changes that are needed. Some suggestions:

- Assess what changes you can make on your own, and what you need your employer or supervisor to do.
- When possible, work together with your school's site safety coordinator, union, and co-workers.
- Share your ideas with your supervisor.
- Workplace hazards can be reduced or eliminated by: (1) removing the hazard (preferable); (2) instituting policies and procedures that reduce the hazard; and/or (3) using personal protective equipment.
- Find out if there are laws that support the change you need.

* Did you know?

- School employees as a whole have a higher rate of work-related injuries and illnesses than do other California workers.
- The most common injuries to school bus drivers are sprains, strains and muscle tears.
- The most costly injuries in schools are those related to motor vehicle accidents.



Common Job Hazards and Safety Tips for School Bus Drivers

Ergonomic Hazards

The most common musculoskeletal complaint of bus drivers is lower back pain. This can be caused by sitting for long periods of time, by the vibration of the bus, or by lifting students with disabilities. Other problems include sciatica, neck, and shoulder pain. Here are some tips to prevent ergonomic injuries:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify your seat with such things as lumbar pillows to support your lower back. • Avoid twisting when getting into and out of the seat. Adjust your equipment when possible to minimize any twisting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for help when lifting students and assisting them with their belongings. • Stand and do gentle stretches when possible. • Obtain the SASH ergonomics fact sheet for additional practical tips. |
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Slip and Fall Hazards

Slips, trips and falls are the most common accidents that happen on school buses. Slippery walks, cluttered aisles, and climbing up and down the stairs can lead to accidents.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep aisles and exits free of backpacks, baggage, equipment, and people. • Use handrails when entering and exiting the bus. Make sure handrails are in good condition. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear shoes with non-skid soles. • Be aware of your surroundings. Be alert especially when getting on and off the bus. |
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Transportation Accidents

Transportation accidents cause about a third of the injuries that occur to school bus drivers.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out about fixed hazards on your route such as railroad crossings, dangerous intersections and roadways, tunnels, overpasses, and steep down-hills. Tell other bus drivers about these hazards. • Be prepared for any sudden hazards, such as fog, blinding sunlight, storms, flooded roadways, fallen trees, downed power lines, and traffic accidents. • Ask your supervisor for training on effective ways to deal with both fixed and sudden hazards. • Conduct a pre-trip inspection to be sure that all equipment is in working order. Report any problems to your supervisor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow down when the weather is bad. • Do not talk on a cell phone when driving. • Have a cell phone or two-way radio available on the bus for emergencies. • Make sure your bus is equipped with a first aid kit and emergency supplies. • Know how to report accidents. • Post a school bus code of conduct on the bus. • Tell students to sit quietly on the bus, face forward, and follow your instructions at all times. |
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Violence and Aggressive Student Behavior

A 1993 to 1999 U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics study found that over 100,000 bus drivers experienced workplace violence during this time.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post emergency phone numbers on the bus. • Set up a communication system if you're working alone at night or during off hours. • Report to maintenance staff any locks and alarms that are not working. • Know how to report violent incidents and threats. • Request that cameras be installed on buses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for a transportation policy that states that the bus driver is in charge of what happens on the bus, not students or parents. • Advocate for workplace violence training for all school bus drivers. • Obtain the SASH emergencies fact sheet for additional practical tips.
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Diesel Exhaust

School buses emit exhaust fumes that can enter buses through ventilation systems. Studies show exposure to diesel exhaust can cause lung damage, respiratory problems, premature death, and lung cancer.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate unnecessary engine idling, especially at school bus yards in the morning and at school loading zones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the amount of distance between your bus and the vehicle in front of you, especially when following large commercial motor vehicles. • Request that the newest buses with cleaner engines be used for the longest trips.
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Infectious Disease

You could be exposed to many different viruses and bacteria, such as the common cold, flu, HIV, and Hepatitis B. If you are responsible for cleaning up students' blood or vomit, you may be at particular risk.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands as frequently as possible. • Stay home if you're sick! • If you provide first aid to students, you may need a Hepatitis B vaccine and bloodborne pathogens training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you may come into contact with blood or other bodily fluids: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wear disposable gloves; - wash your hands with soap and water; and - disinfect any equipment or work areas that are affected.
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A HEALTH AND SAFETY TIP SHEET FOR SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS

* Safety Pays

Although resources are limited in school districts, some solutions do not require extra money.

Preventing injuries can actually SAVE lives and SAVE money by:

- reducing workers' compensation claims;
- avoiding loss in productivity when injuries occur; and
- improving employee morale!

Step 3. Follow up and share your successes

Once you've identified the hazards and solutions, follow up to make sure the changes are implemented. Contact your district's or school's safety coordinator for help or suggestions. Share your successes with your co-workers and your supervisor.

School Site Safety Coordinator

The person in charge of health and safety at your school is:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

District Resource

The person in charge of health and safety at your district is:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Reporting Injuries and Illnesses

It is important to report work-related injuries and illnesses. You cannot be discriminated against or punished for doing so. If you have a work-related injury or illness, contact:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

To learn more....

Go to the SASH website at www.dir.ca.gov/CHSWC/SASH and click on Hazards by Occupation. Or call 510-642-5507.