

THE VEHICLE

Driver Responsibility

As the school bus driver, **you** must bear a great deal of responsibility for your **vehicle**, your **passengers** and **other road users**. Yours will be one of the largest vehicles on the road and it will be carrying the most precious cargo; therefore, it is imperative that you are aware of your responsibilities for your bus.

Regardless of how safe and good a driver you may be, if your bus is unsafe, your driving will be unsafe. Drivers are legally responsible for knowing the condition of their vehicles. According to the National Safety Code, a driver of a commercial vehicle shall inform the carrier responsible for that vehicle of any defects or deficiency that would affect the safe operation of the vehicle. This is why it is necessary to do regular maintenance checks. If done properly, they will reduce maintenance costs (most major repairs are minor problems that went undetected), breakdowns (they are unsafe and inconvenient for all concerned) and complaints (from parents, contractors, vehicle safety inspectors, other drivers, etc.).

DAILY WALK-AROUND

Five or ten minutes a day can quickly pay for itself even if one breakdown is prevented. Make it a habit – make it a routine – do it every day – do it the same way each time. The items that are highlighted in **bold** print, are the inspections a driver **shall** inspect prior to operating a bus at the beginning of a work shift and at the end of a work shift. These highlighted areas are referenced from the National Safety Code. Although these items are a must, a driver is still responsible for the other items listed.

1. Under the hood checklist

- Fluid leaks.
- Wires, hoses and belts.
- Fluid levels – oil, radiator, windshield washer, power steering.
- Battery.

2. Engine start up checklist

- All gauges and warning lights.
- Fuel level (never fuel the bus with passengers aboard).
- Wipers and washers.**
- Defrosters, fans and heaters individually.
- Horn.**
- Parking brake, service brake, including the trailer brake connections.**
- If your bus is equipped with air brakes, refer to the *Alberta Air Brake* manual for the pre-trip inspection.
- Unusual engine noises.
- All lights (turn them on to check).

3. Outside the bus checklist

- Headlights (high and low beam) and turn signals.**
- Clearance lights or markers, reflectors and alternately flashing lights.**
- Hazard warning lights.**
- Brake lights / tail lights and licence plate light.**
- Tires, wheels and rims, lug nuts, objects lodged between the duals.**
- The coupling devices.**
- Exhaust and tailpipe.
- Body damage.
- Rear emergency door opens and closes properly.
- Fuel filler cap.
- Specialized equipment for transporting persons with disabilities. Make sure it is operational and secured properly.
- All windows and mirrors check for damage, cleanliness and proper adjustments.
- General cleanliness. Be sure all signs and licence plate are legible.
- Under the bus. Look at the suspension, shocks, fuel tanks, air tanks or vacuum tanks, and check for fluid leakage.

4. Inside the bus checklist

- Adjust the driver's seat.
- All mirrors** (see note).
- All emergency exits open and close and ensure alarm system is operational.
- Interior (seats, floors, step well light, etc. for cleanliness and damage).
- Emergency equipment, first aid kit, fire extinguisher, approved warning devices.**
- Restraint straps for mobility aids.
- Vehicle documents.

5. Final checklist

- Fasten the seat belt.
- Re-check all gauges.
- Holding ability of the parking brake.
- Brakes and clutch. Check by driving forward and stopping. Check the steering wheel for excessive slack and play by rocking the steering wheel back and forth.**
- All mirrors.**

Make a written note of all problems and ensure the necessary repairs are made. DO NOT drive the bus if any problem could affect its ability to operate safely. REMEMBER, the driver is responsible for the safe operation and condition of the bus.

While operating a school bus, be alert to any changes in engine performance, noise, handling, braking ability and ride.

NOTE: Mirrors

To be effective, mirrors must be adjusted to each individual's height.

No mirror shall be cracked or broken or have a reduction in its reflective surface.

Mirrors should be firmly supported, adjusted properly and clean.

Rear View Mirrors

Should be located inside and outside of the bus and conform to Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards.

Interior Mirrors

Must afford the driver a good view of the bus interior and the roadway to the rear.

Must not unduly restrict the driver's forward vision.

Outside Mirrors

Shall be located on each side of the bus, forward of the driver's seat. They must be capable of providing a view along the left and right side of the bus, which includes a view of the rear tires at ground level. The mirrors must not unduly restrict vision through the driver's side windows.

Cross Over Mirror

Provides the driver with a view of the blind spot immediately in front of the bus. The cross over mirrors also give a view of the front corners of your bus including the front tires and front door.

Post Trip Duties.

A school bus carries a precious cargo in difficult weather conditions and often over poor roads. It is understandable that a school bus suffers a great deal of wear and tear. It becomes important to perform some tasks in addition to your daily walk-around.

These include checking for:

- Lost articles.
- Sleeping children.
- Clean floors (particularly around the front steps) and no garbage.
- Clean seats and windows.
- Clean exterior of the bus (ensure rear emergency door does not freeze closed in winter).
- Report any minor damage identified during the walk-around and fluid leaks under the bus.
- Tires for damage and air leaks.