

MANAGE YOUR RISK

Bus and Car Line Duty

The busiest and most hectic times of day at schools are usually when the students are arriving and leaving the campus. For employees performing bus and car line duties this may also be the most dangerous part of the day. The mix of drivers, students, staff, cars and buses presents a possibility for vehicle and pedestrian accidents. In addition, slips and falls while walking to and from the parking areas and sidewalks to the front entrance of the school are also a risk factor in the busy area. Traffic safety in the loading zone is a serious concern for the school staff, students and others arriving or leaving at the beginning and end of the school day.

Training is recommended for staff members who participate in bus and car line duty while also being outfitted with reflective vests and traffic control paddles/signage, wearing slip resistant shoes and appropriate dress for the weather conditions.

Isolate bus, car and pedestrian traffic flow

Conduct an evaluation of every school site for proper traffic flow, pavement markings, signage, pedestrian walkways, curbing and entrance ways. Provide drivers and pedestrians clear direction on how to approach and use the bus lanes and student drop off zone. Establish, communicate and enforce rules on a daily basis. Creating a diagram that illustrates traffic flow directions, bus zones and parking lot rules may assist in the design and discussion. The following are items to consider:

- Physically isolate the school bus loading zone.
- Provide a designated location for student drop off and pick up that is removed from the bus loading/unloading zone.
 - Some schools have moved student pick up areas to another area of the campus.
 - Other institutions have built restricted bus zones with concrete lane barriers to isolate the school bus loading zone or added fencing with strategic openings to help maintain that students stand back as buses are entering the loading zone.
- Engage professional traffic engineering help if needed.

The goal is to develop a configuration that removes staff, visitor and student vehicles from bus loading zones.

Considerations to communicate rules

Starting the school year with a welcome package that includes a diagram and clear directions for persons driving on campus may be beneficial. Stress to parents/drivers that the system is designed to protect children and improve efficiency. Consider the following to facilitate communications:

- Encourage PTA involvement to help communicate the plan.
- Make use of the communication means available (e-mailing information, posting rules on the district web site and social media).
- Outline the hours of operation, expectations for waiting areas and procedures for dropping off and picking up students.
- Create a short and friendly memo from the school principal to place on any car parked unattended in the loading zone.
- Train school staff to avoid confrontation while providing positive direction to parents not complying with the rules.

Remember to train the most important part of the school transportation team, the students. The first days of the school year are a critical time to reinforce the loading zone rules. Consider the following:

- Train students early and often so that they understand the serious nature of mixing pedestrians with cars and buses.
- Stress the importance of waiting in the correct area until the vehicle stops before approaching.
- Many school districts send school bus drivers and supervisors into the classroom to remind students of the importance of traffic safety.
- Training tools such as the Glatfelter Public Practice coloring book, “Benny B. Safe’s School Bus Safety,” can be used with early elementary school students to reinforce school bus safety education.

Supervise and control the loading and unloading zone

Train staff who are assigned bus and car line duty in crossing guard safety. The National Center for Safe Routes to School and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center offers the guidance document “Adult School Crossing Guard Guidelines” as a reference. Physical condition (including good vision, hearing and mobility), the ability to work outdoors in varying weather conditions and the ability to communicate well with others are important characteristics for staff performing bus and car line duty.

Even with a proper design, it is important to actively supervise the loading zone. To help protect school staff, students and visitors:

- Distribute reflective vests, hand traffic control stop paddles and two-way radios (if available) to the staff performing bus and car line duties. Vests and stop paddles help reinforce the importance of vehicle safety and traffic and pedestrian flow control.
- Uniformly enforced hand signage rules may help to avoid confusion for staff, parents and students.
- Include alternates and substitutes when training staff.
- The visibility and activity level of the loading/unloading zone monitor helps reinforce their role and their own personal safety.
- Anticipating vehicle movement and student activity may help keep the two separated. Common activities to watch out for include:
 - Students who are running or rough-housing around the loading zone.
 - Bullying and harassment prior to loading.
 - Students who drop things and try to go under the bus to retrieve the items.
 - Students who try to walk between buses.

School bus drivers are trained on safe loading and unloading procedures. Having clear operational policies specific to each school may help reduce the potential for injuries in the loading zone. Some concepts to consider include:

- Holding students in the bus until the school is ready to receive them in the morning can help to minimize the number of persons in the loading zone.
- For the afternoon dismissal, have the buses in place before students are released and align the buses in an established order so that students can learn the location of their bus.

General school site rules such as posting speed limits and having a “no backing” policy could help eliminate tragic accidents. Work closely with parents and students to establish consistent routines that can contribute to school site safety. Careful planning, specific campus rules, good communication and uniform enforcement of the rules are the framework for success. Train staff, parents, bus drivers and students to work together in the loading zone so the process can help protect the school staff, students and community.