

## **Loading and Unloading**

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 or unloading students is critical.

This section will give you specific procedures to help you avoid unsafe conditions which could result in injuries and fatalities during and after loading and unloading students.

**Rationale:** Some stops require different procedures, related to the use of loading lights. Depending on whether you are loading on the highway or off the highway. If you are loading off of the highway the loading light system should not be activated. However all necessary precautions should be taken to ensure the safety of the students.

### ***On highway loading procedure***

Each school district establishes official routes and official school bus stops. All stops should be approved by the school district prior to making the stop. You should never change the location of a bus stop without written approval from the county transportation director.

You must use extreme caution when approaching a school bus stop. You are in a very demanding situation when entering these areas.

It is critical that you understand and follow all state and local laws and regulations regarding approaching a school bus stop.

This would involve the proper use of mirrors, alternating flashing lights, stop arm, and crossing control arm.

When approaching the stop, you should:  
Approach cautiously at a slow rate of speed.  
Make a light brake application to activate brake lights so that vehicles behind you will have an indication that the bus is about to stop.

### **Activate**

alternating flashing amber warning lights at least 200 feet or approximately 5-10 seconds before the school bus stop.

Look for pedestrians, traffic, or other objects before, during, and after coming to a stop.  
Continuously check all mirrors.

Continuously check mirrors to monitor the danger zones for students, traffic, and other objects.  
Move as far as possible to the right on the traveled portion of the roadway.

Bring school bus to a full stop with the front bumper at least 10 feet away from students at the designated stop. This forces the students to walk to the bus so you have a better view of their movements.

Place transmission in Park, or if there is no Park shift point, in Neutral and **set the parking brake at each stop.**

Open service door, if possible, enough to activate alternating red lights when traffic is a safe distance from the school bus.

**Make a final check to see that all traffic has stopped before completely opening the door and signaling students to approach.**

## ***Loading Procedures***

Students should wait in a designated location for the school bus, facing the bus as it approaches.

**Students should board the bus only when signaled by the driver.**

**Monitor all mirrors continuously.**

Count the number of students at the bus stop and be sure all board the bus. If possible, know names of students at each stop. If there is a student missing, ask the other students where the student is.

Have the students board the school bus slowly, in single file, and use the handrail. The dome light should be on while loading in the dark.

**Wait until students are seated and facing forward before moving the bus.**

Check all mirrors. Make certain no one is running to catch the bus.

If you cannot account for a student outside, secure the bus, take the key, and check around and underneath the bus.

When all students are accounted for, prepare to leave by:

Closing the door.

Engaging the transmission.

Releasing the parking brake.

Turning off alternating flashing red lights.

Checking all mirrors again.  
Allowing congested traffic to disperse.  
When you have determined it is safe, proceed and continue the route.

## **Off highway Loading**

If an off Highway stop has been established and at any time the circumstances change requiring a student to cross the Highway. The County Transportation Director must be notified prior to changing the stop. Then an approved and proper procedure can be made.

You must use extreme caution when approaching a school bus stop. You are in a very demanding situation when entering these areas. It is critical that you understand and follow all state and local laws and regulations regarding approaching a school bus stop.

This would involve the proper use of mirrors.

When approaching the stop, you should:  
Approach cautiously at a slow rate of speed.  
Look for pedestrians, traffic, or other objects before, during, and after coming to a stop.  
Turn on right turn signal indicator about 100-300 feet or approximately 3-5 seconds before pulling over.

Continuously check mirrors to monitor the danger zones for students, traffic, and other objects.  
Move a safe distances from the travel portion of the roadway.

Bring school bus to a full stop with the front bumper at least 10 feet away from students at the designated stop. This forces the students to walk to the bus so you have a better view of their movements.

**Place transmission in Park, or if there is no Park shift point, in Neutral and set the parking brake at each stop.**

Make a final check and when you have determined that it is safe, open the door and signal for students to load.

## **Loading procedure at School**

The loading procedure is essentially the same wherever you load students, but there are slight differences. When students are loading at the school campus, you should:

Turn off the ignition switch.

*Lift equipped buses may require a different procedure*

Remove key if leaving driver's compartment.

Position yourself to supervise loading as required or recommended by your state or local regulations.

## ***Unloading Procedures on Highway***

***To be used when there is no students crossing the highway***

Perform a safe stop at designated unloading areas as described.

Open service door, if possible, enough to activate alternating red lights when traffic is a safe distance from the school bus.

**Make a final check to see that all traffic has stopped before completely opening the door.**

Have the students remain seated until told to exit.  
**Check all mirrors.**

Tell students to exit the bus and walk at least 10 feet away from the side of the bus to a position where the driver can plainly see all students.

Count the number of students while unloading to confirm the location of all students before pulling away from the stop.

**Check all mirrors again.** Make sure no students are around or returning to the bus.

**If you cannot account for a student outside the bus, secure the bus, and check around and underneath the bus.**

When all students are accounted for, prepare to leave by:

Closing the door.

Engaging transmission.

Releasing parking brake.

Turning off alternating flashing red lights.

**Checking all mirrors again.**

Allowing congested traffic to disperse.

When it is safe, move the bus, and continue the route.

Note. If you have missed a student's unloading stop, do not back up. Be sure to follow local procedures.

**Additional Procedures for Students That Must Cross the Roadway.** You should understand what students should do when exiting a school bus and crossing the street in front of the bus. In addition, the school bus driver should understand that students might not always do what they are supposed to do.

**If a student or students must cross the roadway, they should follow these procedures:**

1. Walk approximately 10 feet away from the side of the school bus to a position where you can see them.

Walk to a location at least 10 feet in front of the right corner of the bumper, but still remaining away from the front of the school bus.

Stop at the right edge of the roadway. You should be able to see the student's feet.

When students reach the edge of the roadway, they should:

2. Stop and look in all directions, making sure the roadway is clear and is safe.

Check to see if the red flashing lights on the bus are still flashing.

Wait for your signal before crossing the roadway.

Upon your signal, the students should:

Cross far enough in front of the school bus to be in your view.

3. Stop at the left edge of the school bus.  
Look again for your signal to continue to cross the roadway

Look for traffic in both directions, making sure roadway is clear.

Proceed across the roadway, continuing to look in all directions.

## **Unloading off highway**

If an off Highway stop has been established and at any time the circumstances change requiring a student to cross the Highway. The County Transportation Director must be notified prior to changing the stop. Then an approved and proper procedure can be made.

## ***Approaching the Stop***

You should never change the location of a bus stop without written approval from the County transportation Director.

You must use extreme caution when approaching a school bus stop. You are in a very demanding situation when entering these areas. It is critical that you understand and follow all state and local laws and regulations regarding approaching a school bus stop. This would involve the proper use of mirrors,

When approaching the stop, you should:

Approach cautiously at a slow rate of speed.

Look for pedestrians, traffic, or other objects before, during, and after coming to a stop.

**Continuously check all mirrors.**

Turn on right turn signal indicator about 100-300 feet or approximately 3-5 seconds before pulling over.

**Continuously check mirrors** to monitor the danger zones for students, traffic, and other objects.



Move a safe distances from the travel portion of the roadway.

Bring school bus to a full stop.

**Place transmission in Park, or if there is no Park shift point, in Neutral and set the parking brake at each stop.**

Have the students remain seated until told to exit.  
Check all mirrors.

Make a final check and when you have determined that it is safe, open the door and signal for students to unload.

Tell students to exit the bus and walk at least 10 feet away from the side of the bus to a position where the driver can plainly see all students.

Check all mirrors again. Make sure no students are around or returning to the bus.

Count the number of students while unloading to confirm the location of all students before pulling away from the stop.

**If you cannot account for a student outside the bus, secure the bus, and check around and underneath the bus.**

When all students are accounted for, prepare to leave by:

Closing the door.

Engaging transmission.

Releasing parking brake.

Turning on left turn signal.

**Checking all mirrors again.**

Allowing congested traffic to disperse.

When it is safe, move the bus, enter the traffic flow and continue the route.

**Note. If you have missed a student's unloading stop, do not back up. Be sure to follow local**

### ***Unloading Procedures at School***

State and local laws and regulations regarding unloading students at schools, particularly in situations where such activities take place in the school parking lot or other location that is off the traveled roadway, are often different than unloading along the school bus route.

It is important that the school bus driver understands and obeys state and local laws and regulations.

The following procedures are general guidelines.

When unloading at the school you should follow these procedures:

Perform a safe stop at designated unloading areas and  
Secure the bus.

Have the students remain seated until told to exit.  
Position yourself to supervise unloading as required or recommended by your state or local regulations.

Have students exit in orderly fashion.  
Observe students as they step from bus to see that all move promptly away from the unloading area.

Walk through the bus and check for hiding/sleeping students and items left by students.

**Check all mirrors.** Make certain no students are returning to the bus.

If you cannot account for a student outside the bus and the bus is secure, check around and underneath the bus.

When all students are accounted for, prepare to leave by:

Closing the door.

Fastening safety belt.

Engaging the transmission.

Releasing the parking brake.

**Checking all Mirrors.**

## ***Special Dangers of Loading and Unloading***

**Dropped or Forgotten Objects.** Always focus on students as they approach the bus and watch for any who disappear from sight.

**Students may drop an object near the bus during loading and unloading. Stopping to pick up the object, or returning to pick up the object may cause the student to disappear from the driver's sight at a very dangerous moment.**

Students should be told to leave any dropped object and move to a point of safety out of the danger zones and attempt to get the driver's attention to retrieve the object.

**Handrail Hang-ups.** Students have been injured or killed when clothing, accessories, or even parts of their body get caught in the handrail or door as they exited the bus.

You should closely observe all students exiting the bus to confirm that they are in a safe location. **Prior to moving the bus continue to monitor all mirrors**

Any problems or special situations should be reported immediately to your supervisor or school authorities.