VERMONT SCHOOL BUS MANUAL

Phil Scott, Governor
State of Vermont

Joe Flynn, Secretary
Agency of Transportation

Andrew Collier, Commissioner
Department of Motor Vehicles

2025

VERMONT

Message from the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles

The task of safely transporting children to and from our schools is a tremendous responsibility. We hope this manual will assist school bus drivers to better perform their duties and will also serve as a guide for others involved in school bus transportation.

School bus drivers must at all times obey traffic laws such as speed limits, traffic control signs and special regulations pertaining to interstate highways.

Drivers convicted of violating any motor vehicle laws or regulations are subject to a loss of license as well as any fines that are levied. Conviction could mean your job!

One's success as a school bus driver depends largely on knowledge, attitude, good driving habits and caution behind the wheel.

Andrew Collier
Commissioner

Note: This study guide is a supplement to Section 10 of the Vermont Commercial Driver License Manual (Form VN-111)

The Department of Motor Vehicles does not discriminate against disabled individuals in providing services, programs, activities, or employment.

VN-003 11/2024 MTC

Contents

Message from the Commissioner 1
Road Test 3
Knowledge Test 3
School Transportation 4
The Driver: 7
Becoming a School Bus Driver 8
Driver Qualifications 9
Drug and Alcohol Testing Requirements 10
Disqualification for Use of Alcohol 11
Scheduling and Taking the Driver's Tests 13
Safe Operating Procedures 20
Speed Management 38
Road Surfaces 39
Speed and Vision 40
Turning Around 41
Texting and Hand Held Device Usage 41
Control and Disciplinary Action 44
Emergency Evacuation 48
Evaluation and Planning 48
Pre-Trip Inspection: 52
Post Trip Inspection 53
Miscellaneous Statutes and Regulations 60
Motor Vehicle Laws of Vermont 60

Road Test

- **Barre** – 20 Auditorium Hill
- **Bennington** – 359 Bowen Road (AOT Garage)
- **Colchester** – Barnes Avenue, Fort Ethan Allen (AOT Garage)
- **Rutland** – 280 Seward Road
- **St. Johnsbury** – 1998 Memorial Drive
- **Springfield** – 77 Hartness Road (Fire Department)

Knowledge Test

- **Bennington,** 530 Main Street
- **Dummerston**, 870 US Route 5*
- **Montpelier,** 120 State Street
- **Newport,** 100 Main Street
- **Rutland,** 101 State Place
- **Saint Albans**, 27 Fisher Pond Road*
- **Saint Johnsbury**, 1998 Memorial Drive*
- **South Burlington,** 4 Market Street
- **Springfield,** 100 Mineral Street
- **White River Jct**, 221 Beswick Drive*

* This location does not accept cash for payment.
* This location processes renewals only (no first-time issue).

Visit mydmv.vermont.gov to schedule an appointment.

PART I – School Transportation

School bus transportation is one of the safest forms of transportation in the United States. Every year, our nation's 475,000 public school buses travel more than 4.3 billion miles to transport 25 million children to and from school and school-related activities.

Students are nearly eight times safer riding in a school bus than with their own parents and guardians in cars. The fatality rate for school buses is only 0.2 fatalities per 100 million miles traveled compared to 1.5 fatalities per 100 million miles traveled for cars. An average of 10 occupants die each year in school buses, while an average of 600 occupants die each year riding to and from school in motor vehicles other than school buses.

Vehicles and drivers are the two key factors that contribute to this impressive highway safety record.

The Vehicle:

School buses are equipped with more safety equipment than any other vehicle on the road. Additionally, the size and design of the school bus gives it an important advantage in all but the most catastrophic circumstances. Both state and federal regulations set the standards for safety equipment.

State of Vermont regulations for school bus equipment are detailed in the "School Bus Laws" section of this manual. Additionally, Vermont school buses must conform to the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. The key federal safety requirements include:

- Well-padded, high back, energy-absorbing seats, as well as special requirements for wheelchair restraint systems.
- Brake systems that enable the school bus to stop in a shorter distance than other large vehicles.
- Lamps and reflective devices that indicate when the bus is loading and unloading passengers.
- Special mirrors that allow the driver to see critical areas directly in front of and along both sides of the school bus.
- A stop arm on newer buses that extends out to the left side of the bus to warn motorists when the bus is loading and unloading passengers.

- Several emergency exits.
- Rollover protection that reduces the likelihood of a roof collapse and allows for operable emergency exits even after the roof is subject to extreme forces.
- A passenger compartment designed to reduce the chances of injury to occupants caused by sharp edges of body panels that might tear loose in a crash.
- Protected fuel tanks and fuel pump, fuel delivery system, emissions control lines and connections to protect against fuel spills in severe crashes.
- Buses painted “national school bus glossy yellow.”

◆ **Non-Conforming Vehicles:**

Any vehicle with a manufacturer’s rated seating capacity of 11 or more, used to transport school children, must meet all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses if owned, leased or hired by a school.

Vehicles not meeting these safety standards, often referred to as non-conforming school buses or non-conforming vans, cannot be used to transport school children to or from home and/or school or school activities. While these vehicles cannot be used to transport students, they still can be used to transport equipment, staff, teachers and other personnel.

Note: Removal of seats from a non-conforming vehicle, by the manufacturer, dealer or the user, to reduce capacity to 10 or fewer, is not permitted if the vehicle will be used to transport school children.

23 VSA §4(34)(A) - "School bus" means any motor vehicle used to transport children to or from school or in connection with school activities, except:

(i) Buses operated by common carriers who incidentally accept school children as passengers;

(ii) Private motor vehicles used to carry members of the owner's household. For the purposes of this section, private motor vehicle means a vehicle neither owned nor leased by a public school or an approved independent school;

(iii) Private motor vehicles used to transport children without compensation. For the purposes of this section, compensation means payment in any form except reimbursement for mileage or the normal salary paid to a person otherwise employed by the school;

(iv) Motor vehicles with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of fewer than 11 persons, including the operator, which are owned, leased, or hired by a school, or for which services are reimbursed by a school. However, if used to transport students, these shall be considered a Type II school bus for purposes of licensure, shall display an identification sign as prescribed in subdivision 1283(a)(1) of this title, and shall be equipped with a simple system of at least two red alternating warning lights; unless the driver is a school employee or a volunteer subject to a criminal background check and is transporting no more than five persons excluding the operator; provided that the vehicle has safety belts for all persons being transported;

(v) Motor coaches provided with a driver to a school on a single-trip or multi-trip contract basis to provide transportation to or from, or to and from, athletic or other special events. A motor coach is a vehicle at least 35 feet in length with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of more than 30 passengers and is designed for long distance transportation of passengers, characterized by integral construction with an elevated passenger deck located over a baggage compartment. Pursuant to 16 VSA §255, a superintendent or headmaster shall request criminal record information for a driver of a motor coach if the driver may be in unsupervised contact with schoolchildren;

(vi) Multifunction school activity buses, as defined in section 1287 of this title, provided with a driver to a school on a single-trip or multi-trip contract basis to provide transportation to or from, or to and from, athletic or other special events. Pursuant to 16 VSA §255, a superintendent or headmaster shall request criminal record information for a driver of a multifunction school activity bus if the driver may be in unsupervised contact with schoolchildren;

(vii) Other multifunction school activity buses as defined in section 1287 of this title.

B. "Type I school bus," means a school bus with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of more than 15 passengers, including the operator.

C. "Type II school bus" means a school bus with a manufacturer's rated seating capacity of more than 10 and fewer than 16 passengers, including the operator.

23 VSA §1287 Multifunction School Activity Bus:

(a) A "multifunction school activity bus" is a vehicle which is used to transport students on trips other than on a fixed route between home and school, and which meets the construction safety standards for a "multifunction school activity bus" adopted by rule by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

(b) If a school owns a multifunction school activity bus or leases one other than as provided in subdivision 4(34)(A)(vi) of this title, the driver shall be required to hold a license which includes a school bus driver's endorsement. A school bus endorsement road test may be taken in a multifunction school activity bus, but the resulting endorsement shall be restricted to the operation of the appropriately sized multifunction school activity bus. Otherwise, the endorsement shall be a Type I or Type II endorsement as appropriate to the size of the vehicle.

(c) A multifunction school activity bus may be a color other than national school bus yellow.

The Driver:

School bus drivers are expected to meet the highest traffic safety standards. They must adhere to the many rules and regulations that ensure safety in and around the bus, and ensure the vehicle is in top mechanical condition. Their attention to safety is another key factor in the impressive safety record of school bus transportation.

This publication details the requirements and recommended practices of operating a school bus. It is designed to prepare the driver-applicant with the knowledge necessary to pass the DMV driver's test and to provide reference material for existing drivers, school bus contractors and others in the school bus transportation business.

PART II – Becoming a School Bus Driver

School bus drivers must possess special knowledge and skills in order to ensure the safe transportation of their passengers. In addition to the knowledge and skill requirements of operating commercial motor vehicles, school bus drivers must be aware of the risks that are unique to transporting school children. It is this responsibility that makes school bus operation a specialized driving task.

To become licensed as a school bus driver, you must meet certain training, testing and medical qualifications, and obtain a school bus endorsement. Listed below are the basic steps that are required. A more detailed guide listing the requirements for various types of licenses follows this general information.

Type I Operation (manufacturer's rated seating capacity is more than 15 passengers including the operator):

- Physical examination conducted by a licensed physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner.
- School bus driver training clinic.
- **Valid commercial driver license, passenger endorsement, and school bus endorsement, vision, written, and Road tests.**

Type II Operation (manufacturer's rated seating capacity is fewer than 16 passengers including the operator, which are owned, leased, or hired by a school, or for which services are reimbursed by a school and if used to transport students):

- Physical examination conducted by a licensed physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner.
- School bus driver training clinic.
- Valid license, school bus endorsement, vision, written and Road tests.

The principal differences between Type I (CDL) and Type II (non-CDL) are the following:

- A CDL requires additional knowledge tests based on the class and type of commercial vehicle being operated.
- A CDL requires an entire vehicle pre-trip inspection as part of the road test.

Driver Qualifications

The physical and mental condition, of school bus drivers is of primary importance. For that reason, school bus drivers must submit to their employer, and to the Department of Motor Vehicles, certification that they meet the physical, mental and vision standards required by law. A licensed physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner must sign these forms. If vision testing is done separately, a medical doctor, ophthalmologist, optometrist or nurse practitioner must sign a **Driver Eyesight Evaluation Form.** Vision testing can also be administered at the DMV exam office.

Type I – Medical Examination Report form and Medical Examiners Certificate required for Type 1 school bus drivers, can be obtained through employers, physicians or online at the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration website, fmcsa.dot.gov.

Type II – The Universal Medical Evaluation/Progress Report form, required for Type II school bus drivers, can be obtained from the Department of Motor Vehicles or online at the DMV website, dmv.vermont.gov

You must provide the following information to DMV:

Type I - The Medical Examination Report and Medical Examiners Certificate when applying for or renewing a CDL and/or School Bus Endorsement.

In order to assure school bus drivers continue to be medically qualified, it is also required a current Medical Examiners Certificate always be on file at the DMV.

Failure to maintain current medical documentation may result in suspension and/or downgrade of a CDL. Certificates can be mailed, faxed or provided electronically to the DMV CDL office.

Email to: DMV.MedCert@vermont.gov

Fax to: 802-828-5548

Mail to: Department of Motor Vehicles

CDL Office

120 State Street

Montpelier, VT 05603-0001

Type II – Universal Medical Evaluation/Progress Report form or a Medical Examination Report form when applying for or renewing a Type II school bus endorsement.

<u>You must provide the following information to your employer:</u>

Type I - A valid copy of the Medical Examination Report and Driver Eyesight Evaluation (if done separately).

Type II – A valid copy of the Universal Medical Evaluation/Progress Report form or a Medical Examination Report and Driver Eyesight Evaluation (if done separately).

Type I and Type II

Because the driving history of school bus drivers is of great importance, employers must also be provided with a copy of the individual's 3-year driver record, prior to their first date of employment as a school bus driver. Driving records can be obtained from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Driving records request form (VG-116) can be obtained from any DMV office or from the DMV website, dmv.vermont.gov.

Drug and Alcohol Testing Requirements

Federal DOT regulations state that drivers who are subject to CDL requirements and who operate commercial motor vehicles are subject to federal DOT drug and alcohol testing requirements. The testing requirements apply to drivers who operate Type I school buses including drivers employed by municipal governments and school districts. Testing is directed by the driver's employer in accordance with the DOT regulations. Drivers and their employers who do not comply with the testing regulations are subject to federally imposed fines and penalties. The requirements can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 49, Section 382.

The DOT regulations require drivers to undergo testing under several circumstances including:

- Pre-employment drug testing
- Random drug and alcohol testing
- Post-crash drug and alcohol testing

- Drug and/or alcohol testing when the driver's employer has reasonable suspicion of a violation

Marijuana is a controlled substance in accordance with federal law. Drivers who are required to comply with DOT drug testing requirements are prohibited from using marijuana for recreational or medicinal purposes.

Disqualification for Use of Alcohol

A person with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.02 or above operating a school bus or a person with a BAC of 0.04 or above operating a commercial motor vehicle is subject to a civil suspension. See 23 VSA §1205.

Training

To provide a foundation of knowledge about school bus statutes and recommended operating procedures, state law requires that each driver attend a training course that has been approved by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles. This must be successfully completed prior to adding or renewing a school bus endorsement.

The approved training known as the "school bus driver training clinic," is taught by certified instructors. Clinics are conducted by school districts, school bus transportation contractors, driving schools and independent instructors. It is important to understand this is a minimum requirement only. School bus clinic attendance is valid for six months. You must obtain your school bus endorsement within the six months. Drivers should obtain additional knowledge and skills training through other sources such as driving schools and employer training programs.

The training curriculum includes, but is not limited to the following subjects:

- The Role and Responsibility of a School Bus Driver.
- Loading, Unloading, Passenger Control and Discipline.
- Collisions and Emergency Procedures.
- Vehicle Maintenance and Inspection.
- Driving Fundamentals.

Drivers who wish to renew their school bus endorsement must attend a school bus driver clinic.

To obtain information about the dates and locations of driver clinics visit our website at dmv.vermont.gov.

License Testing and Issuance

The type of license you now hold, and the type of school bus you will be operating determines what tests you have to take. The following guide provides those details.

- **Type I School Bus Endorsement:** Use the following chart to determine what tests are required.

Your Present License ↓	CDL General Knowledge test	CDL Passenger Endorsement Knowledge test	Vision Screening	School Bus Knowledge test	CDL/School Bus Road test
Driver's License no endorsement	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Driver's License Type II endorsement	✓	✓		✓	✓
CDL no endorsements		✓	✓	✓	✓
CDL Type II bus endorsement no passenger endorsement		✓		✓	✓
CDL passenger endorsement			✓	✓	✓
CDL Type II bus passenger endorsement				✓	✓

Note: If the school bus you will be driving is equipped with air brakes, a written air brake test, and a road test in a school bus equipped with air brakes is required.

- **Type II School Bus Endorsement:** Use the following chart to determine what tests are required.

Your Present License ↓	Vision Screening	School Bus Knowledge test	School Bus Road Test
Driver's License no endorsement	✓	✓	✓
CDL with or without passenger endorsement	✓	✓	✓

Scheduling and Taking the Driver's Tests

- **Scheduling:**

  Written and vision tests are administered at several DMV offices located throughout the state. Road tests (pre-trip, basic controls & road test) are administered at locations that are designated as CDL test sites. The written and vision tests must be passed before taking the Road tests. You must hold a Commercial Learner Permit (CLP) for 14 days prior to taking the road test.

  A scheduling deposit must be submitted to the DMV prior to scheduling a CDL road test. This fee can be paid at any office when you take the knowledge test/s or can be mailed to DMV in Montpelier. After paying the fee, wait at least one full day before scheduling an appointment. **If you are adding a <u>Type II</u> endorsement, or if you have a passenger endorsement on your license and are adding a Type II school bus endorsement, <u>no scheduling fee is required</u>.**

  Appointments are made online at mydmv.vermont.gov, or by calling 888-970-0357. When scheduling your appointment, you will need the following information:

  - The tests you wish to take.
  - The DMV location that is most convenient to you.
  - Your name as it appears on your driver's license.
  - Your driver license identification number.
  - Your date of birth.
  - Your phone number.

- **Taking the Vision and Knowledge tests:**

  The vision test is administered using a vision-screening device that tests for visual acuity and field of vision.

  The Type II school bus test is based on information provided in the School Bus Driver's Manual. This test consists of fifty (50) multiple choice questions. The passing score is 80% or better. **Type II drivers do not need to study the CDL manual.**

  The Type I school bus knowledge test is based on information provided in the School Bus Drivers Manual (30 multiple choice) and Section 10 of the Vermont Commercial Driver License Manual (20 multiple choice). The passing score is 80% or better for each section.

  All the required knowledge tests including CDL General Knowledge, CDL endorsements and school bus endorsement can be taken on the same day. The following checklist is provided to help you prepare for the test session. **Bring the following items with you:**

  - Your driver's license/s and permit (if applicable).
  - All required fees (see CDL manual for details).
  - Medical Examination Report and DOT or VT medical card.
  - Receipt from previous testing (if applicable).

- **Taking the Road tests:**

  The road test for Type I drivers are based on information provided in the School Bus Drivers Manual **and** the Commercial Driver License (CDL) Manual.

  To successfully complete the road test, you must pass a vehicle pre-trip inspection (CDL only), demonstrate the proper procedures for stopping at a railroad grade crossing, discharging students at a bus stop, turning around and obeying other rules of the road in general.

  The following checklist is provided to help you prepare for the road test. **Bring the following items with you:**

  - A properly equipped and inspected school bus of the type and size you will be driving.
  - A licensed CDL Driver with a School Bus and Passenger endorsements. (No licensed CDL Driver is required for a Type II School Bus exam.)

- Your driver's license and permit (if applicable).
- Vehicle registration certificate.
- Vehicle insurance identification card.
- Medical Examination Report, and if driving a Type I school bus, a Medical Examiners Certificate.
- Receipt from previous testing (if applicable), including the school bus application.

NOTE: If you are taking the school bus skills test in a Multi-Function School Activity Bus (MFSAB) your endorsement will be restricted to a MFSAB only.

Non-Resident Drivers

Out of state school bus drivers holding a CDL, must obtain and maintain a School Bus Endorsement in their home state. Out of state individuals who will be operating a Type II school bus are required to complete the same requirements as Vermont residents. They will be issued a Vermont School Bus Endorsement Card to carry with their out of state licenses.

Endorsement Renewal

The school bus endorsement is only valid on a four (4) year license. School bus endorsements may not be issued or renewed on a two (2) year license. To renew your endorsement, you must first attend a school bus driver's clinic and then take the DMV school bus endorsement examination.

Note: A school bus clinic is only valid for six (6) months. Your school bus endorsement must be obtained within six months of date of the clinic.

The school bus endorsement examination consists of the vision, written and road tests. This is the same examination that is required for a first-time endorsement, however, for renewal purposes, the examiner may waive the road test portion.

The endorsement expires at the same time as your Driver's License or CDL. Prior to license expiration the DMV will send you a notice, which details the requirements for renewing the endorsement. The DMV must have your current mailing address on file to mail the notice to you. **It is**

the driver's responsibility to apply for the endorsement renewal, whether or not this renewal is received.

Note: Because the endorsement expires at the same time as your Driver's License or CDL, the first endorsement may be valid for less than four years. Thereafter the endorsement will be valid for full four (4) year terms.

- 23 VSA §1282 ~ Operator, Equipment and Inspection:

  (a) Before a person may assume the duty of transporting school pupils in either a Type I or Type II school bus, he or she shall as a minimum:

  (1) For Type I, have a valid state of Vermont commercial driver license with a passenger endorsement and a school bus driver's endorsement or, for Type II, have a valid state of Vermont license with a school bus driver's endorsement or have a license from another jurisdiction valid for the class or type of vehicle to be driven;

  (2) Furnish the department of motor vehicles or in the case of a person licensed in another jurisdiction furnish his or her employer a certificate signed by a licensed physician, or a certified physician's assistant or a nurse practitioner in accordance with written protocols, that he or she is, as far as can be determined by reasonable inquiry and examination, mentally and physically competent to perform his or her duties. Any newly diagnosed diabetic or established diabetic must be stabilized and must be certified by his or her personal physician that he or she has not had a hypoglycemic reaction (loss of consciousness or near loss of consciousness) for the last two years or since his or her last physical, whichever is longer. Any diabetic must be recertified every six months by his or her personal physician who must state that the patient has not had a hypoglycemic reaction during that time;

  (3) Have completed training in school bus operation, including evacuation and emergency procedures, as the commissioner deems necessary;

  (4) Be licensed for Type I or Type II or both, Type I being an automatic qualification for a Type II operator;

(5) Furnish to his or her employer prior to the first date of employment as a school bus driver, a copy of his or her three-year operating record.

(b) A school bus shall not be operated in the transportation of children to and from school unless and until it is inspected at an inspection station designated as such by the motor vehicle department. The inspection shall thoroughly cover mechanical conditions, standard equipment, extra equipment and safety and comfort conditions all as provided in section 1281 of this title; and, if the inspected vehicle meets all of these requirements, the inspection station shall give the owner or operator of the inspected vehicle a signed certificate so stating. This certificate shall be shown as soon as possible by the owner or operator to a school director in the town in which this vehicle is to be operated, and shall thereafter be carried in some easily accessible place in the vehicle. Thereafter, so long as this bus remains in this service, it must be inspected as provided in this section during each of the following periods: January-April, May-August, and September-December. School buses of the pleasure car type, if regularly used in this service, shall display signs required in subdivision 1283(a)(1) of this title when transporting schoolchildren.

(c) (1) A school bus shall not regularly transport more passengers than seating space of 13 inches for each child will permit.

(2) Bus routing and seating plans shall be coordinated so as to eliminate standees when a school bus is in motion, and standees shall be permitted only in emergency situations.

(3) There shall be no auxiliary seating accommodations such as temporary or folding jump seats in school buses.

(d) (1) No less often than every two years, and before the start of a school year, a person licensed by the Department of Motor Vehicles to assume the duty of transporting school pupils in either a Type I or Type II school bus shall furnish the employer, who employs him or her as a school bus driver, the following:

(A) a certificate signed by a licensed physician, or a certified physician assistant, or a nurse practitioner in accordance with written protocols, certifying that the licensee is, as

far as can be determined by reasonable inquiry and examination, mentally and physically competent to perform his or her duties, and that he or she meets or exceeds the minimum hearing standards, based on voice testing, as prescribed by the Commissioner; and

(B) A certificate signed by a properly registered and authorized medical doctor, ophthalmologist, optometrist, or nurse practitioner certifying that he or she meets or exceeds the minimum vision standards as prescribed by the commissioner.

(2) Upon receipt of a certificate required by this subsection which indicates that the school bus driver is not mentally or physically competent or does not meet the minimum hearing or vision standards, the employer shall immediately notify the commissioner.

(3) The certificates required under this subsection may be valid for up to two years from the examination.

(e) In the event the school bus driver is subject to 49 C.F.R. part 391, subpart E, the provisions of those regulations rather than the standards of this section shall apply.

(f) Subject to State Board of Education rules, which may provide for limited idling, the operator of a school bus shall not idle the engine while waiting for children to board or to exit the vehicle at a school and shall not start the engine until ready to leave the school premises. The board, in consultation with the Agency of Natural Resources, the Department of Health, and the Department of Motor Vehicles, shall adopt rules to implement this subsection. The rules shall set forth periods or circumstances that reasonably require the idling of the engine, including periods when it is necessary to operate defrosting, heating, or cooling equipment to ensure the health or safety of the driver or passengers or to operate auxiliary equipment; and periods when the engine is undergoing maintenance or inspection.

23 VSA § 4103 ~ Definitions

(4) "Commercial motor vehicle" means a motor vehicle designed or used to transport passengers or property:

(A) a motor vehicle designed or used to transport passengers or property:

(i) if the vehicle has a gross vehicle weight rating of 26,001 or more pounds or such lesser rating as determined by federal regulation;

(ii) if the vehicle is designed to transport more than 15 passengers, including the driver;

(iii) if the vehicle is transporting hazardous materials and is required to be placarded in accordance with 49 C.F.R. part 172, subpart F.

(B) the term shall not include:

(i) authorized emergency vehicles as defined in section 4 of this title;

(ii) motor homes as defined in 32 V.S.A. § 8902(11) and trailer coaches as defined in subdivision 4(41) of this title; however, this exemption shall only apply to vehicles used strictly for recreational, noncommercial purposes;

(iii) equipment owned or operated by the U.S. Department of Defense, including the National Guard, and operated by noncivilian personnel or by National Guard military technicians (civilians who are required to wear military uniforms) and active duty U.S. Coast Guard personnel;

(iv) farm vehicles, which are vehicles:

(I) controlled and operated by a farmer;

(II) used to transport either agricultural products, farm machinery, farm supplies or both to or from a farm;

(III) not used in the operations of a common or contract motor carrier; and

(IV) used within 150 miles of the farm.

🚌 *23 VSA §4107 ~ Commercial driver license required*

A. Except when driving under a commercial driver instruction permit and accompanied by the holder of a commercial driver license valid for the vehicle being driven, no person may drive a commercial motor vehicle on the highways of this state unless:

   1) the person holds a commercial driver license; and

   2) the person is in immediate possession of the license; and

   3) the license has the applicable endorsements valid for the vehicle he or she is driving.

B. No person may drive a commercial motor vehicle while his or her driving privilege is suspended, revoked, or cancelled, while subject to a disqualification, or in violation of an out-of-service order.

C. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, employees of farm-related service industries shall be exempt from the knowledge and Road tests required under this chapter, and shall be issued restricted Commercial Drivers Licenses as long as the applicants meet the requirements of 49 C.F.R. part 383 and upon payment of the appropriate fee.

   "Farm-related service industries" shall include farm retail outlets and suppliers, agri-chemical businesses, custom harvesters, and livestock feeders.

Part III – Safe Operating Procedures

Railroad Grade Crossings

Crossing railroad tracks represents one of the greatest hazards insofar as mass casualties and fatalities are concerned. **STOP, LOOK** and **LISTEN**. All school buses, loaded or empty, must stop for railroad crossings. This is an important safety procedure and it is the law.

The following procedures must be followed when approaching and crossing railroad tracks. Learn these procedures and practice them until they become automatic actions.

Procedures

- **Prepare to Stop:**
  1. As the school bus approaches a railroad crossing, activate the four-way hazard lights approximately 200 feet before the crossing
  2. To reduce distractions, request silence and turn off radio and heaters.
  3. Get the "Big Picture". Check all traffic control devices.
  4. Apply your brakes to give adequate warning to motorists behind the bus.
- **Stop the Bus:**
  1. Stop in a position that gives a clear view of the tracks in both directions. Stop no closer than 15 feet, nor further than 50 feet from the nearest rail.
  2. Place bus in neutral or park and set parking brake.
  3. Turn off the master switch so the red lights will not come on when the door is opened. (Remember to turn it on when clear of the tracks.)
- **Look and Listen:**
  1. Always anticipate a train.
  2. For Type I buses, open the service door and the driver's window. On Type II buses, open the driver's window.
  3. Look and listen thoroughly and carefully.
- **If the Tracks are Clear:**
  1. Shift into the proper starting gear, so that there is no need to shift gears while crossing the tracks.
  2. Look and listen a second time, close the door and proceed quickly and smoothly. After crossing the tracks completely, activate the master switch for the warning lights system.

3. Four-way hazard lights should be deactivated after the vehicle crosses the tracks.

- **If a Train is Approaching:**
  1. Hold the bus in position with the use of the parking brake.
  2. Once the train has passed, the gate is up, and the flashing lights are off, use proper procedure for crossing the tracks.
- **Multi-Track Crossings:**
  1. Make sure a train is not approaching on any of the tracks.
  2. After the train passes, wait until other tracks become visible before proceeding. A second train might be approaching.
  3. When clear, use proper procedure for crossing tracks.

Railroad Traffic Control Devices

Flashing lights and bells warn of an approaching train. If a train is stopped and a railroad attendant is directing traffic, you may cross with the attendant's directions.

All traffic must obey railroad-crossing gates. Vehicles may proceed around the gates **only** at the direction of a law enforcement officer or an authorized railroad attendant. If the gate appears to be stuck, contact your dispatcher or law enforcement.

If the gate comes down as you are starting across a railroad crossing, do not stop, drive through the gate, even if it means you will break the gate.

If the school bus stalls or becomes trapped while crossing the railroad tracks, immediately evacuate the bus. Move everyone away from the bus at an angle that is both away from the track and toward any oncoming train.

Important Note: When approaching a crossing where a stop sign or traffic control device is on the other side of the tracks, additional care must be taken.

At some of these locations, there might not be enough room available to stop for the traffic control device, and at the same time be clear of the railroad tracks. If this situation arises, the driver should not cross the tracks until they are clear of rail traffic, and when it is not required to make another stop at the traffic control device. If this type of crossing is on a proposed or existing school bus route, drivers and transportation

administrators should work together to establish the safest procedure for the particular situation.

- **Exempt Crossings:**

  A school bus is not required to stop at a crossing marked “exempt.” If a railroad wishes to use this type of crossing, a flagger must be present when the train crosses.

- ***23 VSA §1072 ~ Certain Vehicles Must Stop:***

(a)(1) Before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, the drivers of the following vehicles shall stop within 50 feet, but not less than 15 feet, from the nearest rail of the railroad and while so stopped shall look and listen in both directions along the track for any approaching train and for signals indicating the approach of a train, and may not proceed until he or she can do so safely:

(A) any motor vehicle carrying passengers for hire except for jitneys designed to carry not more than seven passengers including the driver;

(B) any school bus or multifunction school activity bus; and

(C) any vehicle carrying explosive substances or flammable liquids as cargo or part of its cargo.

(2) After stopping as required herein and upon proceeding when it is safe to do so, the driver of any such vehicle shall cross so that there will be no necessity for changing gears while traversing the crossing, and the driver may not shift gears while crossing the track or tracks.

(b) No stop need be made at any crossing where an attendant, an enforcement officer, or a traffic-control signal directs traffic to proceed.

(c) The driver of a Type I school bus stopping as required under subsection (a) of this section shall open the door of the bus before crossing the railroad tracks. Drivers of Type II school buses shall open the left front window.

(d) Except when required by section 1071 of this title, stopping is not required at a crossing that has been signed as "exempt" in accordance with a designation of the Transportation Board.

Railroad Grade Crossing Facts

- A 150-car freight train, traveling at 50 mph and using emergency braking procedures, will travel 1½ miles before coming to a complete stop. At 30 mph, the stopping distance is 2/3 mile.
- It is difficult to judge the speed at which a train approaches. Because of its large size, a train appears to be moving slower than it is.
- If you race to reach a crossing before a train and it's a tie – **you lose.**

Passenger Loading and Unloading

One of the most important safety concerns for a school bus driver is the boarding and discharging of passengers. It is at this point that they are exposed to many potential hazards. Foremost among these hazards is other drivers disregarding or being inattentive to a stopped school bus.

By law, school buses must be equipped with an "eight-light system," and these lights must be used each and every time students are loaded and unloaded, regardless of location. There is no exception to this legal requirement. These warning lights are the primary method of controlling traffic at a school bus stop. The driver is responsible for the proper use of the light system, and must be attentive to the conditions that exist in and around the bus. No one other than a Law Enforcement Officer has the authority to direct a vehicle around a stopped school bus displaying it's flashing red warning lights.

By law the warning lights must only be used when approaching a stop to load or unload passengers. When a school bus is being used for non-school purposes, the SCHOOL BUS sign must be covered or removed and the eight-light system must not be used.

The following procedures must be followed when loading or unloading passengers.

Loading Procedures

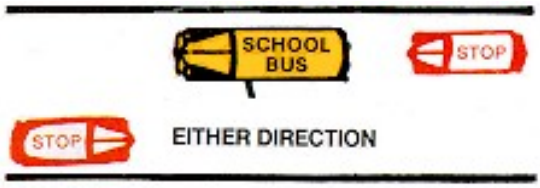
- **Prepare to Stop:**
  1. Activate the warning light system and approach the stop cautiously, watching

for traffic and pedestrians. Turn on the alternating flashing amber lights at least 200 feet or approximately 5 – 10 seconds before the stop. If driving a Type II bus equipped with a simple light system, turn on your four way flashers.

2. Keep your bus in the center of the lane. Do not drive to the right side of the road and do not use the right directional light. Doing so might communicate to other drivers that you want them to pass the bus.
3. Check all mirrors to see that traffic is clear and it is safe to stop. Approach students with extreme care, giving due consideration to road conditions.
4. Make a final check to be sure all traffic has stopped before opening the door and signaling students to approach.

- **Stop the Bus:**

1. Stop the school bus with the front bumper at least 10 feet away from the students. This requires the students to walk to the bus enabling you to have a better view of their movements. Students should be waiting at least 10 feet back from the shoulder (space permitting) of the road.
2. Shift into park or neutral and hold the bus in position by applying the parking brake at each stop.
3. Check all mirrors and note the location of any oncoming traffic. Open the door. This will activate the red warning lights.
4. Check to be sure traffic has stopped; continue to check mirrors. Once you have ensured vehicles have stopped, signal the pupils to approach the bus entrance. If the students are waiting on the opposite side of the road, check again to be sure traffic has stopped before signaling them to cross. Students should cross at least ten feet in front of the bus.
5. Before proceeding account for all students that were at the stop. If a student cannot be accounted for, shut



off the bus, set the parking brake, remove the key and get out to look for the missing student. Be sure to check under the bus.

- **Proceed:**
  1. Check to ensure all passengers are seated.
  2. Close the door (which turns off the red warning lights). If driving a Type II bus equipped with a simple light system, turn off the red lights.
  3. Check traffic and accelerate smoothly.

Unloading Procedures

- **Prepare to Stop:**
  1. Follow instructions in above section on loading.
- **Stop the Bus:**
  1. Come to a complete stop. Shift to neutral and hold the bus in position with the parking brake. Students should remain seated until the bus has come to a complete stop.
  2. Check all mirrors and note the location of any on-coming traffic. Open the door. This will activate the red warning lights. If driving a Type II bus equipped with a simple light system, activate the red lights.
  3. Check to be sure traffic is stopped. Once traffic has stopped allow students to leave the bus, counting them as they get off, and re-counting before moving the bus. Continue to monitor the traffic situation.
  4. If students must cross the street, proceed as follows:
     a. Instruct them to first walk at least 10 feet away from the side of the bus (space permitting). They should then walk forward and wait at least 10 feet in front of the right corner of the bus. Count the number of students who will be crossing the street.
     b. Check to be sure traffic is stopped; continue to check mirrors.
     c. Give a signal for them to cross. Do not use a signal that might confuse motorists in front of you.
     d. Count the pupils that have walked to the other side of the street. Do not close the door (which will turn off the warning

lights) or move the bus until all students are clear of the highway. If driving a Type II bus equipped with a simple light system, turn off the red lights after all students are clear of the highway.

5. After all students who got off the bus are accounted for, proceed as in above instructions under Loading. If they cannot all be accounted for, shut off the bus, set the parking brake, remove the key and get out to look for the missing student. Be sure to check under the bus.

Teach students to move out of the buses danger zone as soon as they exit the bus. Assure they understand they are never to stop or to go back to retrieve a dropped object. Teach them to move to a point of safety, out of the danger zones, and get the driver's attention.

If you should miss a child's stop, never back up. Contact your dispatcher and follow the school's procedures

When unloading students at the school, secure the bus by turning off the ignition switch. Students should remain seated until told to exit. Have students exit in an orderly fashion. Watch to be sure they move promptly away from the unloading area as soon as they exit the bus.

23 VSA §1283 ~ Identification and Equipment of School Buses:

(a) Types I and II school buses shall be:

(4) Equipped with a system of signal lamps approved by the Commissioner, including an eight light system on any new or used school bus ordered on and after July 1, 1976. The driver of a Type I or a Type II school bus shall keep the alternately flashing red signal lamps lighted whenever school children are being received or discharged, and they shall be used only for that purpose. A school bus driver found in violation of this subdivision shall be guilty of a traffic violation.

23 VSA §1075 ~ Passing School Bus:

(a) The operator of a motor vehicle, including authorized emergency vehicles under section 1015 of this title, upon meeting or overtaking a vehicle marked and equipped as provided in section 1283 of this title which has stopped on the highway for the purpose of receiving or discharging public or private schoolchildren, shall stop his or her vehicle immediately and

shall keep it stationary while the flashing red signal lights are in operation.

(b) The driver of a vehicle need not stop upon a highway with separate roadways upon meeting or overtaking a school bus which is on a different roadway, or upon a controlled access highway where the school bus is stopped in a loading zone which is a part of or adjacent to the highway at a point where pedestrians are not permitted to cross the roadway.

23 VSA §1015 ~ Authorized Emergency Vehicles:

(a) The driver of an authorized emergency vehicle, when responding to an emergency call or when responding to, but not returning from, a fire alarm and a law enforcement officer operating an authorized emergency vehicle in fresh pursuit of a suspected violator of the law:

(1) May park or stand contrary to the provisions of this chapter;

(2) May proceed past a red or stop signal or stop sign, but only after slowing down as may be necessary for safe operation;

(3) Shall come to a full stop when approaching a school bus which is flashing red lights and may proceed only when the flashing red lights are extinguished;

(4) May exceed the maximum speed limits;

(5) May disregard regulations governing direction of movement or turning in specified directions.

(b) The exemptions granted to an authorized emergency vehicle apply only when the vehicle is making use of audible or visual signals meeting the requirements of this title.

(c) The foregoing provisions shall not relieve the driver of an authorized emergency vehicle from the duty to drive with due regard for the safety of all persons, nor shall such provisions protect the driver from the consequences of his reckless disregard for the safety of others.

(d) The operator of a school bus, upon the approach of an authorized emergency vehicle as described in subsection (a) of this section, shall take action immediately to get school children out of the

public highway and to a safe place and shall thereafter extinguish the flashing red lights.

🚌 ***23 VSA §1013 ~ Authority of enforcement officers***

Enforcement officers may make arrests for violation of this title, may direct, control and regulate traffic and make reasonable orders in enforcement of this title or to prevent or alleviate traffic congestion, property damage, or personal injury. No person may knowingly fail or refuse to comply with any lawful order or direction of any enforcement officer.

PASSING

When approaching another vehicle or vulnerable user from the rear and you want to pass, be sure you have enough distance to pass safely. Signal left to let other drivers know that you will be pulling out, look to the rear to see if your vehicle is being passed (look in the rearview mirrors and over your left shoulder to check the blind spot), change lanes and pass on the left. At night it might be necessary to blink your headlights from low to high to low beam to warn the driver in front of you that you intend to pass.

Pass vehicles and vulnerable users on the left. Leave at least four feet of clearance between your vehicle and any vehicle or bicycle you are passing. You should go far enough beyond the motor vehicle or bicycle you are passing so that you are able to see the entire front of the motor vehicle vulnerable user in your inside rearview mirror. Use your right signal, check the right blind spot over your shoulder, and return to the right side of the road. When you are being passed by another vehicle, you should slow a little and keep right. This will allow the other driver to pass more safely.

A driver may pass on the right of another vehicle on a multilane road. On roads that are not multilane, a driver may pass on the right of a vehicle or vulnerable user turning or preparing to turn left, if there is room to go by safely. Under no conditions can a motor vehicle be passed by driving off the pavement or main traveled part of the road.

Extra care must be given when passing “Vulnerable Users.” 23 VSA 1033(b) requires a driver passing a “vulnerable user” shall exercise due care by increasing clearance and cross the center line only in accordance

with 23 VSA 1033(a)(1). "Vulnerable Users" are defined in 23 VSA §4(81) as:

> *""Vulnerable user" means a pedestrian; an operator of highway building, repair, or maintenance equipment or of agricultural equipment; a person operating a wheelchair or other personal mobility device, whether motorized or not; a person operating a bicycle or other non-motorized means of transportation (such as, but not limited to, roller skates, rollerblades, or roller skis); or a person riding, driving, or herding an animal."*

DO NOT PASS AT THESE LOCATIONS

- Hills
- Curves
- Railroads
- Intersections
- If you see a "changed path ahead"

23 VSA §1033 Passing motor vehicles and vulnerable users

(a) Passing motor vehicles generally. Motor vehicles proceeding in the same direction may be overtaken and passed only as follows:

(1) The driver of a motor vehicle overtaking another motor vehicle proceeding in the same direction may pass to its left at a safe distance, and when so doing shall exercise due care, shall not pass to the left of the center of the highway, and shall not again drive to the right side of the roadway until safely clear of the overtaken vehicle.

(2) Except when overtaking and passing on the right is permitted, the driver of an overtaken motor vehicle shall give way to the right in favor of the overtaking motor vehicle and shall not increase the speed of his or her vehicle until completely passed by the overtaking vehicle.

(b) Approaching or passing vulnerable users. The operator of a motor vehicle approaching or passing a vulnerable user as defined in subdivision 4(81) of this title shall exercise due care, which includes reducing speed and increasing clearance to a recommended distance of at

least four feet, to pass the vulnerable user safely, and shall cross the center of the highway only as provided in section 1035 of this title. A person who violates this subsection shall be subject to a civil penalty of not less than $200.00.

(c) Approaching or passing certain stationary vehicles. The operator of a motor vehicle approaching or passing a stationary sanitation, maintenance, utility, or delivery vehicle with flashing lights shall exercise due care, which includes reducing speed and increasing clearance to a recommended distance of at least four feet, to pass the vehicle safely, and shall cross the center of the highway only as provided in section 1035 of this title.

School Bus Idling

Vermont state law prohibits school bus idling on school grounds. School grounds are defined as any area adjacent to school buildings and used at any time for school-related activities, including parking lots, playing fields and driveways.

- 23 VSA §1282(f) ~ Operator, equipment and inspection

  (f) Subject to state board of education rules, which may provide for limited idling, the operator of a school bus shall not idle the engine while waiting for children to board or to exit the vehicle at a school and shall not start the engine until ready to leave the school premises. The board, in consultation with the agency of natural resources, the department of health, and the department of motor vehicles, shall adopt rules to implement this subsection. The rules shall set forth periods or circumstances that reasonably require the idling of the engine, including periods when it is necessary to operate defrosting, heating, or cooling equipment to ensure the health or safety of the driver or passengers or to operate auxiliary equipment; and periods when the engine is undergoing maintenance or inspection.

- Vermont Board of Education Rule 6005 ~ School Bus Idling:

  The district shall communicate this rule to all parents, drivers, and staff. The provisions of this rule shall be incorporated into transportation contracts and agreements.

  The employer of a school bus driver shall ensure that the driver is informed of the rule and any related district policy, and that all

complaints of non-compliance are reviewed and that appropriate corrective actions are taken.

The operator of a school bus:

(a) shall turn off the primary propulsion engine immediately upon arrival at student loading or unloading areas on school grounds, and shall not restart the engine until the bus is loaded or unloaded and is ready to depart; and

(b) shall not otherwise idle the bus engine for more than five (5) minutes in a sixty (60) minute period on school grounds.

The provisions of this rule shall not apply under the following conditions:

1. when the engine is required to operate special equipment for disabled persons;
2. when the engine is required to operate safety equipment other than lighting systems, such as windshield defrosters, and the operation of the equipment is necessary at that time to address specific safety, traffic, health, or emergency concerns; and
3. when the vehicle is being serviced and the operation of the engine is essential to the service being performed.

Contact the Department of Education for more information or questions about this rule.

Visual Search

It is important for the driver to get a clear, complete and accurate picture of the traffic scene. To find out what is happening around you in traffic, you must use your senses of sight, sound, and smell. Sight is the most important sense in driving. It is your best source of information about the traffic scene.

To know what you see quickly and correctly, you must use a visual search pattern or routine. This is called **systematic seeing**. It helps you know:

- What to look at.
- What to look for.
- Where to look.

Look ahead of where you intend to travel. Search the traffic scene ahead of the bus and to the sides. Use your mirrors to see to the rear.

Looking Ahead:

You should look ahead as far as you will travel in 12 or 15 seconds. This is called eye-lead time. In city driving, 12 seconds is equal to about one block. On the open highway, it is about ¼ mile. Looking far enough ahead will give you time to:

- Identify problems.
- Prepare for trouble.
- Decide how to avoid the problem.
- Check for anything that might keep you from making the proper change.
- Take the right action.

Looking well ahead and having enough visual lead time increases safety, saves fuel, and saves time.

Looking at Intersections:

After stopping at an intersection, it is important for you to know how to look before you move into and across traffic lanes. The following guidelines should be helpful.

1. Move your bus forward very slowly. Give other drivers a chance to see you. The slow, controlled speed will also let you stop again before driving into the path of cross traffic.
2. Look in the right order. Look left, right then left again as you begin to move forward.

The reason to look in this order is the first lane you cross carries traffic from the left. Until that lane is clear to enter, you cannot move forward. If your search shows the right lane is also clear, you can safely begin to move forward. At this point, the second look to the left assures you there are no changes in that direction. You can now go through the intersection.

Using Mirrors

Using mirrors properly is an important driving skill. The driver must properly adjust and use the mirrors to effectively search the traffic scene.

School buses come in different sizes and designs. Therefore, it is important for new drivers, or those getting behind the wheel of a different bus, to properly adjust the mirrors and practice visual search around the entire vehicle. Using mirrors is especially helpful when driving in heavy traffic, backing, and picking up and discharging passengers.

"Crossover" mirrors are required on some buses to provide the driver with a clear view of pupils who might be crossing in front of the bus. The size and design of the bus, and a formula in state statute determines if this type of mirror is required.

More information regarding the use of mirrors can be found in Chapter 10 of the Commercial Driver License Manual.

Communication

If travel is to be safe and smooth, highway users need to talk to each other. Bus drivers must do their share. Tell others what you intend to do as you move your bus through traffic. At the same time, be alert for messages from other highway users such as drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Communicate your intent. Other highway users do not know what you are going to do unless you tell them. Therefore, whenever possible, you should signal what you intend to do before you do it.

Signaling for Turns:

1. **Signal Early:** The best way to keep others from trying to pass you when you are turning is to turn on the signal one-half block before an intersection or about 500 feet on the open highway. Vermont statute requires that a turn signal be activated at least 100 feet prior to the turn.
2. **Signal Continuously:** You might find that after turning on your signal, you must stop and wait for a safe break in traffic. Keep the signal on. It tells everyone what you are going to do.

3. **Cancel Your Signal:** When you have completed the turn, cancel the signal. Do not cancel the signal until you have completed the turn.

4. **Signaling for Lane Changes:** Lane changes need the same early signals as turns. They also need one more signal – the motion of your vehicle. Once you have started your lane change, pause for a few seconds as you enter the new lane. This will catch the attention of those who did not notice your earlier signal. It will give them a chance to react.

23 VSA §1064 ~ Signals required

(a) Before changing direction or materially slackening speed, a driver shall give warning of his or her intention with the hand signals as provided in section 1065 of this title, or with a mechanical or lighting device approved by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles. A bicyclist shall give such hand signals unless he or she cannot do so safely.

(b) A person shall not turn a vehicle at an intersection unless the vehicle is in proper position upon the roadway as required in section 1061 of this title, or turn a vehicle to enter an alley, private road, or driveway, or otherwise turn a vehicle from a direct course or move right or left upon a roadway unless such movement can be made with reasonable safety.

(c) A person shall not stop or suddenly decrease the speed of a vehicle without first giving an appropriate signal in the manner provided in this section to the driver of any vehicle immediately to the rear when there is opportunity to give such signal.

(d) A signal of intention to turn right or left when required shall be given continuously during not less than the last 100 feet traveled by the vehicle before turning. A bicyclist shall comply with this subsection unless he or she cannot do so safely.

(e) The signals provided for in section 1065 of this title shall be used to indicate an intention to turn, change lanes, or start from a parked position and may not be flashed on one side only on a parked or disabled vehicle, or flashed as a courtesy or "do pass" signal to operators of other vehicles approaching from the rear.

Slowing Down

Highway users expect vehicles ahead of them to keep moving. Any time you slow suddenly, give the driver behind you some warning. Light taps on the brake pedal – enough to flash the brake lights should accomplish that.

You should give a warning when there is trouble ahead, when you are approaching a tight turn, when driving slowly and, especially, when approaching rail grade crossings or when stopping to pick up or discharge passengers.

Poor Visibility

Visibility is affected by the time of day (dawn or dusk) and by poor weather. If you are having trouble seeing oncoming vehicles, you must assume that other drivers are having trouble seeing you. Turn on your low beam headlights. Do not use high beams in these conditions as they can be as much of a problem in the day as at night.

Space Management

One of the most important things a good driver does is to keep a cushion of safety around his or her vehicle at all times. We call this space management.

You need space all around your vehicle – in front, to the sides, and to the rear. When things go wrong on the road, space gives you time to adjust. At times, other vehicles will stop unexpectedly or turn in front of you. You might need space to change lanes, stop or slow down. If, for instance, you must change lanes or swerve right or left, you will need to check your side-view mirrors. That takes time, and time requires space.

Space Ahead:

> Of all the space around your bus, the space ahead is the most important. This is the amount of space you need to be able to stop.
>
> In normal road conditions, you should maintain at least a 4-second following distance. The distance must be increased when operating at higher speeds or when road and weather conditions are poor.
>
> Another situation that requires increased following distance is when a vehicle is following you too closely. Increasing your following

distance will allow you to brake more gradually, which will reduce the possibility of that vehicle colliding with the rear of the bus.

To measure your following distance, note when the rear end of the vehicle ahead passes a marking on the road or other landmark. Then count off the seconds; 1,001, 1,002, 1,003, and so on, until the front of your bus reaches the same spot. Compare your count with your desired following distance.

Space Behind:

It is difficult to control the space behind your bus. However, there are some things you can do to control the space to the rear.

When changing lanes, leave plenty of space. Wait a little longer before pulling in front of the vehicle you have just passed.

Anticipate tailgating and respond safely to tailgaters. If you find yourself being tailgated, some actions can help reduce the chance of a collision.

- Avoid quick changes. If you have to slow down or turn, signal your intentions early and make the changes slowly.
- Increase your following distance. Arrange for more space in front of the bus. This will help you avoid having to make sudden changes in speed or direction. It also makes it easier for a tailgater to get around you.
- Do not speed up. Tailgaters often tend to stay close no matter how fast you go. It is better to be tailgated at a slow speed than a high speed.
- Avoid tricks. Do not flash your brake lights to shake up the tailgater. You could make the situation worse by angering or confusing the driver.
- When traffic begins to build up between bus stops, pull over to the side of the road and allow traffic to pass. This should be done only in a location where such a stop is both convenient and safe.

Space to the Sides:

Controlling space to the sides is especially important when traveling on multi-lane roadways.

Maintain as much space to the sides as possible. Concentrate on keeping your bus centered whenever you are meeting, passing, or being passed by another vehicle.

Whenever possible, avoid traveling beside other vehicles. Two dangerous situations can develop any time you travel alongside other vehicles:

1. Another driver might change lanes suddenly and turn directly into you.
2. You might need to change lanes and find there is no opening. You are trapped.

The best way to avoid either situation is not to travel with the pack. Find an open spot where you have the road pretty much to yourself. Of course, there are times when traffic is so heavy you cannot find an open spot. Then you have no choice except to be alert and careful. If you have to travel near other vehicles, stay out of their blind spots. Drop back or pull forward so the other drivers can see you.

Speed Management

Managing speed is a big part of driving safely. The faster you go, the less time you have to react to what is happening around you. Conditions can change in a split second. Speed must be adjusted to each traffic condition.

- **Speed and Stopping Distance:**

  The faster you go, the longer it will take you to stop. It takes over eight times more distance to stop at 50 mph than it does at 15 mph. There are three factors to consider when calculating braking distance.

  1. **Perception Distance:** This is the distance your vehicle travels from the time your eyes see a hazard, until your brain recognizes it.
  2. **Reaction Distance:** The distance traveled from the time your brain tells your foot to move from the accelerator, until your foot is actually pushing the brake pedal.
  3. **Braking Distance:** The distance it takes to stop once the brakes are applied.

There is no speed that will always be a safe speed. Speed must be adjusted to the conditions. These conditions can and do change often during a trip – even a short one.

Road Surfaces

It takes longer to stop when the road surface is slippery. It is also harder to turn your bus. If you are to control your bus, slow down when the road is slippery. This is called **managing your speed**.

If your bus has antilock brakes, do not expect to stop any quicker. All antilock brakes do is allow you to stay in control while braking.

How much you slow down depends on the conditions. Refer to the following chart for approximate speed reduction under various road conditions.

Normal Driving Speed	Driving in Rain	Driving in Snow	Driving on Ice
55 mph	40 mph	28 mph	18 mph
50 mph	35 mph	25 mph	17 mph
45 mph	33 mph	23 mph	15 mph
40 mph	30 mph	20 mph	13 mph

Identifying Slippery Surfaces

Certain clues can help you identify slippery road conditions. When you see any of the following, slow down!

- **Shaded area:** When the sun begins to melt the ice and snow, the shaded areas of the road stay icy long after the open areas are clear. Examples are around bridges and wooded areas.
- **Bridges:** Because air circulates over, under and around bridges, they tend to freeze more quickly than other parts of the road.
- **Black ice:** This is a thin layer of ice that is clear enough to let you see the road underneath. It makes the road look wet. Any time it is below freezing and the road looks wet, watch out for black ice.
- **Just after it begins to rain:** When rain begins to fall after a period of dry weather, it mixes with dirt, grit, oil and other road particles. Then the road becomes very slippery.

- **Hydroplaning:** When water collects on the road, your wheels might lose contact with the road. A thin film of water separates the tires from the road and your bus simply slides along the water. This loss of traction is called **hydroplaning**. Under these conditions, you lose much of your ability to steer, brake and control the bus.

  If you sense this is occurring, gradually decelerate, but do not brake or turn the wheel.

Speed and Vision

You must adjust your speed when visibility is reduced. Driving at 45 mph on bare roads with good tires and brakes, you will need 310 feet to stop your bus. If, because of fog or rain, you can see ahead only 100 feet, you are in a dangerous situation. Imagine a stalled vehicle on the road just beyond the limit of your vision! A general guideline is you should always be able to stop within the distance you can see ahead.

You can apply the same general guideline to night driving. Low beams let you see about 250 feet ahead. If you drive faster than 40 mph at night with low beams, you will not be able to stop in time to keep from hitting something that suddenly appears on the road in front of you.

- **Speed and Field of Vision:**

  Your **field of vision** includes everything you can see (front and both sides) while looking straight ahead. The faster you go, the less you can see to the sides. As your speed increases, your field of vision decreases.

- **Speed and Traffic:**

  The safest speed in traffic is usually the same speed other vehicles are going. Collisions happen more often when vehicles are traveling at different speeds. As a general rule, it is best to blend in with other traffic. Adjust your speed to match the normal flow of legal traffic. Some drivers try to save time by speeding. This really does not work because:

  - Speeding is risky and often leads to collisions.
  - When there is other traffic, you usually cannot save more than a couple of minutes in an hour of driving.

  It is simply not worth the extra risk to speed.

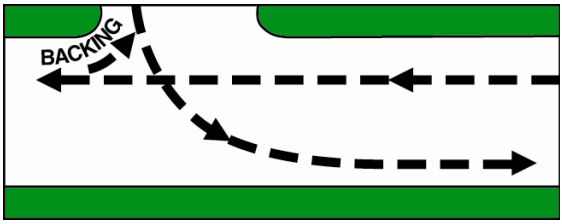
If you drive faster than the other traffic:

- You will have to pass many other vehicles. Each time you change lanes to pass, there is the risk of collision.
- You become more tired from driving.
- You will be more likely to attract the attention of the police.
- You will waste fuel and increase the wear on your brakes.

Going with the flow is safer, easier and cheaper.

Turning Around

At the end of a route, or any time when it is necessary to turn a school bus around, it should be done off the highway if possible. A circular turnaround, which does not require backing, is the safest way. When this is not possible, use the following procedure.



1. Select a side street on the right.
2. Signal to the right, drive past the side street and stop about 30 inches from the curb.
3. Check traffic front and rear.
4. Allow traffic to pass if necessary, and then back into the side street.
5. When traffic is clear, signal to the left and re-enter the roadway.

Texting and Hand Held Device Usage

CDL drivers operating a motor vehicle requiring a CDL are prohibited from texting and using a hand held mobile telephone device by State and Federal Law. Operators of a non CDL vehicle are prohibited by State Law, from texting, and may be prohibited from using a hand held mobile telephone under Federal Law.

- 23 VSA §1099 ~ Texting prohibited

(a) As used in this section, "texting" means the reading or the manual composing or sending of electronic communications, including text messages, instant messages, or e-mails, using a portable electronic device as defined in subdivision 4(82) of this title. Use of a global positioning or navigation system shall be governed by section 1095b of this title.

(b)(1) A person shall not engage in texting while operating a moving motor vehicle in a place open temporarily or permanently to public or general circulation of vehicles.

(2) In addition, a person shall not engage in texting while operating a motor vehicle on a public highway in Vermont, including while the vehicle is stationary, unless otherwise provided under this section. As used in this subdivision (b)(2):

(A) "Public highway" means a State or municipal highway as defined in 19 V.S.A. § 1(12).

(B) "Operating" means operating a motor vehicle on a public highway, including while temporarily stationary because of traffic, a traffic control device, or other temporary delays. "Operating" does not include operating a motor vehicle with or without the motor running when the operator has moved the vehicle to the side of or off the public highway and has halted in a location where the vehicle can safely and lawfully remain stationary.

(c) A person who violates this section commits a traffic violation as defined in section 2302 of this title and shall be subject to a penalty of not less than $100.00 and not more than $200.00 for a first violation, and of not less than $250.00 and not more than $500.00 for a second or subsequent violation within any two-year period.

- 23 VSA §4125 ~ Texting Violations; Handheld Mobile Telephone Violations

(a) Definitions, As used in this section, “driving” means operating a commercial motor vehicle on a public highway, including while temporarily stationary because of traffic, a traffic control device, or other momentary delays. “Driving” does not include operating a commercial motor vehicle with or without the motor running when

the operator has moved the vehicle to the side of or off a highway and has halted in a location where the vehicle can safely remain stationary.

(b)(1) General Prohibition on Texting. No operator shall engage in texting while driving a commercial motor vehicle.

(2) Exception. Texting while driving is permissible by operators of a commercial motor vehicle when necessary to communicate with law enforcement officials or other emergency services

(3) No person may be issued traffic complaints alleging a violation of this section and a violation of section 1099 of this title from the same incident.

(c)(1) General Prohibition on Use of Handheld Mobile Telephones. No operator shall use a handheld mobile telephone while driving a commercial motor vehicle.

(2) Exception. Use of a handheld mobile telephone is permissible by operators of a commercial motor vehicle when necessary to communicate with law enforcement officials or other emergency services.

(d) Motor Carriers

(1) A motor carrier shall not allow or require its drivers to engage in texting while driving a commercial motor vehicle.

(2) A motor carrier shall not or require its drivers to use a handheld mobile telephone while driving a commercial motor vehicle.

- 23 VSA §4116 ~ Disqualification

(d) A person shall be disqualified from driving a commercial motor vehicle for a period of 60 days if convicted of two serious traffic violations, or 120 days if convicted of a third or subsequent serious traffic violation, arising from separate incidents occurring within a three-year period. A disqualification for 120 days shall be issued to be consecutive with any previous disqualification.

PART IV – STUDENT MANAGEMENT

The bus driver must accept the responsibility for supervising and controlling students while on the bus route. The driver is the person in charge and, therefore, must establish and discuss acceptable discipline

procedures for students on the bus. These procedures must be consistent with local policies.

A list of school bus rules for proper behavior should be available for students and their parents. These rules should be printed in school handbooks or as information sheets. Drivers should read and be familiar with state laws, district policies and guidelines in regards to who has the authority to discipline and what procedures they should follow.

The employer must ensure that all drivers are trained in proper student management practices, which also includes proper management during emergency situations.

Control and Disciplinary Action

- **Information:**

  All rules and regulations concerning pupil behavior should be well known and clearly understood by:

  - Bus drivers,
  - Students,
  - Parents,
  - Teachers, and
  - School administrators and transportation directors.

  Lists of school bus rules and regulations covering student behavior should be prepared by the school administration and distributed to students and their parents. The active participation of parents can be very helpful. The rules should also be posted at the front of the bus.

- **Desirable Student Conduct:**

  An informal atmosphere that encourages pupils to relax and enjoy the ride is desirable. However, there are certain limits within which student activity must be confined. Your control over pupils should be sufficient to ensure they:

  - Will enter and leave the bus at school loading stations and at roadway bus stops in an orderly fashion and in accordance with state law and school policies.
  - Will remain quiet enough so you are not distracted from the driving task.

- Will remain seated while the bus is in motion.
- Will cross the roadway in accordance with instructions and the provisions of state law.
- Will neither purposely or carelessly destroy property.
- Will not extend arms or other parts of their body out the windows.
- Will not throw objects about in the bus or out through the windows.
- Will be on time at the bus stop location prior to the arrival of the bus, and on time at the school loading station.
- Will not get off at any stop except their own without written authorization from a school administrator.

- **Disciplinary Action:**

  Drivers must remember when loading and unloading they must always concentrate on what is happening outside of the bus. They must not be distracted by what is happening inside the bus.

  If, at any other time, a driver needs to handle unruly behavior, they should pull off the road in a safe location and firmly tell the students(s) what behavior they expect. The driver may also need to request an unruly student to move to a seat near the front of the bus. It is important to remember the driver has no legal authority to put a pupil off the bus, except at the regular stop or the school loading station.

  There are many different types of disciplinary or corrective actions to take, depending on the type of behavior involved. Some of the most effective methods use psychology, which can be used without shouting, excitement, and threats of violence or evidence of irritation.

- **Reporting Discipline Problems:**

  It is important to have a system in place to report problems. It is the responsibility of the contractor or school district to establish the procedures, and for drivers to understand and properly use them. Proper and accurate documentation of repeat-offenders' actions is the best way to provide information to authorities.

  Mandated Reporting:

As employees of a school district or transportation provider who contracts whith a school district, School Bus drivers are "mandated reporters." If a driver suspects a child is being abused or neglected they are required by Vermont State Statute to personally report it to the Vermont Department for Children and Families. If they feel immediate action is needed they should contact the local police department and then contact VT DCF.

33 VSA §4913 Reporting child abuse and neglect; remedial action

(a) A mandated reporter is any:

(1) health care provider, including any:

(A) physician, surgeon, osteopath, chiropractor, or physician assistant licensed, certified, or registered under the provisions of Title 26;

(B) resident physician;

(C) intern;

(D) hospital administrator in any hospital in this State;

(E) registered nurse;

(F) licensed practical nurse;

(G) medical examiner;

(H) emergency medical personnel as defined in 24 V.S.A. § 2651(6);

(I) dentist;

(J) psychologist; and

(K) pharmacist;

(2) individual who is employed by a school district or an approved or recognized independent school, or who is contracted and paid by a school district or an approved or recognized independent school to provide student services, including any:

(A) school superintendent;

(B) headmaster of an approved or recognized independent school as defined in 16 V.S.A. § 11;

(C) school teacher;

(D) student teacher;

(E) school librarian;

(F) school principal; and

(G) school guidance counselor;

(3) child care worker;

(4) mental health professional;

(5) social worker;

(6) probation officer;

(7) employee, contractor, and grantee of the Agency of Human Services who have contact with clients;

(8) police officer;

(9) camp owner;

(10) camp administrator;

(11) camp counselor; or

(12) member of the clergy.

(b) As used in subsection (a) of this section, "camp" includes any residential or nonresidential recreational program.

(c) Any mandated reporter who reasonably suspects abuse or neglect of a child shall report in accordance with the provisions of section 4914 of this title within 24 hours of the time information regarding the suspected abuse or neglect was first received or observed.

(d)(1) The Commissioner shall inform the person who made the report under subsection (a) of this section:

(A) whether the report was accepted as a valid allegation of abuse or neglect;

(B) whether an assessment was conducted and, if so, whether a need for services was found; and

(C) whether an investigation was conducted and, if so, whether it resulted in a substantiation.

Emergency Evacuation

Vermont state law mandates that students are to receive instruction in safe riding practices at least twice a year, and that school bus evacuations are to be included in these safety lessons. This should be done at the beginning of the school year, and again half way through the school year.

Evacuation procedures should be explained to all students who ride school buses. It should cover in detail the procedure to be followed if it is necessary to evacuate a bus. The evacuation drills should be conducted on the school grounds with school personnel to aid in supervision. **The school bus driver must be the one to direct the procedure.**

Usually it is safer to remain on the bus during an emergency. However, in situations where this is considered to be too dangerous, pupils must be evacuated. Keep in mind it is more difficult to manage a large number of pupils off the bus than on the bus. Situations that require evacuation are fire or a danger of fire, the bus is in an unsafe situation (railroad tracks) or the bus is in a dangerous position (on a steep bank, near water and in danger of rolling or falling into it).

If it is necessary to evacuate the bus, the driver must first determine the type of evacuation. The driver should then secure the bus, and if time permits, notify the dispatch office of evacuation location, conditions, and type of assistance needed.

As with general student management, there are programs available for in-service driver training. Employers and drivers must work together to learn and practice the procedures.

- 23 VSA §1285 ~ Pupil Instruction:

  At least twice during each school year, each pupil who is transported in a school bus shall be instructed by school authorities in safe riding practices, and participate in emergency evacuation drills.

PART V – SCHOOL BUS ROUTES

Evaluation and Planning

Establishing school bus routes and schedules is usually the responsibility of school administrators or their transportation directors. When developing these routes and schedules, it is essential that those responsible work closely with the bus drivers who know the roads and are aware of the hazards that may exist. Constant dialogue between

school bus drivers and route planners is critical to ensure the continued safe transportation of students.

Identifying hazards is a primary concern when planning routes. School bus route hazards are grouped into two main categories. They are "driving hazards" and "loading zone hazards." Hazards are also identified as "fixed" and "non-fixed." A fixed hazard is one that exists, can be identified, and drivers can be informed and educated about the hazard. Non-fixed hazards are ones that occur without advance warning – examples: (1) black ice and (2) flooded roadways.

Transportation efficiency is another concern. An efficient route plan saves time, fuel and money; and reduces the amount of time students must spend on the bus.

Evaluation:

Administrators should develop a system to identify route hazards. The objective should be to:

- List potential driving hazards and;
- Establish a specified procedure/schedule for conducting on-site reviews of school bus routes.

The following is a list of potentially hazardous locations/situations on school bus routes:

Railroad Grade Crossing:

- Number of tracks.
- Visual obstructions to determine type and travel speeds of trains.
- Train schedules.
- Presence or absence of grade crossing controls.
- Unique characteristics of operation of grade crossing controls.
- Presence or absence of traffic control signals, including interaction with grade crossing controls.
- Size of queuing area before and after the tracks.
- Expected traffic conditions at various times of the day.
- Roadway design near the grade crossing.

Bus Stop:

- Excessive number of stops.
- Visual obstructions.
- Uphill or downhill grade.
- Student waiting areas.

Dangerous Intersections and Roadways:

- High-frequency crash locations as defined by state transportation and/or law enforcement officials.
- Uncontrolled intersections.
- Curves and intersections with limited sight distances.
- Areas with no shoulders.
- Visibility of traffic control signals.
- Coordination of traffic control signals with others in the immediate area.

Bridges, Tunnels/Underpasses and Overpasses:

- Weight capacity.
- Height clearances.
- Lane width.

Queuing/Storage Areas:

- Short acceleration/deceleration lanes.
- Limited median areas crossing multi-lane highways.
- Turning lanes.

Industrial Intersections and Construction Zones:

- Areas where heavy vehicles/equipment operate on a regular basis, and may be entering, exiting, or crossing the roadway.

Steep Downgrades:

- Mountainous areas where brake condition and braking operations are important.
- Location of out-of-control vehicle run-off areas.

Areas of Significant Speed Differences Between Vehicles

- On-off ramps to high-speed roads.
- Farm vehicle areas, including non-motorized vehicles on the road.
- Mountain terrain.

Pedestrian Areas

- School bus loading/unloading zones.
- Narrow streets with parked motor vehicles, and children running between vehicles.
- Congested shopping and business areas.

Unique Roadway Conditions:

- Roadways without guardrails that are next to rivers, lakes etc.
- Dirt or gravel roads that could affect braking.
- Areas with problems related to right-turn-on-red laws.
- Areas with visibility problems due to air quality.
- Areas near fire stations and hospitals where emergency equipment operates on a regular basis.

Information and Planning

Administrators should develop an efficient and effective means to inform all school bus drivers, including substitutes, of the presence of potential driving route hazards, and to work with the drivers to minimize the risks.

In addition to dealing with potential hazards, the route plan should address scheduling factors, such as the following:

- The school schedule.
- Amount of time students must wait at the school-loading zone or at stops.
- Extra time that might be necessary for boarding disabled students.
- The number of students.
- Walking distances for students.

A copy of the final plan and of each route should become a part of the area school transportation map.

PART VI – PUBLIC RELATIONS

A school bus driver has many responsibilities, not the least of which is public relations. The importance of establishing and maintaining good public relations cannot be overemphasized. You must be constantly aware of your relations with students, parents, school officials and the community. Everything a school bus driver does is in the public eye.

Students on your bus are at an impressionable age. Your driving habits may have a profound effect on their practices on the highway when they learn to drive. You need to present a clean appearance and a good attitude. You need to be friendly, consistent, and fair and respond to the needs of the students. You may be the first school-related person some children meet when they embark on their school careers. This experience could affect their adjustment to the school situation for some time. The young child may hear about the school bus driver months before starting school.

Also consider the parents of the children who ride your bus. Promptness, and a courteous and polite attitude will be greatly appreciated. The school bus driver may also be the only person in the school system some parents meet. Good or bad impressions of the school can be created by the driver's attitude toward students and parents.

All members of your community frequently travel on the same roadways you do. Because their children are aboard your bus, you are no doubt the most observed driver on the road, whether in your school bus or your private vehicle.

Drive safely, properly maintain your bus, and present a good appearance and friendly attitude. Doing so will instill confidence in your ability as a driver and a respected member of the community.

PART VII – VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Pre-Trip Inspection:

Vermont law requires a daily pre-trip inspection of your school bus. This is necessary to ensure equipment defects, which may prevent safe operation of the vehicle, can be identified, reported and repaired.

Before driving a school bus, the driver shall:

1. Be satisfied the school bus is in safe operating condition;
2. Review the last driver's vehicle inspection report; and
3. Sign the report, only if defects or deficiencies were noted by the driver who prepared the report, to acknowledge the driver has reviewed it and there is a certification that the required repairs have been performed.

A suggested driver's pre-trip inspection checklist is provided on the following page.

- **Cleanliness:**

  A school bus driver's workplace is, obviously, the school bus. As such, drivers should have pride in their workplace and make the necessary efforts to keep the bus clean and sanitary. However possible, drivers should seek cooperation of the pupils in this effort.

  A dependable, daily inspection and cleaning routine will also help to identify vandalism, and which pupils may be responsible. The following are suggested cleaning routines.

  - **Daily:**
    1. Sweep the floor.
    2. Dust seats and inspect for damage.
    3. Clean windshield, side windows and mirrors (this is also a safety measure).
    4. Clean all light lenses.
  - **Weekly:**
    1. Wash floors and seats.
    2. Wash exterior of the bus to improve paint life and visibility.
    3. Check and oil door hinges and door operating mechanisms.

Post Trip Inspection

After completing your route or school activity trip, you should conduct a post trip inspection of the bus. Walk through and around the bus looking for:

- Sleeping students
- Articles left on the bus
- Open windows and doors
- Mechanical/operational problems with the bus
- Damage or vandalism

Immediately report any problems discovered to your supervisor or school authorities.

🚌 23 VSA §1281 ~ Additional Equipment:

In addition to other equipment required by this title, any school bus as described in section 4 of this title shall be equipped as follows:

(1) A door in the rear and a door on the right side for entrance or exit purposes.

(2) At least one fire extinguisher of a type approved by the Commissioner at all times in good and usable condition and easily accessible to the driver.

(3) A standard first-aid kit of a type approved by the Commissioner at all times filled with necessary articles.

(4) A hot water heater at all times capable of keeping the interior at a comfortable temperature or other type of heater approved by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles.

(5) Adequate ventilation facilities.

(6) At least two windows of safety glass on each side to provide interior light and so secured as to afford protection against wind and rain.

(7) Seats securely fastened to the floor or sides of the interior and providing at least 13 inches of seat space for each child to be transported.

(8) In addition to the foregoing, all motor vehicles in which the original seating equipment has been modified or added to must comply with the following:

(A) All seats must be readily accessible by use of an aisle or door without interference from any other seat or seats.

(B) A minimum of 36 inches headroom for sitting position above top of undepressed cushion line of all seats shall be provided.

(C) A minimum of 12 inches shall be provided from the top of the undepressed cushion line to the floor.

(D) Seats shall be covered with fire-resistant material.

(E) Jump seats or portable seats shall not be used.

(F) A seat beside the driver, if regular equipment or installed by the vehicle manufacturer, may be used for student seating. It shall be securely fastened to the body and shall be so constructed as not to interfere with students entering or leaving vehicle.

(G) All seats shall have at least 12 inches overall depth.

(H) If forward-facing seats are used, they shall be so placed that the distance from center to center measured at top center of the backs shall be not less than 26 inches.

(I) If longitudinal seats are used, only two shall be installed against the sides of the vehicle and the distance between the front edges of seat cushions shall be at least 24 inches.

- 23 VSA §1281a ~ Optional Equipment:

In addition to equipment required under section 1283 of this title, any school bus as described in subdivision 4(34) of this title may be equipped with a stop arm sign with flashing red lights, of a type approved by the Commissioner, securely mounted below the left front window on the vehicle in an area approved by the commissioner and must be visible to the driver when extended. Such sign shall not be activated unless the vehicle has stopped on the highway for the purpose of receiving or discharging public or private school children. At no time shall the sign be extended when the vehicle is in motion.

- 23 VSA §1283 ~ Identification and Equipment of School Buses:

(a) Types I and II school buses shall be:

(1) Identified with the words, "School Bus," printed in letters not less than eight inches high, located between the warning signal

lamps as high as possible without impairing visibility of the lettering from both front and rear.

(2) Painted national school bus glossy yellow, except that the hood shall be either national school bus glossy yellow or lusterless black, the fenders shall be either national school bus glossy yellow or black, and the roof shall be either national school bus glossy yellow or white. For Type II school buses, the requirements of this subdivision and subdivision (a)(3) of this section shall apply to any new bus ordered on or after January 1, 2000.

(3) Equipped with bumpers of glossy black, unless for increased night visibility they are covered with a reflective material, or, if the school bus is a plug-in electric vehicle, blue.

(4) Equipped with a system of signal lamps approved by the Commissioner, including an eight-light system on any new or used school bus ordered on and after July 1, 1976. The driver of a Type I or a Type II school bus shall keep the alternately flashing red signal lamps lighted whenever school children are being received or discharged, and they shall be used only for that purpose. A school bus driver found in violation of this subdivision shall be guilty of a traffic violation.

(5)(A) Equipped with a system of mirrors, if such a system is necessary to give the seated driver a view of the roadway to each side of the bus, and of the area immediately in front of the front bumper, in accordance with the following procedure: when a rod, 30 inches long, is placed upright on the ground at any point along a traverse line one foot forward of the forward most point of a school bus, and extending the width of the bus, at least seven inches of the length of the rod shall be visible to the driver, either by direct view or by means of an indirect visibility system.

(B) In addition, equipped with an inside mirror so located as to give the driver clear vision of the interior of the bus, and an outside mirror located on each side of the bus located so as to give an unobstructed view of the road to the rear.

(6) In compliance with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses as of the date of manufacture.

(b) Any school bus meeting the identification requirements of (a)(1)-(4) of this section that is permanently converted for use wholly for

purposes other than transporting pupils to or from school, or transporting organized groups of pre-school or school age children, shall be painted a color other than national school bus glossy yellow, and shall have the stop arm, if any, and equipment required by this section removed.

(c) Type I and Type II school buses being operated on a public highway and transporting primarily passengers other than school pupils shall have the words "School Bus" covered, removed, or otherwise concealed, and the stop arms and equipment permitted by section 1281a of this title shall not be operable through the usual controls.

(d) No motor vehicle other than a school bus shall display the identifying equipment and signs required by this section.

- 23 VSA §1284 ~ Vehicle Maintenance:

(a) School buses shall at all times be maintained in a safe operating condition.

(b) A systematic preventive maintenance program shall be established and records kept, which at all times shall be available for inspection by any enforcement officer.

(c) School bus drivers shall perform daily pre-trip inspections of their vehicles and report immediately, in writing, to their supervisors, any defects or deficiencies discovered that may affect the safety of the operation of the vehicle or result in its mechanical breakdown.

- 23 VSA §1303 ~ Flares Required:

A person shall not operate a motor truck, except those registered at pleasure car rates and those registered with a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 10,001 pounds, with or without a trailer or semi-trailer attached, or a motor bus, upon a highway outside the lighted area of a town or city, unless there shall be carried in such vehicle, ready at all hours for instant use, three electric flares or three reflector type flares of a type approved by the commissioner of motor vehicles. However, if the vehicle is used in the transportation of hazardous material as defined in 5 VSA §2001(a)(1), three electric flares or three reflector type flares of a type specified in this section shall be carried.

First Aid Kits:

School Buses may be required to carry a standard first aid kit. A kit purchased from a regular supplier of this type of equipment is acceptable. For those assembling or refilling a kit, the following items must be included:

- 1” x 2½ yards adhesive tape rolls (2)
- Pair latex gloves (1)
- Pair plastic gloves (1)
- Sterile gauze pads 3” x 3” (24)
- ¾” x 3” Adhesive bandages (100)
- 2” Bandage compress (12)
- 3” Bandage compress (12)
- 2” x 6” Sterile gauze roller bandages (2)
- Sterile gauze pads 36” x 36” (3)
- Sterile eye pads (3)
- Mouth-to-mouth airway (1)
- Rounded end scissors (1)
- Non-sterile triangular bandages approximately 40” x 36” x 54” with two safety pins (2)

These items shall be carried in a durable, dust proof container, plainly marked “**FIRST AID KIT**” and located in full view in the driver’s compartment.

PRE-TRIP VEHICLE INSPECTION CHECKLIST	
ENGINE COMPARTMENT ☐ OIL LEVEL ☐ COOLANT LEVEL ☐ POWER STEERING (FLUID/BELT) ☐ WATER PUMP (BELT) ☐ ALTENATOR (BELT) ☐ AIR COMPRESSOR (BELT) LEAKS ☐ HOSES ☐ WIRING ☐ WINDSHIELD WASHER ☐ STEERING BOX/LINKAGE	ENGINE START ☐ CLUTCH AND GEARSHIFT ☐ TEMPERATURE ☐ OIL PRESSURE ☐ AMMETER/VOLTMETER ☐ AIR BRAKES OR HYDRAULIC CHECKS ☐ STEERING PLAY ☐ PARKING BRAKE ☐ LIGHTING INDICATORS ☐ HORN ☐ HEATERS/DEFROSTERS
FRONT SUSPENSION ☐ SPRINGS ☐ SPRING MOUNTS ☐ SHOCK ABSORBERS	REAR SUSPENSION ☐ SPRINGS ☐ SPRING MOUNTS ☐ SHOCK ABSORBERS
FRONT WHEELS ☐ RIMS ☐ HUB OIL SEAL ☐ TIRES ☐ LUG NUTS	REAR WHEELS ☐ RIMS ☐ TIRES ☐ AXLE SEALS ☐ LUG NUTS ☐ SPACERS
FRONT BRAKES ☐ SLACK ADJUSTMENT (AIR) ☐ BRAKE CHAMBER (AIR) ☐ BRAKE HOSES/LINES ☐ BRAKE DRUMS/LININGS	REAR BRAKES ☐ SLACK ADJUSTMENT (AIR) ☐ BRAKE CHAMBER (AIR) ☐ BRAKE HOSES/LINES ☐ BRAKE DRUMS/LININGS
EXTERIOR ☐ WINDOWS/MIRRORS ☐ ALL LIGHTS AND REFLECTORS ☐ FUEL TANKS/LEAKS ☐ BATTERY/BATTERY BOX ☐ SPLASH GUARDS ☐ PASSENGER ENTRY/LIFT ☐ STOP ARM ☐ “SCHOOL BUS” SIGNS	UNDER VEHICLE ☐ DRIVE SHAFT ☐ EXHAUST SYSTEM ☐ FRAME/BODY CLIPS INTERIOR ☐ SEATS/FLOOR ATTACHMENTS ☐ EMERGENCY EXITS ☐ CEILING LIGHTS ☐ FIRST AID KIT

APPENDIX – Miscellaneous Statutes and Regulations

Motor Vehicle Laws of Vermont

- 23 VSA §921 ~ Liability Insurance:

  A motor vehicle owned or hired by a board of school directors shall not be operated in the transportation of school children at any time when the owner and operator thereof is not insured under a liability policy issued by an insurance company authorized to transact business in this state to indemnify against liability for damages for personal injuries or damages to property. The amount of insurance shall be a minimum of $100,000.00 for injury to, or death of any one person in any crash, subject to a minimum limit per crash of $300,000.00 for injuries to or death of all persons in any one crash if the vehicle has a seating capacity of nine passengers or less. If the vehicle has a seating capacity in excess of nine passengers the amount of insurance shall be a minimum of $300,000.00 for injury to, or death of any one person in any crash, and subject to a minimum limit per crash of $500,000.00 for injuries to or death of all persons in any one crash. In addition, a minimum limit of $50,000.00 per occurrence for property damage shall be required. It shall be the duty of the school directors to require the filing, by or with them, of proof that the insurance is in force prior to the opening of each school year and that it is kept in force so long as school children are being transported. A person who violates a provision of this section shall be fined not more than $500.00 or imprisoned not more than six months, or both. This section shall not apply to any person who transports only his own children, whether with or without compensation.

- 23 VSA §1286 ~ Penalties:

  Any violation of sections 1283, 1284 or 1285 of this title shall be a traffic violation as defined in Chapter 24 of this title.

- 23 VSA §1301 ~ Emergency Exits:

  The owner of a motor bus, designed to carry more than seven passengers and having a closed body, shall not operate such bus or permit the same to be operated, unless it has an exit in the rear end or an exit at the rear on the opposite side from the front door thereof through which passengers may pass in case of emergency.

- 23 VSA §1304 ~ Use:

  If such vehicle is disabled so that it is necessary that it remain on the roadway or shoulder of the highway, the driver or other person in charge of such vehicle shall cause operating flares to be placed upon the roadway or shoulder of the highway, one approximately 100 feet in front of such vehicle, one approximately 100 feet to the rear and one on the traffic side of the vehicle. Such flares shall remain in place until such vehicle is removed from the roadway or shoulder.

Administrative Rules of the Department of Motor Vehicles

DMV Rule 14-050-018 - Driver's License Endorsements:

Rule (a) Requirements to Obtain a School Bus Endorsement.

Before a person may be licensed to assume the duty of transporting school pupils in either a Type I or Type II school bus, he or she shall comply with applicable provisions of 23 V.S.A. §1282 , and shall:

(1) Successfully pass the following tests:

a. Vision test.

b. A knowledge test, as prescribed by the Commissioner, based on the Vermont School Bus Manual for a Type 1 and Type II School Bus, and the Vermont Commercial Driver License Manual for a Type I School Bus. The passing score is 80% or better.

c. Road Test. The road test must be taken in a school bus representative of the type of school bus the person may operate. An crash, dangerous action, or serious violation would be cause for immediate rejection.

(2) No person applying for a school bus endorsement will be permitted such endorsement unless he or she is physically qualified.

A person is physically qualified to drive a school bus only if he or she:

A. Has no loss of a foot, a leg, a hand or an arm, or has been granted a waiver by the department following a determination that the loss/impairment will not interfere with his or her ability to control and safely drive a school bus. Such waiver will be

subject to review upon renewal of the endorsement as described in section (b).

B. Has no impairment of the use of a foot, a leg, a hand, fingers, or an arm, and no other structural defect or limitation, which is likely to interfere with his or her ability to control and safely drive a school bus, or has been granted a waiver by the department following a determination that the impairment will not interfere with his or her ability to control and safely drive a school bus. Such waiver will be subject to review upon renewal of the endorsement as described in section (b).

C. Has no current clinical diagnosis of unstabilized diabetes mellitus. An applicant's physician must certify that the applicant has not had a hypoglycemic reaction for at least two years. Any diabetic who obtains a school bus driver endorsement must submit a statement from his or her physician every six months that the applicant has not had a hypoglycemic reaction during that period.

D. Has no current clinical diagnosis of myocardial infarction, angina pectoris, coronary insufficiency, thrombosis, or any other cardiovascular disease of a variety known to be accompanied by syncope, dyspnea, collapse, or congestive cardiac failure.

E. Has no established medical history or clinical diagnosis of a respiratory dysfunction likely to interfere with his or her ability to control and drive a school bus safely.

F. Has no current clinical diagnosis of high blood pressure likely to interfere with his or her ability to operate a school bus safely. The federal regulations for blood pressure readings and medical recertification are as follows:

(a) An individual diagnosed with Stage 1 Hypertension (blood pressure reading is 140/90 - 159/99) may be certified for one year. At recertification, an individual with a blood pressure reading equal to or less than 140/90 may be certified for one year; however, if his or her blood pressure is greater than 140/90 but less than 160/100, a one-time certificate for 3 months can be issued.

(b) An individual diagnosed with Stage 2 Hypertension (blood pressure reading is 160/100 - 179/109) should be

treated and a one-time certificate for 3-month certification can be issued. Once the driver has reduced his or her blood pressure to equal to or less than 140/90, he or she may be recertified annually thereafter.

(c) An individual diagnosed with Stage 3 Hypertension (blood pressure reading equal to or greater than 180/110) should not be certified until his or her blood pressure is reduced to 140/90 or less, and may be recertified every 6 months.

G. Has no established medical history or clinical diagnosis of epilepsy or any other condition which is likely to cause loss of consciousness or any loss of ability to control a school bus, except where the established medical history shows no seizures or use of medication within the last five years preceding application.

H. Has no mental, nervous, organic or functional disease or psychiatric disorder likely to interfere with his or her ability to drive a school bus safely.

I. Meets the same vision standards as required for obtaining a Vermont Learner's Permit, Junior Operator's license and Operator's license.

J. Is not totally deaf but can perceive and understand, with or without a hearing aid, a conversation conducted in a normal tone of voice at a distance not to exceed five feet. However, a person unable to qualify as above can be granted an endorsement subject to the following restrictions:

(a) Left and right hand outside rear view mirrors which give an unobstructed view to the rear on any school bus he or she may operate.

(b) An inside rear view mirror which gives the seated driver clear vision of the interior of the bus.

(c) Must have at least one individual capable of hearing with or without a hearing device in the bus at all times when said bus is transporting school age pupils.

K. Does not use an amphetamine, narcotic, or any habit-forming drug.

L. Has no current clinical diagnosis of alcoholism.

M. Is not using any medication, the side affects of which would affect the safe operation of a school bus.

The waivers permitted under letters A and B of this section will be determined during the road test. Acceptance or denial on the basis of high blood pressure will be determined by the School Bus Driver Medical Evaluation Form submitted by applicant's own doctor and progress reports at intervals of 6 months can be required. The possible exception under letter G, epilepsy, will be determined on the basis of a School Bus Driver Medical Evaluation Form submitted by the applicant's own doctor. Determination under letter M above will be based on a recommendation by the person's own doctor or a School Bus Driver Medical Evaluation Form. Said forms as referenced in this paragraph are required by statute at T. 23 V. S. A. § 1282 .

(3) In the case of first time endorsement only, if the applicant's operator's license expires within one year, the endorsement shall expire coincidentally with the license's second expiration.

Rule (b) School Bus Examination to Retain Endorsement.

A person who holds a license with a school bus endorsement is required to take an examination every four years.

(1) The examination consists of:

a. Vision test.

b. A knowledge test, as prescribed by the Commissioner, based on the Vermont School Bus Manual for a Type 1 and Type II School Bus, and the Vermont Commercial Driver License Manual for a Type I School Bus. The passing score is 80% or better.

c. Road test required if the applicant has any physical disabilities, or at the discretion of the Examiner. The road test must be taken in a school bus representative of the type of school bus the person may operate. A crash, dangerous action, or serious violation would be cause for immediate rejection.

(2) No person applying to retain his school bus endorsement under this section will be permitted to do so unless he or she is physically

qualified pursuant to the standards set forth under section (a)(2) of this rule.

(3) If an applicant's license with a school bus endorsement has been expired for six (6) months or more, it is required that the complete examination, as described in section (a) be administered. It is strongly recommended that an annual physical report be required by and filed with the school district.

(4) When a school bus endorsement is being renewed, the endorsement shall expire coincidentally with the operator's license. A school bus clinic shall be required for renewal of an endorsement. Applicants must obtain a four-year operator's license upon renewal.

Education Laws of Vermont

16 VSA §1222 ~ Pupils Who May be Furnished Transportation:

(a) Each legal pupil, as defined in section 1073 of this title, entitled or required to attend an elementary school, or a secondary school may be furnished with total or partial transportation to school, or board, as in the opinion of the board of school directors is reasonable and necessary to enable him to attend school. Each board shall adopt a transportation policy for pupils required to attend school in accordance with the procedure specified in section 563(1) of this title. This policy must take into consideration the transportation needs of pupils supported by, but not limited to, such factors as age and health of pupils, distance to be traveled, condition of the road and type of highway. The policy shall be adopted by the board prior to September 1, 1971 and filed in the office of the principal of each school in the district. Any subsequent amendments in policy shall also be filed in the principal's office. Such compensation may be paid to parents or guardians, and shall be payable only in return for actual transportation or board as shall be stipulated by the school directors.

(b) The provisions of section 376 of Title 23 relative to the use of motor vehicles for a municipal purpose shall apply to this section.

(c) Expenditures by a school district for transportation or board under this act shall be included in computing current school expenses under Chapter 123 of this title.

Index

23 VSA §4 - "School bus", 5
Administrative Rules of the Department of Motor Vehicles, 61
Authority of enforcement officers, 29
Authorized Emergency Vehicles, 28
Certain Vehicles Must Stop, 23
Commercial driver license required, 20
Communication, 34
Definitions, 18, 42
Disciplinary Action, 44, 45
Disqualification, 11, 43
Driver Qualifications, 9
Emergency Evacuation, 48
Emergency Exits, 60
Endorsement Renewal, 15
First Aid Kits, 58
Flares Required, 57
Identification and Equipment of School Buses, 27, 55
Liability Insurance, 60
Miscellaneous Statutes and Regulations, 60
Multifunction School Activity Bus, 7
Non-Conforming Vehicles, 5
Operator, equipment and inspection, 31
Operator, Equipment and Inspection, 16
Passenger Loading and Unloading, 24
Passing School Bus, 27
Poor Visibility, 36
Post Trip, 53
Pre-Trip, 52
Pupils Who May be Furnished Transportation, 65
Railroad Grade Crossing Facts, 24
Railroad Traffic Control Devices, 22
School Bus Idling, 31
Skills Test, 3, 12
Slowing Down, 36
Space Ahead, 36
Space Behind, 37
Space to the Sides, 37
Speed and Stopping Distance, 38
Speed Management, 38
Texting and Hand Held Device Usage, 41
The Driver, 7
Type I, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 21
Type II, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 21, 25, 26, 27
Vehicle Maintenance, 11, 57
Visual Search, 32
vulnerable users, 29, 30
Written Tests, 3, 14