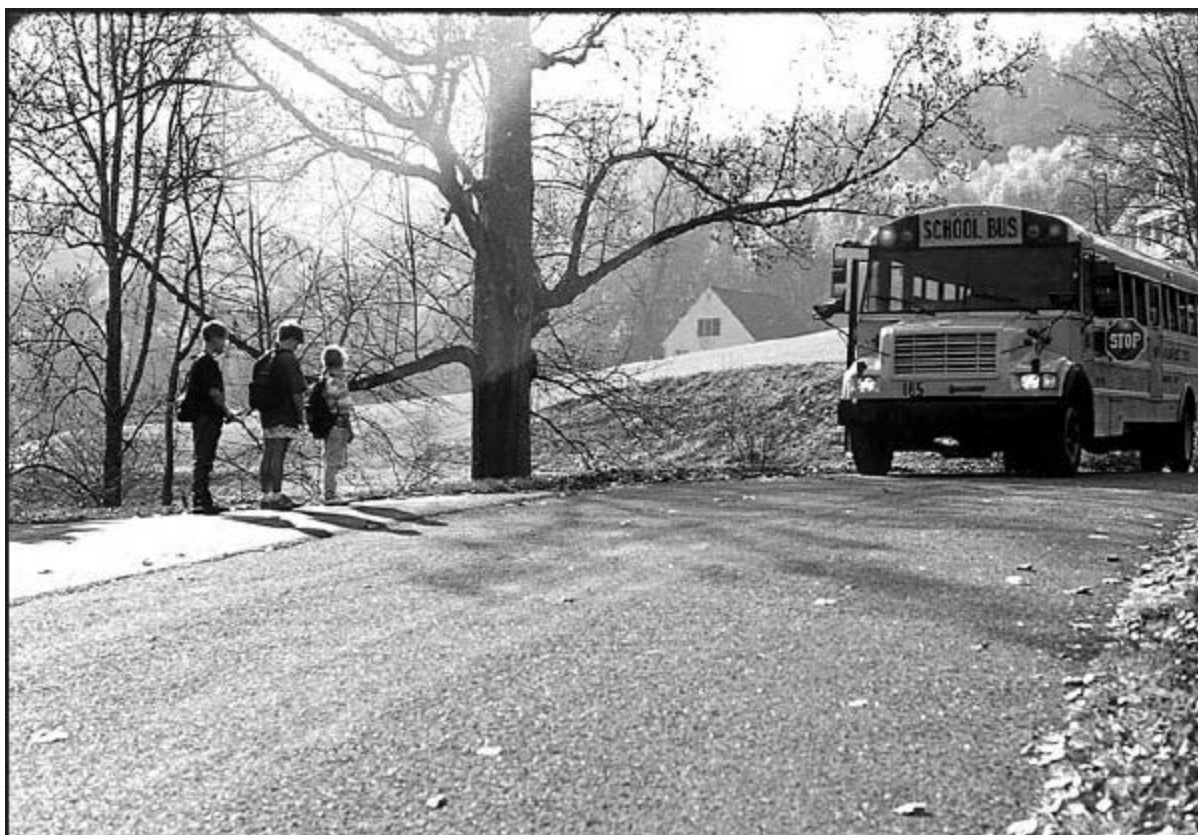


North Carolina School Bus Driver Handout



This handout contains knowledge and safe driving information for driving a school bus in North Carolina.

School Bus Inspections

Safety is the most important reason you inspect your vehicle, safety for yourself and for other road users.

Federal and state laws require that drivers inspect their vehicles.

Perform a pre-trip inspection before each trip to find problems that could cause a crash or breakdown.

You should carry out the pre-trip inspection in the same manner every time so you will learn each step and be less likely to forget something.

Inspection Procedure

During the vehicle inspection, you must know that the vehicle is safe to drive. You will need to complete an internal and external inspection. Engine should be off, the parking brake set, and the wheels are chocked, if chocks are available.

Front of the School Bus

School Bus Wording – clearly visible

Clearance Lights – clean, orange or amber, not missing or broken

Passenger Stop Lights – clean, red, not missing or broken

Amber Lights – clean, orange or amber, not missing or broken

Windshield – clear, no obstructions, no damage

Wipers – secure, not damaged

Mirrors/Student mirrors – clean, brackets secure, not damaged or loose

Turn Signals – clean, orange or amber, not missing or broken

Headlights – clean, not missing or broken

Safety Arm – secure, mounted

Engine Compartment (Engine Off)

Leaks/Hoses – no puddles or dripping fluids, hoses in good condition and not leaking

Windshield Washer Fluid – present

Water Pump/Belt – secure, not loose, belt not frayed, cracked, ½ to ¾ inch of play

Alternator/Belt – secure, wires intact, belt not frayed, cracked, or more than ¾ inch loose

Coolant Level – proper level

Oil level – Indicate where dipstick is located check oil level is in safe operating range

Power Steering Fluid/Belt – level above refill mark, belt not frayed, cracked, ½ to ¾ inch of play

Air Compressor/Belt – secure, not leaking, belt not frayed, cracked, ½ to ¾ inch of play (Driver must state gear driven if no belt)

Steering Box/Hoses – securely mounted, hoses not leaking or damaged

Steering Linkage – connectors to the wheel are not worn or cracked, no missing nuts, bolts, or cotter pins

Front Suspension

Springs – not missing, shifted, cracked, or broken

U-Bolts – not broken, missing, or loose

Spring Mounts – secure, not cracked, broken, or missing

Shock Absorbers – secure, not leaking

Front Brakes

Brake Hoses/Lines – not cracked, worn, or frayed, not leaking

Brake Chamber – secure, not leaking, cracked, or dented

Slack Adjustors/Push Rod – securely mounted, not bent, broken, loose, or missing

Brake Drums – no cracks, dents, or holes

Brake Linings – not thin, no grease, oil, etc.

Front Tire

Tread – Minimum 4/32

Overall Condition – evenly worn, no cuts or damage, valve caps and stem no missing or damaged

Tire Pressure – Proper inflation checked by tire gauge

Rims – not damage or bent, no welding repairs, not loose

Lug Nuts – present, no loose, no distortion of bolt holes

Hub Seal – not leaking, proper level

Left Side of the School Bus

Stop Arm – mounted, no damage or loose fittings

Clearance Lights – clean, not missing or broken, proper color (red on rear, amber elsewhere)

Turn Signals - clean, not missing or broken, proper color

Reflectors – clean, not missing or broken, proper color

Reflective Tape – present and secure

Frame – not loose, cracked or bent, no holes in the floor

Exhaust – tight and secure, no leaks, cracks, holes, or severe dents

Drive Shaft – not bent, twisted, or cracked, u-joints secure and free of foreign objects

Rear Suspension

Springs – not missing, shifted, cracked, or broken

U-Bolts – not broken, missing, or loose

Spring Mounts – secure, not cracked, broken, or missing

Shock Absorbers – secure, not leaking

Air Bags – if equipped, not damage or leaking

Air Mount – if equipped secure and not damaged

Torque Arm – if equipped secure, not damaged

Rear Brakes

Brake Hoses/Lines – not cracked, worn, or frayed, not leaking

Brake Chamber – secure, not leaking, cracked, or dented

Slack Adjustors/Push Rod – mounted, not bent, broken, loose, or missing

Brake Drums – no cracks, dents, or holes

Brake Linings – not thin, no grease, oil, etc.

Rear Tire

Tread – Minimum 2/32

Overall Condition – evenly worn, no cuts or damage, valve caps and stem no missing or damaged

Tire Pressure – Proper inflation checked by tire gauge

Rims – not damage or bent, no welding repairs, not loose

Lug Nuts – present, no loose, no distortion of bolt holes

Axle Seal – not leaking

Spacers and Budd Spacing – even spacing, no damage or foreign objects

Rear

Strobe Light – secure, not broken

School Bus Wording – clearly visible

Clearance Lights – clean, not missing or broken

Passenger Stop Lights – clean, not missing or broken

Amber Lights – clean, not missing or broken

Door – open, closes, and latches, no damage

Reflective Tape – present and secure

Turn Signals – clean, not missing or broken

Tail Lights/Brake Lights – clean, not missing or broken

Reverse Lights – clean, not missing or broken

Reflectors – clean, not missing or broken

Splash Guards/Mud Flaps – mounted, not damaged

Right Side of School Bus

Fuel Tank/Cap – tank secure, cap tight, no leaks

Clearance Lights – clean, not missing or broken, proper color (red on rear, amber/orange elsewhere)

Turn Signals - clean, not missing or broken, proper color

Reflectors – clean, not missing or broken, proper color

Reflective Tape – present and secure

Lights Operations Check

Front – All lights (headlights {high/low}, turn signals, 4-way flashers, passenger lights, amber lights, clearance lights) illuminate.

Left side – All lights (clearance lights, 4-way flashers, turn signals, stop arm) illuminate.

Rear – All lights (tail lights, brake lights, turn signals, 4-way flashers, passenger lights, amber/orange lights, strobe light, clearance lights) illuminate

Right Side – All lights (clearance lights, 4-way flashers, turn signals) illuminate

Passenger Entry and Lift

Handicap Lift – If equipped, no leaks, damaged, or missing nuts, explain how lift works, latched securely

Entry door – not damaged, operates smoothly, and closes securely

Step Light – not cracked or broken, working

Entry Steps – clear, treads not loose or worn excessively

Hand Rails - secure

Emergency Equipment

Triangles – three reflective triangles present

Extinguisher – charged and properly secured

Fuses – check for spare electrical fuses (if equipped) or identify circuit breakers

Emergency Kit – present

Body Fluid Cleanup Kit – present

Passenger Area

Seating – not damaged, no broken frames, securely fastened to the floor, cushions secure
Emergency Exits – operates smoothly, closes securely, not damaged, warning sounds when opened

Cab Check/Engine Start

Safe Start – place gear in “neutral” position, start engine, check dashboard

Anti-lock Brake System – ensure ABS lighting indicator illuminates and promptly turns off

Safety Belt – properly secured, mounted, and adjusted, no rips or frays

Mirrors/Student Mirrors – proper adjustment, vision not impaired, clean

Windshield-Clean, no illegal stickers, no damage

Gauges

Oil Pressure – pressure increasing

Temperature – begin to climb to normal operating range

Ammeter/Voltmeter – Shows alternator is charging

Air Gauge – working properly and builds to the cut-off (120 to 140 psi)

Inside Controls

Heater/Defroster – works properly

Horn – works properly

Lighting Indicators – dash indicators for turn signals, flashers, and headlight high beam illuminate, flashing amber and red lights illuminate

Stop Arm – extends fully

Safety Arm – extends fully

Brake Checks

Parking Brake – gently try pulling forward with parking brake on, parking brake holds vehicle

Service Brake – pull forward at 5 mph, applies service brake to check brakes work properly and vehicle does not pull to one side or other

Hydraulic Brake Check (if equipped) – Pump the brake pedal three times, and hold down for five seconds, brake pedal should not move

Air Brake Check – Must perform all three air brake checks correctly in order to receive credit. If driver fails to do any one part correctly it is scored as an automatic failure for the Vehicle Inspection Test.

- **L** – With air pressure built to governor cut off(120-140psi), shut off engine leaving key in the “on” or “battery charge” position, release the parking brake and fully apply the foot brake. Hold the foot brake for one minute. Check air gauge to see if air pressure drops more than three pounds in one minute.
- **A** – begin fanning off the air pressure by rapidly applying and releasing the foot brake. Low air warning devices should activate before air pressure drops below 55 psi
- **B** – Continue to fan off air pressure. At approximately 40 psi the parking brake valve should close (pop out)

During the Trip

Gauges – watch for signs of trouble

Senses – look (roadway, gauges, students), listen (unusual sounds), smell (smoke or burning smell), and touch (vibration in the steering), etc.

Students – loading and unloading,

Post Trip Inspection

Students – sleeping, articles left on the bus

Vehicle condition – any damage, close all windows and doors, sweep the bus

Air Pressure – release air pressure until button pop out

Reports – completed showing any equipment defects. This report helps alert transportation officials to problems that need repair.

A school bus is much longer, wider, and heavier than a car. Driving the bus requires preparation, thought and care.

Riding in the bus with you are several dozen children whose lives are in your hands and depend on your good judgment.

Basic Control of the School Bus

Right Of Way

There are two types of intersections — regulated and unregulated. Regulated intersections have a traffic control device such as a signal or sign. Unregulated intersections have none. When approaching an unregulated intersection, reduce speed, check traffic and continue to move only when others have yielded right of way to you. If another vehicle is in or very near the intersection, you must yield right of way to it.

When two vehicles approach or enter an intersection from different highways at approximately the same time, the driver of the vehicle on the left shall yield the right-of-way to the vehicle on the right. (G.S. 20-155). The law only names which vehicle must yield right of way. It never states that any vehicle has the right to proceed. Right of way laws are designed to prevent collisions by prescribing which vehicle must move last.

Yield Signs

Because of the restricted visibility, slow acceleration and length of a school bus, use extreme caution as you approach a yield sign. Approach the intersection where you must yield at a speed that is reasonable for the existing conditions but slow enough to allow you to stop and yield right of way to another vehicle in the intersection or to avoid a hazard.

Stop Signs

You must stop at intersections when there is a stop sign for your lane. Before proceeding, look in all directions at least twice. Resume travel only when you can move without interfering with the movement of another vehicle.

G.S 20-158 (b) (5):

When a stop sign, traffic signal, flashing light, or other traffic-control device authorized by subsection (a) of this section requires a vehicle to stop at an intersection, the driver shall stop (i) at an

appropriately marked stop line, or if none, (ii) before entering a marked crosswalk, or if none, (iii) before entering the intersection at the point nearest the intersecting street where the driver has a view of approaching traffic on the intersecting street.

Traffic Signals

Approach each traffic signal (light) expecting it to change at any moment. Always obey the color of the traffic signal:

- **Red light:** G.S 20-158 (b) (1): When a traffic signal is emitting a steady red circular light controlling traffic approaching an intersection, an approaching vehicle facing the red light shall come to a stop and shall not enter the intersection. **For safety reasons, do not turn right on red.**
- **Yellow light:** G.S 20-158 (b) (2a): When a traffic signal is emitting a steady yellow circular light on a traffic signal controlling traffic approaching an intersection or a steady yellow arrow light on a traffic signal controlling traffic turning at an intersection, vehicles facing the yellow light are warned that the related green light is being terminated or a red light will be immediately forthcoming.
- **Green light:** G.S 20-158 (b) (2a): . When the traffic signal is emitting a steady green light, vehicles may proceed with due care through the intersection subject to the rights of pedestrians and other vehicles as may otherwise be provided by law.
 - Check to be sure that approaching traffic is stopped and proceed with caution.
- **Flashing yellow light:** G.S 20-158 (b): When a flashing yellow light has been erected or installed at an intersection, approaching vehicles facing the yellow flashing light may proceed through the intersection with caution, yielding the right-of-way to vehicles in or approaching the intersection.
- **Flashing red light:** G.S. 20-158 (b) (3): When a flashing red light has been erected or installed at an intersection, approaching vehicles facing the red light shall stop and yield the right-of-way to vehicles in or approaching the intersection. The right to proceed shall be subject to the rules applicable to making a stop at a stop sign.

Traffic Officer

A uniformed traffic officer always has authority above regular traffic signs and signals. You must follow the officer's instructions regardless of regular traffic devices. When an officer is directing traffic, there is usually a specific problem or hazard. There could be a collision ahead, malfunctioning traffic signal or missing sign.

Private Drive

When leaving a driveway, yield the right of way to the approaching vehicles on the roadway where you are entering. Check for approaching traffic and proceed with caution when it's safe.

Turning the Bus

The following procedure should be used to make a safe turn:

- Get in the proper lane well in advance of the turn.
- Check traffic (to the front, rear and sides).
- Engage the turn signal 300 feet in advance.
- Slow gradually to 10 mph or less at least 50 feet before the turn.
- Check traffic (to the front, rear and sides as well as the road in which you are turning).
- Check clearance while turning.
- Straighten the bus and check traffic (to the front, rear and sides).
- Check to see that the signal cancelled.

Backing

Because you cannot see everything behind your vehicle, backing is always dangerous. Never back unless it is absolutely necessary. When you have to back use these safe driving practices:

- Start in the proper position.
- Look at your path for hazards.
- Check traffic (front, rear, and sides).
- Engage hazard lights (four-way flashers).
- Communicate with monitor.
- Sound horn.
- Back slowly, with no acceleration.
- Continue to check traffic and with monitor.

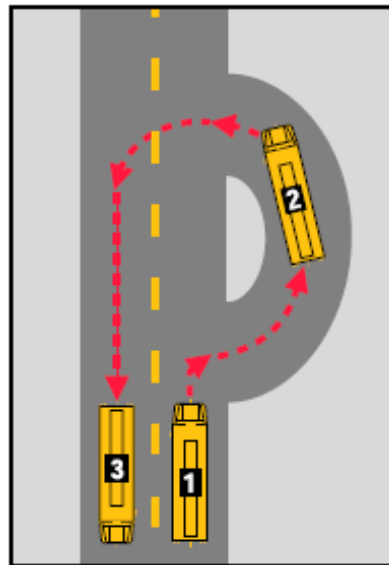
Turning Around

Consult with school transportation officials to select the safest place to turn around. A safe place should have at least 500 feet of unobstructed visibility in both directions and plenty of clearance for the bus. Using an unsafe place for turning around could eventually lead to a collision. Report any unsafe conditions at a turnaround point to school transportation officials.

There are three methods of turning the bus:

Forward Turn Around

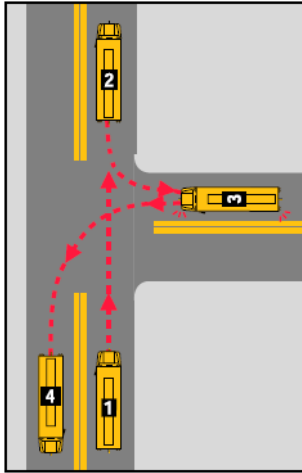
Because backing the bus is an extremely dangerous procedure, the safest way to turn around is to avoid backing and use a forward turn around instead. Use an adequately sized, safe area away from the road, such as a parking lot, where you can move forward in a wide circle.



Forward turn (no backing)

Right Side Road Turn Around

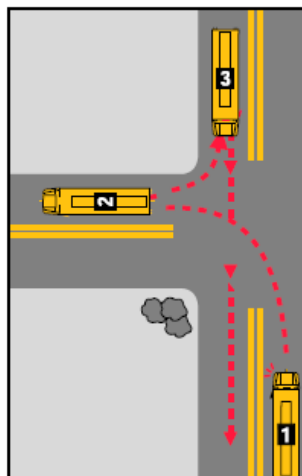
The second safest method is to use a side road on the driver's right side. To perform the right side road turn around, use a safe, intersecting side road on the right. Drive far enough past the side road to clearly see it behind and to the right of the bus. Activate your hazard lights, sound your horn and use a monitor. To turn around, cautiously back the bus with no acceleration, onto the side road into the correct lane of travel.



Side road (right)

Left Side Road Turn Around

Sometimes you might have no choice for turning the bus around except to use a side road on the left. To perform the left side road turn around, make a standard left turn onto a safe, intersecting side road. Activate your hazard lights, sound your horn and use a monitor. Then cautiously back, with no acceleration, onto the main road. Backing onto a main road is very dangerous.



Side road (left)

Safety Rules

- Turn around only at places designated by the principal.
- Always keep the bus in the proper lane of travel.
- Observe all the precautions for backing.
- If you must turn the bus around by backing at a passenger stop, make sure all the passengers are on the bus when you back. If you are loading passengers at the turn around point, load them onto the bus before turning around. If you are unloading passengers at the turn around point, unload after turning around.
- Inform school transportation officials of any turn around problems you notice on your route.

Speed Limits

According to G.S. 20-141:

- No person shall drive a vehicle on a highway or in a public vehicular area at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions then existing.

Therefore, drive the bus with the flow of traffic, but never move at an illegal or unsafe speed. When weather, road or vehicle conditions are hazardous, reduce speed.

According to G.S. 20-218(b):

- It is unlawful to drive a school bus occupied by one or more child passengers over the highways or public vehicular areas of the State at a greater rate of speed than 45 miles per hour.
- It is unlawful to drive a school activity bus occupied by one or more child passengers over the highways or public vehicular areas of North Carolina at a greater rate of speed than 55 miles per hour.

On school grounds, the maximum speed limit is 10 miles per hour.

Passing

School buses are unusually slow. Avoid passing other vehicles as much as possible.

If you must pass a vehicle:

- Use extreme caution. You will usually gain very little or nothing at all by passing because any vehicle moving more slowly than a school bus is not likely to go very far before turning off.
- You should never pass another school bus unless it is parked. At a multilane highway intersection where traffic lanes are designated for left and/or right turns, a bus may pass another bus that is waiting to make such a turn.
- You are much more likely to have trouble with other vehicles passing you. Maintain a regular check of traffic and signal your intentions early.

According to G.S. 20-150 (e):

- The driver of a vehicle shall not overtake and pass another on any portion of the highway which is marked by signs, markers or markings placed by the Department of Transportation stating or clearly indicating that passing should not be attempted.

Passenger Stops

More students are killed while getting on or off a school bus each year than are killed as passengers inside of a school bus. As a result, knowing what to do before, during, and after loading and unloading students is critical. Always use great care any time passengers are outside the bus.

School Bus Stop Law (G.S. 20-217)

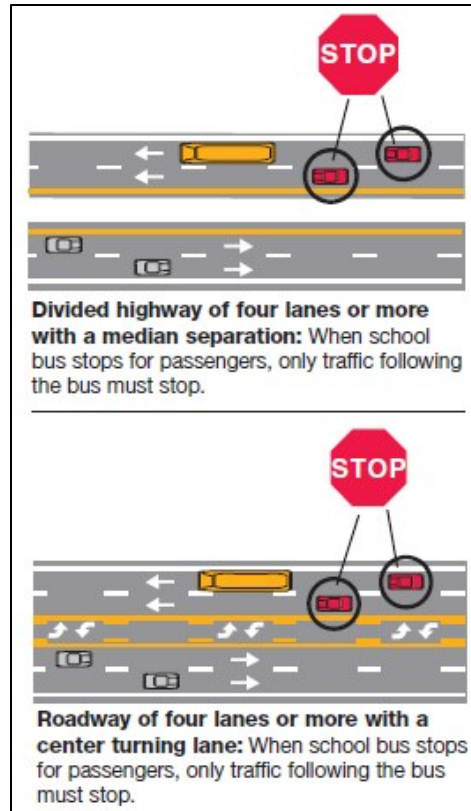
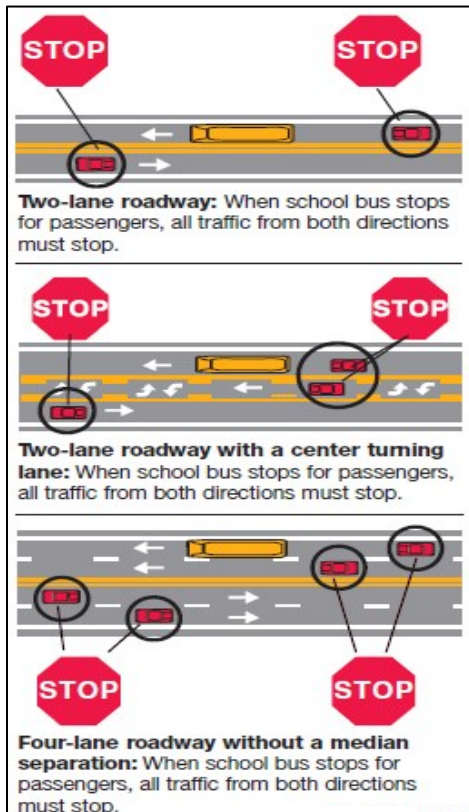
The NC School Bus Stop Law exists to protect children at school bus passenger stops and to enhance traffic safety. Each procedure detailed by the law is designed to minimize the dangers. The school bus stop law names specific instances when an approaching motor vehicle is required to stop for a properly marked, designated school bus:

- When a school bus is displaying its mechanical stop signal or flashing red lights and the bus is stopped for the purpose of receiving or discharging passengers, the driver of any other vehicle that approaches the school bus from any direction on the same street, highway or public vehicular area shall bring the other vehicle to a full stop and remain stopped. The driver of the

other vehicle shall not proceed to move, pass or attempt to pass the school bus until the mechanical stop signal has been withdrawn, the flashing red stoplights have been turned off and the bus has started to move.

- For the purpose of this section, a school bus includes a public school bus transporting children or school personnel, a public school bus transporting senior citizens under G.S. 115C-243, or a privately owned bus transporting children. This section only applies in the event that the school bus bears upon the front and rear a plainly visible sign containing the words "school bus".
- The driver of a vehicle traveling in the opposite direction from the school bus, upon any road, highway or city street that has been divided into two roadways, so constructed as to separate vehicular traffic between the two roadways by an intervening space (including a center lane for left turns if the roadway consists of at least four more lanes) or by a physical barrier, need not stop upon meeting and passing any school bus which has stopped in the roadway across the dividing space or physical barrier.
- It shall be unlawful for any school bus driver to stop and receive or discharge passengers or for any principal or superintendent of any school, routing a school bus, to authorize the driver of any school bus to stop and receive or discharge passengers upon any roadway described in the preceding paragraph where passengers would be required to cross the roadway to reach their destination or to board the bus; provided that passengers may be discharged or received at points where pedestrians and vehicular traffic are controlled by adequate stop-and-go traffic signals.
- Any person violating this section shall be guilty of a Class I misdemeanor and shall pay a minimum fine of five hundred dollars (\$500.00).

- Any person who willfully violates this section and strikes any person shall be guilty of a Class I felony and shall pay a minimum fine of one thousand two hundred fifty dollars (\$1,250). Any person who willfully violates this section and strikes any person, resulting in the death of that person, shall be guilty of a Class H felony and shall pay a minimum fine of two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500).
- Automated camera and video recording systems may be used to detect and prosecute violations of this section. Any photograph or video recorded by a camera or video recording system shall, if consistent with the North Carolina Rules of Evidence, be admissible as evidence in any proceeding alleging a violation of this section.



If the stop sign, any stop sign light, any warning light or any passenger stop light on the school bus is malfunctioning, do not make passenger stops. Have it repaired before continuing. You must activate the stop sign, warning lights and passenger stop lights only at passenger stops for loading and unloading passengers from the bus you are driving. Improper use of the stop system could cause collisions, injuries and even fatalities.

If someone passes the school bus while you are loading or unloading passengers, gather as much information about the driver as you can. The ability to identify the driver visually is always best. Try to estimate and note the driver's age, gender and skin tone as well as the license plate number of the vehicle. It is crucial also to note the date, time of day and location of the incident. Additional information such as the color and make of the vehicle can also be helpful.

Violation of the school bus stop law carries the penalty of more driver license points than any other driving violation in North Carolina. Five points are assessed if the violation occurred in a classified vehicle and eight if committed with a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) (G.S. 20-16c). Drivers who violate this law greatly endanger the lives of school

bus passengers. Do your part to have these dangerous drivers convicted. Report their actions to school transportation officials, who will assist you in making a report to the proper law enforcement agency.

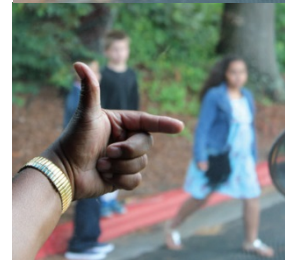
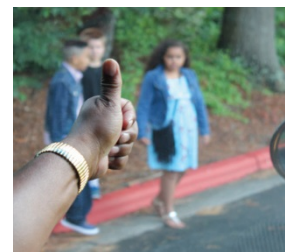
Passenger Stops – General Observations

- Passenger stops should be made in safe places only. Motorists approaching from both directions should have a clear view of the bus for a distance of at least 500 feet, if possible.
- Stops should not be made just below the crest of a hill, on a blind curve or on a steep grade.
- Stops should be spaced at least two-tenths of a mile apart.
- The driver should report any problem at a stop to school transportation officials.
- Stop the bus on the main portion of the road in the extreme right-hand lane 15 feet short of the passengers. Never pull to the shoulder of the road to make a passenger stop.
- Never argue with parents at a passenger stop. Refer them to school transportation officials for any request of change of stop, route or schedule and for discipline problems. Inform them of any developments affecting the operation of the school bus, such as change of schedule and days when the bus may be late. Good communication between the parents and you will develop close harmony and make it possible for you to perform your duties more efficiently and safely.
- Never let discipline problems on the bus or any other distraction interfere with checking your passenger mirrors just before leaving a passenger stop.
- If you pass by a passenger stop, do not back up to pick up or discharge students

School Bus Passenger Stop Procedure

Loading Procedure

- Check traffic for imminent danger (front and rear).
- Activate amber warning lights 300 feet in advance of the passenger stop.
- Make a smooth stop 15 feet short of passengers.
- Keep firm pressure on foot brake during the entire bus stop.
- Shift transmission to Neutral.
- Set parking brake (keep pressure on foot brake to keep brakes lights on).
- Activate red lights (using middle position if there is a 3 position switch).
- If students have to cross, hold left palm up to signal the students to wait.
- Check traffic (front and rear).
- Open door when safe (if not already open)
- When safe, give “thumbs up”, signaling students it is okay to cross and then point in the direction they are walking to cross the street (left to right).
- **SOUND HORN if students are in danger!**
- Count, watch, and recount students (outside and inside).
- Close door when all students are safely on board and seated.
- Shift transmission to Drive.
- Release the parking brake.
- Check all mirrors from left to right for students and traffic.
- Proceed slowly while checking for students.



Additional Notes on Passenger Stop Procedures

Always check to ensure no one is in front of the bus by counting the passengers as they load/unload and counting them again when they are safely on the bus or off the roadway on each side. If both totals are not the same, **DO NOT MOVE THE BUS** until you can account for all children or until you get out and check around and under the bus for the missing child.

The bus crossing gate/arm is designed to force passengers to cross in front of the bus at a distance from the hood where they will be easier for you to see them.

Check the passenger mirrors closely. The passenger mirrors are used to locate students who cannot be seen over the hood or at the sides of the bus before proceeding. Frequent use of the passenger mirrors at each passenger stop cannot be overemphasized.

Do not release the stop sign until all students are either on the bus or well off the road on their side of the street or highway.

Ensure that students are seated before moving the bus.

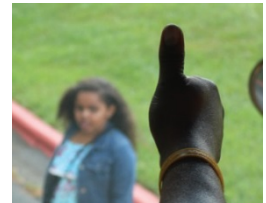
Unloading Procedure

- Check traffic for imminent danger (front and rear).
- Activate amber warning lights 300 feet in advance of the passenger stop.
- Make a smooth stop 15 feet short of the designated stop.
- Keep firm pressure on foot brake during the entire bus stop.
- Shift transmission to Neutral.
- Set parking brake (keep pressure on foot brake to keep brakes lights on).
- Activate red lights (using middle position if there is a 3 position switch)
- Check traffic (front and rear).
- Open door when safe (if not already open).
- Remind students to look both ways before exiting the bus, move away from the bus and road, and if they have to cross, to look for your signal to cross and to look both ways before crossing each lane of traffic.

- If students have to cross, hold right palm up for students to wait.



- When safe, give “thumbs up” signaling students it’s okay to cross and then point in the direction they are walking to cross the street (right to left).



- Make sure STUDENTS also check for traffic.

- **SOUND HORN if students are in danger!**



- Count, watch and recount students (outside and inside).
- Close door only when students are in a safe area.
- Shift transmission to Drive.
- Release the parking brake.
- Check all mirrors from left to right for students and traffic.
- Proceed slowly while checking for students.

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Do not release the stop sign until all students are either on the bus or well off the road on their side of the street or highway.

Ensure that students are seated before moving the bus.

Loading the School Bus

You should assist in proper loading and see that pupils take their assigned seats. You and your supervisor should work together in assigning seats to students for several reasons:

- Speeds up loading and unloading along the bus route.
- Lessens confusion and delay over what seat to take.
- Allows equal weight distribution on each side of bus.
- Helps you maintain better discipline and pupil relations.
- Aids in determining who may have damaged or defaced seats, windows, etc.

Railroad Crossing

According to G.S 20-142.3:

- Before crossing at grade any track or tracks of a railroad, the driver of any school bus, or any activity bus shall stop the vehicle within 50 feet but not less than 15 feet from the nearest rail of the railroad. While stopped, the driver shall listen and look in both directions along the track for any approaching train and shall not proceed until the driver can do so safely. Upon proceeding, the driver of the vehicle shall cross the track in a gear that allows the driver to cross the track without changing gears and the driver shall not change gears while crossing the track or tracks.

Note: You are required to stop at every railroad crossing, even if the gates are up, the crossing lights are not flashing and you can see no train is in sight in either direction.

Procedures

The X-shaped railroad grade crossing sign, known as a Crossbuck Sign requires road users to yield the right-of-way to trains and rail traffic at a highway-rail grade crossing.



Trains have the right-of-way over all highway traffic including police, fire and ambulance emergency vehicles.

A railroad crossing sign indicates:

- Approach with caution
- Prepare to stop and be alert for a train
- Proceed with caution after a train has passed
- Never stop on train tracks for any reason



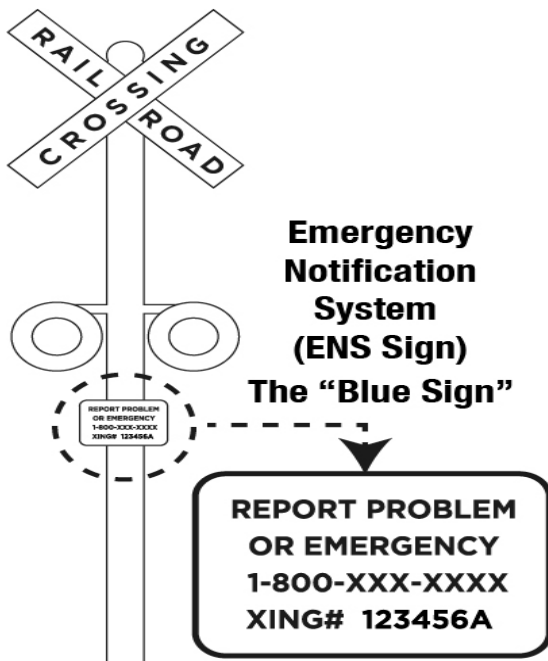
Tragic collisions involving school buses have occurred at railroad grade crossings. Bus drivers and passengers should follow proper procedures at all times when crossing tracks.

- Check traffic and turn on hazard lights about 300 feet before the crossing.
- Stop at least 15 feet, but not more than 50 feet from the track.
- Turn off any accessories that prevent good hearing, open the window and door, look and listen.
- Close door, recheck track(s), proceed if safe.
- After completely crossing tracks, turn off hazard lights, close window.

What you need to know

Railroad Emergency Notification System sign

An example of the railroad Emergency Notification Sign is depicted in the dashed circle on the photograph and drawings below.



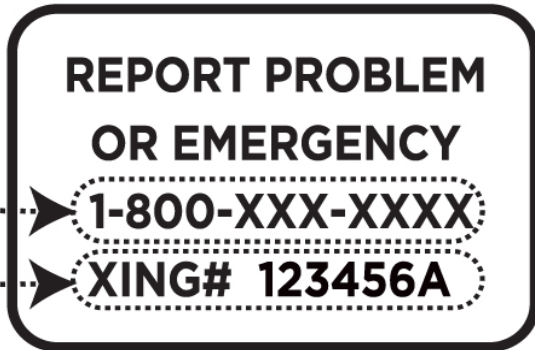
- All highway-railroad crossings in North Carolina are required to have an Emergency Notification System (ENS) sign posted in each traffic direction. The ENS sign, known as the "Blue sign," contains the railroad crossing identification number, name of the railroad company and an emergency telephone number to report emergencies, hazardous conditions or issues with lights or gates directly to the railroad. When you drive your route, look

for the Blue sign at each railroad crossing so you will know its location.

- Each railroad company has its own emergency telephone number and each railroad crossing has a unique DOT crossing identification number.
- Approach railroad tracks with care. Railroad tracks are private property and can only be crossed at an authorized highway crossing – cannot drive on tracks – walk on tracks – take pictures, etc.
- Prepare to stop. If you see or hear a train approaching or the lights are flashing and/or the crossing gates are down, do not cross the tracks. Shift to neutral, set the parking brake and keep firm pressure on the foot brake.
- Look carefully in both directions, especially at double tracks. One train might hide another and they have no set schedule. If one passes by, watch for another. Trains are quieter than you think.
- After a train passes the highway crossing, be patient and insure no other trains are approaching before crossing the tracks.
- Always expect a train from any direction at any time.
- Never drive onto a track until you can drive all the way across. If it won't fit, don't commit. Do not enter a crossing unless you can drive completely through without stopping. Remember trains are wider than the track. Make sure the back of your bus is at least 6 feet beyond the furthest rail.
- Cross tracks with care. Accelerate enough so that the bus does not stall on the tracks. Never stop the bus on the track for any reason.
- If the School Bus stalls on or near the tracks GET OUT IMMEDIATELY. A train, which may weigh several thousand tons traveling at 60 mph may take more than a mile to stop. By the time the engineer on the train sees the bus, it is too late to stop the train.
- Move away from the bus and the tracks. Have the students walk quickly along the roadway to a safe location away from the railroad.
- When you are safely away from the tracks, locate the Blue sign located at or near the railroad crossing.
- Call the railroad's emergency phone number and report the emergency. Give the dispatcher the DOT crossing identification

number located on the Blue Sign. Tell them your school bus is disabled on the tracks.

Railroad Emergency Phone Number



DOT Crossing Identification Number

- Also call, the local police, or 911. Tell them a school bus is on the tracks. Provide location, crossing number, and the name of the road or highway.
- Do not allow anyone to approach the bus until the railroad dispatcher has confirmed that all trains have been stopped. This may take a few minutes.
- When turning near a track, use a turn signal instead of the hazard lights. If unable to turn, stop for the tracks and clear the intersection, stop and check for a train before turning.

Emergency Vehicles

According to G.S 20-157 (a):

Upon the approach of any law enforcement or fire department vehicle or public or private ambulance or rescue squad emergency service vehicle, or a vehicle operated by the Division of Marine Fisheries, or the Division of Parks and Recreation of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, or the North Carolina Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services when traveling in response to a fire alarm or other emergency response purpose, giving warning signal by appropriate light and by audible bell, siren or exhaust whistle, audible under normal conditions from a distance not less than 1000 feet, the driver of every other vehicle shall immediately

drive the same to a position as near as possible and parallel to the right-hand edge or curb, clear of any intersection of streets or highways, and shall stop and remain in such position unless otherwise directed by a law enforcement or traffic officer until the law enforcement or fire department vehicle, or the vehicle operated by the Division of Marine Fisheries, or the Division of Parks and Recreation of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, or the North Carolina Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, or the public or private ambulance or rescue squad emergency service vehicle shall have passed. Provided, however, this subsection shall not apply to vehicles traveling in the opposite direction of the vehicles herein enumerated when traveling on a four-lane limited access highway with a median divider dividing the highway for vehicles traveling in opposite directions, and provided further that the violation of this subsection shall be negligence per se. Violation of this subsection is a Class 2 misdemeanor.

Parking the Bus

Care should be taken to park the bus in a safe designated area not open to vandalism. In parking the bus:

- Use the designated area.
- Shut the bus down.
 - Shift to neutral.
 - Set the parking brake.
 - Turn off all equipment switches.
 - Turn off ignition.
- Reduce air pressure until button pop-out.
- Close all windows, roof hatches and doors.
- Walk the aisle to check for passengers, any interior damage, or items left on the bus.
- Sweep the interior of the bus.
- Use chock blocks, if provided.
- Report equipment defects, any hazardous conditions observed along the bus route, damage or items or passengers left on the bus to school transportation officials.