# **Learning Objectives**

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After completing this unit, the trainee will be able to:

* State the importance of having a plan and being prepared in the case of an emergency.
* Describe the procedures for assuring students are on the correct bus.
* Respond quickly and accurately to different types of threats.

**Best Practices for Assuring Students Are On the Correct Bus**

We must all prepare for emergency situations. The school bus driver can prepare with knowledge and a plan. Communication is essential. School bus drivers should rely on the strong relationship of the Safety Team. The driver, transportation staff, dispatch, school administrator, teachers, parents and the students are key elements. Introduce yourself, get involved and ask questions. If you are in the process of loading the school bus for afternoon dismissal and a student attempts to board the school bus that you do not recognize, ask the students’ name, and grade and contact dispatch for assistance. It is important to know your school district’s procedures for what to do when a student mistakenly boards your bus. Learn your school’s procedures and transportation policies for loading and unloading students. If a student attempts to board the school bus in an unapproved location, you must communicate this to dispatch. Also, you should never allow a student off the bus at an unapproved location.

Know how to identify pre-k, kindergarten, and special needs students. Your school divisions may have a signature policy for identifying students. Communicating with dispatch will assist you, if the student does not know his or her address.

Best practice for school bus drivers would be to create a passenger roster. This roster will help you to remember student names along with loading and unloading information.

It may take some time to establish a consistent school bus route. School bus drivers should anticipate this and expect to experience some delays. Give yourself extra time, especially at the start of each school year.

Communicate with parents and/or guardians to put information in the child’s backpack with student’s full name and address. Bus passes should always be on the school district’s note pad or letterhead. School bus drivers should not accept hand written notes from students asking to be picked up or dropped off at a different location. These handwritten notes must be approved by a school administrator, and then the student can be given an official bus pass.

Remember, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) keeps all records and documentation confidential. Confidential information when no longer needed, must be shredded and fully destroyed.

***Discussion: What should we do if a student is on the bus that doesn’t belong on the bus and we don’t realize it until we have already left the school?***

**Responding to Bus Stop Threats**

If you approach a bus stop and see a suspicious person or vehicle at or near the bus stop, then you should continue past the bus stop without slowing or stopping, and report your concerns immediately to the dispatcher of your transportation office.

**Responding to Adverse Weather Conditions**

You should immediately start to consider your emergency response options, notifying the appropriate emergency points of contact of your intentions and plans, and what help you need, so that a wider response can be implemented.

All students should know where the emergency exits are in order to evacuate from the bus in a controlled and safe manner. Emergency drills should reinforce the understanding and the process for disembarking and evacuating with confidence and safety in mind.

**Windstorms** can be very dangerous, when driving a high-profile vehicle, like a school bus.

During travel through a storm the students should be instructed to get low and below the window line in case of debris breaking glass. The bus driver should report their location and intentions to the emergency point of contact. Secondary hazards including fallen power and telephone lines, flooding, and electrical hazards may be present.

**Earthquakes and flooding** can be an immediate risk. The students should remain inside the bus as this will likely afford them the greatest level of protection. Following an earthquake, bridges and tunnels should not be used as these may have been damaged. Secondary hazards such as flooding, landslides and rock falls, and structural and electrical hazards may be present.

 During periods of flooding, the bus driver should follow any instructions regarding routes to avoid and continue on their route only if it is safe to do so. If caught in a flooded area the driver should seek to move the bus to high ground, and if necessary evacuate the bus and move the students into tall structures, and to the upper floors to avoid the flooding.

If the bus comes to flooded roads the bus driver should understand that vehicles can be swept downstream in fast-moving flood waters in less than 4 inches of water, and should avoid seeking to cross roads with fast-moving water and where the depth of flooding is not known.

**Snow and blizzards** can create a dangerous situation for school bus drivers very quickly. It is so important to plan and prepare for every trip you take as a school bus driver. If you experience heavy snow or blizzard-like conditions while on route, and it is too dangerous to continue to drive the bus, the driver should find a safe location to stop the bus, and enable all lights and the emergency 4-way flashers. If possible, the bus driver should move the students into a building for protection from cold weather injuries, or from potential road traffic accidents.

If students cannot depart the bus and the vehicle is stranded, then they should be instructed to put on all jackets and extra clothing, especially hats and gloves, and the bus heating should be turned up to a comfortable level. If the gas tanks run dry, then students should form groups and should share body heat to reduce the chances of hypothermia.

# **Preparing for Emergency’s**

Know your route and where you could go for help, in a case of an emergency.

 A s*afe house* is a predefined, approved location that provides safety and security for the students during an emergency. You should know where these locations are, and how to get to them by the shortest and most direct route.

School bus evacuation drills should be conducted at least twice a school year and should be practiced by all students and the school bus driver.

**Keep calm** and stay in control. In high stress situations, it is normal to feel anxiety and fear, and indeed this can be useful in terms of providing you with the energy and focus needed to best respond to a threat. Students will respond to your mood, whether positive or negative, and if the students are frightened then they will be harder to manage as you seek to respond to an emergency.

Take a deep breath and take control of your emotions. Smile and look confident and speak in a calm and confident manner.

Keep calm and carry on.

***Discussion: What are other ways that we can be prepared for emergency weather conditions?***

## Unit Review

1. Knowledge and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are the foundation for effective transportation safety, security and emergency management.
2. School bus drivers should use a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to identify and account for all students on the bus.
3. A \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is a predefined, approved location that provides safety and security for the students during an emergency.
4. All students should know where the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are located and how to use them.
5. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** can be very dangerous, when driving a high profile vehicle, like a school bus.
6. List the participants of a Safety Team;
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* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
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* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
1. Bus passes should always be on the school districts note pad or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
2. School bus drivers should never allow a student off the bus at an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_location.
3. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) keeps all records and documentation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Keep \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and Carry On.

## Answers

1. preparation
2. roster
3. safe house
4. emergency exits
5. Windstorms
6. School Bus Driver, Transportation Staff, Dispatch, School Administrator, Teachers, Parents and Students
7. letterhead
8. unapproved
9. confidential
10. Calm