

Student School Bus Safety Training - Overview

The familiar sight of yellow school buses on our streets and highways reminds us that school is in session. It is at the beginning of the school year that school districts must teach their students about school bus safety. Minnesota Statutes, section 123.90.

Students in kindergarten through sixth grade enrolled during the first or second week of school must receive school bus safety training by the end of the third week of school. Students in kindergarten through third grade must receive the school bus safety training twice each school year.

Students in seventh through tenth grade only need to receive school bus safety training or safety instructional material if they did not receive the training while enrolled in kindergarten through sixth grade. If these students require the training, for instance, recently moved to Minnesota, the training must occur by the end of the sixth week.

According to Minnesota laws each district must provide public school pupils enrolled in kindergarten through grade ten with age-appropriate school bus safety training of the following concepts:

- 1) transportation by school bus is a privilege and not a right;
- 2) district policies for student conduct and school bus safety;
- 3) appropriate conduct while on the school bus;
- 4) the danger zones surrounding a school bus;
- 5) procedures for safely boarding and leaving a school bus;
- 6) procedures for safe street or road crossing; and
- 7) school bus evacuation.

In addition, each nonpublic school located within the district must provide all nonpublic school pupils enrolled in kindergarten through grade ten who are transported by school bus at public expense and attend school within the district's boundaries with training as required in the preceding paragraph.

Charter schools are responsible to provide school bus training for their students regardless if they choose to have the district in which they are located or provide it themselves.

Each school district is required to have a written transportation policy. As part of the school district's written transportation policy, a school district must develop rules governing student conduct on a school bus and in school bus loading and unloading areas. If a student does not follow the rules, then the student could lose his or her bus riding privileges. Parents would be required to transport their child if this happens. If the student has a disability, consideration must be given to the type of disability and whether the disability contributed to the student's misbehavior.

Although there is not any specified method or form that a school district must use to document a student's school bus safety training, it is recommended that each student record include information on when the student received the training. It is further recommended that this information be retained for a minimum of one year. This documentation may reduce a district's liability if there is an accident involving the student.

Students taking driver's training instructional classes must receive training in the laws and proper procedures when operating a motor vehicle in the vicinity of a school bus. The statute provides that the commissioner of public safety shall adopt rules requiring a minimum of 30 minutes of instruction concerning driving around a school bus for persons enrolled in driver training programs. The instruction must encompass at least the responsibilities of drivers and the requirements of and the penalties for violation.

Upon request of the superintendent of schools, the school transportation safety director in each district must certify to the superintendent that all students transported by school bus within the district have received the school bus safety training according to this section. Upon request of the superintendent of the school district where the nonpublic school is located, the principal or other chief administrator of each nonpublic school must certify to the school transportation safety director of the district in which the school is located that the school's students transported by school bus at public expense have received training according to this section.

- A district and a nonpublic school with students transported by school bus at public expense may provide kindergarten pupils with bus safety training before the first day of school.
- A district and a nonpublic school with students transported by school bus at public expense may also provide student safety education for bicycling and pedestrian safety, for students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 5.
- A district and a nonpublic school with students transported by school bus at public expense must make reasonable accommodations for the school bus safety training of pupils known to speak English as a second language and pupils with disabilities.
- The district and a nonpublic school with students transported by school bus at public expense must provide students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 3 school bus safety training twice during the school year.
- A district and a nonpublic school with students transported by school bus at public expense must conduct a school bus evacuation drill at least once during the school year.

Resources

• Resources for Student School Bus Safety Training

Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)

MDE has a model curriculum that district may use in providing safety training for students. It covers the seven basic safety concepts. Contact MDE at 651-582-8855 for a copy.

Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS)

DPS has a number of brochures available to help districts provide information on bus safety to children and parents. They are specific to grade level and touch on topics such as getting on the bus, riding the bus and getting off the bus.

<https://dps.mn.gov/divisions/msp/commercial-vehicles/Pages/school-bus-safety.aspx>

Minnesota Association of Pupil Transportation (MAPT)

MAPT is a non-profit association of school transportation professionals and industry leaders who promote safe and efficient student transportation within the state of Minnesota. MAPT offers a variety of information on school bus safety, pedestrian safety, railroad safety, and driver and aid training.

<http://mnapt.org/>

Minnesota School Bus Operators Association (MSBOA)

MSBOA has developed several safety training products. Students, teachers, parents and drivers can all benefit from the products that MSBOA has to offer.

<https://netforum.avectra.com/eweb/startpage.aspx?site=msboa>

National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT)

NAPT is a nonprofit organization and is the school transportation industry's largest and most diverse membership organization. NAPT puts on the National Student School Bus Safety Poster Contest each year.

<http://www.naptonline.org/>

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

This program is committed to reducing school bus-related crashes, injuries, and fatalities through both behavioral programs and vehicle regulations. NHTSA works to educate school bus drivers, students and other motorists about safe behavior that reduces the risk of being involved in a school bus-related crash.

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/portal/site/nhtsa/menuitem.e712547f8daccabbbf30811060008a0c/>

- **Resources for Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety**

U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Safety is important for all roadway users, and the FHWA's Office of Safety has established a goal of reducing pedestrian fatalities and injuries by 10 percent by the year 2011. Pedestrian safety improvements depend on an integrated approach that involves the 4 E's: Engineering, Enforcement, Education, and Emergency Services. The FHWA's Office of Safety develops projects, programs and materials for use in reducing pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities.

http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/

Safe Routes to School (SRTS)

SRTS programs are sustained efforts by parents, schools, community leaders and local, state, and federal governments to improve the health and well-being of children by enabling and encouraging them to walk and bicycle to school.

<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>

Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (BikeMN)

BikeMN's mission is to provide leadership and a unified voice for bicycle education, advocacy and efforts to make Minnesota more bicycle friendly so that more people will ride bicycles more often. It is BikeMN's vision that Minnesota is a state where bicycling is a safe, easy, fun and cool choice for everyone.

<https://www.bikemn.org>

- **Resources for Drivers Education Training in the Vicinity of a School Bus**

RFK Associates

RFK Associates has materials for school districts when the school district provides driver's education training. The material covers what a driver should do while driving around the vicinity of a school bus. Contact Ray Kroll at 612-377-5533 or rckroll@comcast.net for more information.

- **Resources for Parents**

The AAA Exchange

The AAA Exchange was designed to foster communication between AAA and the 51 million members it represents. It is an extension of AAA's long history of public service and provides a look into important safety, consumer, automotive and travel issues.

<http://mn-ia.aaa.com/driving-safety/670/689.uts>

Best Practices

Minnesota School Bus Safety Committee

The committee is a great networking means for school safety directors, contractors and other interested parties. The group discusses topics related to student safety training, school bus driver requirements and vehicle safety. The committee meets the third Wednesday of the month. Contact Chairperson, Eric Schaffhausen at 952-681-6319 or eschaffn@bloomington.k12.mn.us or Co-chair, John Thomas at 952-556-6160 or thomasjohn@district112.org for times and locations.

Minnesota School Bus Safety Poster Contest

The poster contest is sponsored by the Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation. The contest is a mid-year opportunity to remind all students about the importance of bus safety. It encourages student to think about all the elements of school bus safety and presents opportunities for school bus safety activities. It also provides an ideal opportunity to discuss pupil transportation safety themes while working on, or critiquing student posters. Contact Cindy McKay at cindy.mckay@fridley.k12.mn.us for more information.

American School Bus Council, Guidelines on Pupil Transportation

The American School Bus Council represents a unified voice of the school transportation industry including public and private transportation providers, school bus manufacturers and state officials responsible for pupil transportation. The Council is committed to providing safe, effective, efficient and healthy transportation for the more than 26 million schoolchildren who ride more than 480,000 school buses each day.

<http://www.americanschoolbuscouncil.org/>

Results of a Survey

Minnesota school districts transportation directors and safety coordinators were asked what they felt was the **most** effective way to provide student transportation safety. The following are some of their suggestions.

- Provided by the bus drivers and on the bus
- Stress school bus safety all year round, not just in the fall
- Hands-on training on the bus
- Combination of classroom and on the bus

- Repetition
- Include the parents
- Ongoing safety reminders by the drivers on their routes
- Use multiple approaches
- Include the bus company if using one
- Be consistent
- Videos
- Parent information at open house events
- For younger students, a short training in classroom and practice out in a school bus
- Middle school age student training on a bus with a driver and teachers present to learn as well
- Older students in a forum type environment, videos, lecture that is more serious
- Have the students actually do the procedures

Districts said the **least** effective way to provide school bus safety training to students:

- Large classroom settings
- Long sessions
- Providing materials and handouts only
- Through written policy only
- Providing training only once in the fall
- Provided only by the teachers
- Assuming that the parents are providing it
- Taking for granted that someone else is doing it
- Having someone provide the training that does not have knowledge in student transportation
- Sending home the information only
- Not doing anything

This document provides a summary of common student transportation safety topics and resources. School districts often have their own library of student safety training material that they are willing to share. A district may want to exchange student training material with other districts to offer a variety of training techniques to the students. There are also additional resources available through private vendors. If you have questions on student safety training contact Julie Belisle at the Minnesota Department of Education at 651-582-8265 or julie.belisle@state.mn.us