



# Transportation Safety and Procedure Plan

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*Driver Procedure and Policy Guide*

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## Transportation Safety and Procedure Plan

The Transportation Department of the Thermalito Union Elementary School District has the responsibility to transport students to and from school and school activities. This department, in accordance with Education Codes, Vehicle Codes of California, and Title 5, 13 CCR, for the continuing safety and protection of its students, has prepared this safety and procedure plan in order to insure these goals. The provisions of this plan include:

- I. Loading and unloading procedures at regular stops, field trips, lunch stops, etc.
  1. General Procedures for all Routes
  2. Student Conduct and Discipline
    - A. Student Guidelines for the Bus Stop
    - B. Safe Loading, Transportation and Unloading Procedures
    - C. Rules of Conduct on the School Bus
    - D. Discipline Process
  3. General Rules for Drivers and Passengers
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## I. Loading Transportation and Unloading Procedures

In accordance with 13 CCR 1238, VC 22504 (c), and VC 22112, the following procedures have been established to ensure student safety in all aspects of being transported to and from school. Additionally, the Thermalito Union Elementary School District Governing Board has adopted rules and regulations to assist students in understanding their responsibilities while riding the buses of the School District. These rules will assure safe and proper travel to and from school and are to be observed when waiting at bus stops and while riding the bus.

### 1. General Procedures for All Routes

Safety Awareness must be an integral part of every job. This is especially true when driving a school bus. Driving a daily route can become monotonous which can lead to a reduction of safety awareness. Therefore, we observe the following procedures for all routes:

Before loading and unloading, consider the following when positioning the vehicle:

- 1 Activate amber warning lights 200 feet before the bus stop
- 2 Activate the turn indicator 100 feet before the bus stop
- 3 Upon coming to a complete stop, engage the park brake, activate the red lights, and place the transmission in park or neutral. VC 22112 states that *"the driver shall operate the flashing red signal lights and stop arm, as required on the school bus, at all times when the school bus is stopped for the purpose of loading or unloading pupils."* **These lights shall be activated before the door is opened.**
- 4 Any time a driver leaves the driving compartment while students are aboard, he/she is required to turn off the engine, set the park brake, removed the keys from the ignition, and retain possession of the keys.
- 5 If a Red Light Crossover is to be performed, the driver must use the hand held stop sign to regulate traffic as students cross the street between the front of the bus and the driver. **No Hand Signals**
- 6 The driver shall ensure the safety of riders and pedestrians before setting the bus in motion. **Account for all students** that were dropped off.

**NOTE:** All "Red light Crossovers" will be determined according to a student's address and the specific route to which that student has been assigned.

## 2. Student Conduct and Discipline

### To: Parents and Bus Passengers

Students will behave appropriately as school bus passengers in order to assure safe travel. As stated in 5 CCR 14103, pupils transported in a school bus are under the authority of, and directly responsible to the bus driver.

#### (5 CCR 14103) and (13CCR 1217)

- 1) Pupils transported in a school bus or in a school pupil activity bus shall be under the authority of, and responsible directly to, the driver of the bus, and the driver shall be held responsible for the orderly conduct of the pupils while they are on the bus or being escorted across a street, highway or road. Continued disorderly conduct or persistent refusal to submit to the authority of the driver shall be sufficient reason for a pupil to be denied transportation. A bus driver shall not require any pupil to leave the bus en-route between home and school or other destinations.
- 2) Governing boards shall adopt rules to enforce this section. Such rules shall include, but not be limited to, specific administration procedures relating to suspension of riding privileges and shall be made available to parents, pupils, teachers, and other interested parties.

#### WALKING TO AND FROM BUS STOPS

1. Go directly to and from the bus stop.
2. Plan the safest route with the fewest streets to cross.
3. If possible, cross streets at corners, using crosswalks if available. Look in all directions before crossing, and when safe, walk across the street. Always obey traffic signals.
4. Do not run out in the street from between parked cars or shrubbery.
5. Walk to and from school bus stops out of the roadway facing traffic.
6. Never accept a ride from a stranger.
7. Leave home early enough so you do not have to run to catch your bus. Be at the bus stop 5 minutes before the scheduled time. **The bus cannot wait** for a tardy student.

#### CONDUCT AT SCHOOL BUS LOADING ZONE AND BUS STOPS

1. Stand in a line, **12 feet** from where the bus will stop, facing traffic so you can see the bus approaching. Do not approach the bus until the driver opens the door.
2. When loading at a school, follow the directions of the driver or person on bus duty. Stand back the **required 12 feet** from the bus, in a line, until the driver opens the bus doors.

3. Never go under any bus to retrieve something you have dropped and never touch the bus. **Ask the driver for assistance.**
4. Destroying property, playing or running on the street, or participating in any type of **horseplay** at a bus stop is **very dangerous** and prohibited.
5. When waiting to load or unload the bus, students are the direct responsibility of the driver, and students must follow the driver's directions.
6. School buses can only stop at **designated bus stops**. If you miss the bus, have your parent or guardian take you to school. Never run after your bus if you miss it. Please arrive **5 minutes early**



### School Bus Danger Zones

The danger zones around the outside of the school bus are approximately **12 feet** from the bus, around the entire perimeter of the bus, with the front, right, and rear being the most dangerous.

### CROSSING THE STREET AT SCHOOL BUS STOPS

1. Thermalito Union School District bus drivers cross all students, pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, who need to cross the street as they depart the bus. Be sure you tell your driver if you need to cross the street, so the driver can safely prepare the bus for crossing procedures.
2. The school bus driver shall review student rosters or route sheet to determine if anyone needs to cross the street on which the school bus is stopped in order to reach his or her destination.
3. **Always let the bus driver be the first person off the bus.** The driver needs to activate the bus "Red Lights" that flash on the outside of the bus to warn traffic to stop for children crossing the street.
4. Once the driver is off the bus, you can **walk down the steps and wait on the sidewalk**, next to the front of the bus, for your driver to instruct you to cross the street. Never go into the street until the bus driver instructs you to do so.
5. Always walk between the bus and the bus driver, as you cross the street.
6. Once you have crossed the street, **DO NOT go back into the street.** Go directly home.

## RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR SCHOOL BUS PASSENGERS

1. Pupils are encouraged to **arrive at their bus stop five (5) minutes before the bus** is scheduled to arrive.
2. Pupils shall use **only appropriate bus stops**.
3. Pupils, pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, shall leave the bus at their regular bus stop unless they have a note from their parents, **approved by the principal or designee**, authorizing the pupil to leave the bus at another bus stop.
4. Pupils shall avoid fighting, pushing or **rough play of any kind** while at the bus stop, on the bus, when loading or unloading the bus.
5. Pupils shall respect the rights and property of others on the bus and at all bus stops.
6. **Pupils shall not use profane language or obscene gestures**, create excessive or unnecessary noise that would distract the driver's attention.
7. Pupils shall not throw objects inside or outside of the bus.
8. Pupils shall sit up in their seats, face the front of the bus, keep their feet off the seats, and **shall not obstruct the aisle with their legs, feet, or other objects**.
9. Pupils shall not change seats while the bus is moving, or leave their seats until the bus is stopped and the doors are open.
10. Pupils shall keep all parts of the body inside the bus windows and emergency exits at all times.
11. Pupils shall not damage or deface any part of the bus, tamper with the radio, bus controls, or emergency exits.
12. Pupils shall not use any tobacco products, nor eat or drink on the bus. (**On student activity trips only**, the bus driver may allow students to eat or drink on the bus.)
13. Pupils are not allowed to bring live animals, except service dogs, on the bus.
14. **Pupils shall obey the instructions of the driver at all times**.
15. We will not transport hazardous or destructive objects of any kind, such as firearms, weapons, glass objects or containers, explosives, sharp or pointed objects, skate boards, scooters, ball bats, or any other large toys.

## DISCIPLINE PROCESS

Bus transportation is a privilege **extended only to students who display good conduct** while preparing to ride, riding and leaving the bus. Continued disorderly conduct or persistent refusal to submit to the authority of the driver shall be sufficient reason for a student to be denied transportation.

Video cameras may be used on school buses to monitor student behavior while traveling to and from school and school activities. Students found to be in violation of the district's bus conduct rules shall be subject to discipline in accordance with district policy and regulations.

Violations will be subject to the following action:

1. **Verbal Warning:**

Students may be given a verbal warning and/or assigned a seat for a period of time determined by bus driver.

2. **First Written Violation:**

Warning to student by Transportation Supervisor or Bus Driver with notification to parents. One to Five days Denial of transportation possible.

3. **Second Written Violation:**

Three days to two weeks denial of transportation (parent will be notified).

4. **Third Written Violation:**

Denial of transportation from one semester up to one full year (parent will be notified).

Depending on the severity of the violation and the circumstances, the above actions may be modified.

**NOTE:** Parents/guardians are liable for their student's damage to the seats or any other part of the bus

## PARENT AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents will be responsible to share and discuss the bus rules and regulations with their children. A signed verification notice must be returned to the Transportation Office prior to second week of school. **Students, who do not return the signed verification, shall be denied transportation**

## Evacuation Drills

There will be at least one bus evacuation training drill done each year for all students who ride the bus. In addition, each time a bus leaves a school on an activity trip; the students and teacher are given instructions on emergency evacuation, location of first aid kit, location of fire extinguisher, and the rules that are expected to be followed by each passenger.

## Walking Distances

The walking distance for K through 5<sup>th</sup> grades is .75 miles, and for 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grades it is 1 mile. If a child lives further than these distances from the school they attend (must be in the boundary), they may be eligible for bus transportation. For more information on the bus stops near your area, contact your school site, or the transportation Department at 530-538-2960.

## II. Emergency/Evacuation Training

In order to ensure that students are prepared to respond if an emergency occurs while riding the school bus, ED 39831.5 requires all students to receive emergency and evacuation training at least 1 time per each school year

39831.5.

**A.** All pupils in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1 to 12, inclusive, in public or private school who are transported in a school bus or school pupil activity bus shall receive instruction in school bus emergency procedures and passenger safety. The county superintendent of schools, superintendent of the school district, or owner/operator of a private school, as applicable, shall ensure that the instruction is provided as follows:

(1) Upon registration, the parents or guardians of all pupils not previously transported in a school bus or school pupil activity bus and who are in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1 to 6, inclusive, shall be provided with written information on school bus safety. The information shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

- A.** A list of school bus stops near each pupil's home.
- B.** General rules of conduct at school bus loading zones.
- C.** Red light crossing instructions.
- D.** School bus danger zone.
- E.** Walking to and from school bus stops.

**12517** At least once in each school year, all pupils in prekindergarten, kindergarten, and grades 1 to 8, inclusive, who receive home-to-school transportation shall receive safety



instruction that includes, but is not limited to, proper loading and unloading procedures, including escorting by the driver, how to safely cross the street, highway, or private road, instruction on the use of passenger restraint systems, as described in paragraph (3), proper passenger conduct, bus evacuation, and location of emergency equipment. Instruction also may include responsibilities of passengers seated next to an emergency exit. As part of the instruction, pupils shall evacuate the school bus through emergency exit doors.

**12518** Instruction on the use of passenger restraint systems, when a passenger restraint system is installed, shall include, but not be limited to, all of the following:

- A. Proper fastening and release of the passenger restraint system.
- B. Acceptable placement of passenger restraint systems on pupils.
- C. Times at which the passenger restraint systems should be fastened and released.
- D. Acceptable placement of the passenger restraint systems when not in use.

**12519** Prior to departure on a school activity trip, all pupils riding on a school bus or school pupil activity bus shall receive safety instruction that includes, but is not limited to, location of emergency exits, and location and use of emergency equipment. Instruction also may include responsibilities of passengers seated next to an emergency exit.

**B.** The following information shall be documented each time the instruction required by paragraph (2) of subdivision (a) is given:

- i Name of school district, county office of education, or private school.
- ii Name and location of school.
- iii Date of instruction.
- iv Names of supervising adults.
- v Number of pupils participating.
- vi Grade levels of pupils.
- vii Subjects covered in instruction.
- viii Amount of time taken for instruction.
- ix Bus driver's name.
- x Bus number.
- xi Additional remarks.

The information recorded pursuant to this subdivision shall remain on file at the district or county office, or at the school, for one year from the date of the instruction, and shall be subject to inspection by the Department of the California Highway Patrol.

The Field Trip safety instructions must be presented prior to each trip, even though some groups may have heard the safety instructions before.

During darkness, the driver shall ensure that the interior lighting is sufficient for passengers to enter and exit safely and whenever otherwise deemed necessary.

### III. Special Education Procedures and Safety Provisions

When the IEP team determines that a child is eligible for special education (EC 56031), the parent and school staff will identify the student's proper placement, goals, and objectives to help identify annual progress. Related services are identified, and any special transportation services needed for the student to gain access to an education are written into the IEP. When transportation is identified in the IEP as a related service, school bus transportation is provided.

It is important to recognize, therefore, that a student's success is dependent upon maintaining positive communication, cooperation, and collaboration between parents, teachers, and the school bus driver.

#### Transporting Students with Special Needs

Transporting students with special needs requires appropriate care and concern. The process for loading/unloading a student will follow the above procedures, and will include assisting a student as needed.

The driver will utilize the 8 way Warning Light System when loading/unloading a special need student in accordance with **VC 22112**. According to VC 22112 (e) 1, the 8 way warning light system must not be activated in the following locations:

- 25257** School bus **loading zones on or adjacent to school grounds** or during an activity trip, if the school bus is lawfully stopped or parked.
  - 25258** Where the school bus is disabled due to mechanical breakdown. The driver of a relief bus that arrives at the scene to transport pupils from the disabled school bus shall not activate the amber warning light system, the flashing red light system, and stop signal arm.
  - 25259** **Where a pupil requires physical assistance from the driver or authorized attendant to board or leave the school bus** and providing the assistance extends the length of time the school bus is stopped beyond the time required to load or unload a pupil that does not require physical assistance.
- The TUESD Transportation Department will route special needs buses to pick and drop off on the right side only.

- Parents should have students ready for AM pick up 5 minutes prior to the stop time.
- Parent must notify transportation daily if students are not going to school because of illness or any other cause.
- Many special education students must be met by a responsible adult. If no one is available to meet the student, the bus driver completes the route and returns to the stop, attempts to contact the parent, takes the student back to school, or if necessary will take the student to the Police Department.

## Transporting Children in Wheelchairs

Students, who will be transported in a wheelchair, must be seated in a wheelchair that meets the requirements stipulated in **13 CCR 1293**. This regulation requires the following:

Wheelchairs shall be equipped as follows:

- **Brakes and Restraining Belt.** Wheelchairs shall be equipped with brakes and a restraining belt properly maintained by the owner of the chair. Electric wheelchairs transported on school buses shall be capable of being locked in gear when placed in a school bus or shall have an independent braking system capable of holding the wheelchair in place.
- **Batteries used to propel electric wheelchairs transported on school buses shall be both leak resistant and spill resistant or shall be placed in a leak resistant container.** Batteries shall be secured to the wheelchair frame in such a manner as to prevent separation in the event of an accident.

In order to ensure the greatest level of safety, the Transportation Department recommends that a student be transported in a wheelchair that meets the WC-19 standards.

## Wheelchair loading/ unloading procedures

1. Position the bus in order to leave adequate room for deploying the wheelchair ramp and for maneuvering the wheelchair on or off the lift.
2. Turn engine off and remove keys
3. Open and secure the lift door
4. Scan for people or obstructions and then lower the lift to ground level
5. Place chair on lift, being careful to ensure that feet, legs, footrest, chair parts, etc. will not be jammed between the vehicle as the lift is moved up or down.
6. Stand behind chair on the lift with brake set before lowering or raising the lift.
7. After moving the wheelchair off the lift, return the lift to the upright (stow) position, secure the door, and replace the cover before departing the bus stop.

8. Never allow a parent or school staff to operate ramp/lift

### Securing the Wheelchair procedure

1. Make sure brakes are set. **DO NOT** transport chair if brakes are faulty.
2. The chair belt has to be fastened at all times for the purpose of transporting.
3. Use four tie downs and pull to make sure they are fastened to the floor and chair.  
**DO NOT** fastened tie downs to any part of the chair except the frame only.

### Wheelchair Safety and Special Equipment notes

- Always set wheelchair brakes while a student is waiting to load/unload the bus, riding the lift, and while being transported. **If brakes are faulty, do not transport.**
- Always make certain that the student is **properly fastened** within the wheelchair safety belts.
- The wheelchair and student are to be properly secured in the bus with the 7 point system. Four (4) tie downs are to be used to secure the chair and an additional lap and shoulder belt must be used to secure the student.
- After removal of the wheelchair, **the tie downs, lap, and shoulder belts must be secured** to the vehicle in a manner that will prevent hazardous movement during normal operations or in the event of an emergency stop, traffic accident, or vehicle overturn. (13 CCR 1293)
- Properly stow any wheelchair trays, oxygen, or other items accompanying the student.
- Car seats must meet federal safety standards and be properly secured within the vehicle.
- Safety vests must meet federal safety standards and be properly secured within the vehicle.
- Students should be loaded/unloaded by the driver. **Teachers, aides, and parents should NOT be allowed to buckle the student, affix tie downs, or operate the lift.**
- Students are not to be left unattended on buses.

### Safety Reminders

- Never lift a student by his or her safety vest
- Never lift a child by either both or one arm
- Never lift a child who is too heavy for you.

### Special Problems

- If you are driving a bus with special education students and are hijacked, attempt to explain the following to your captors: the special care, medication, and nature of the students aboard the bus.

## Pickup and Drop off locations

- Special education students will be picked up and dropped off at their assigned location within the district boundary (Unless homeless, or misplaced).
- If the bus is unable to pull up to the house the bus will stop on the roadway.
- **NO** student will be dropped off unless there is an adult to receive child or parent/guardian gives written permission for the child to be dropped unattended.

## Confidentiality Requirements

The IDEA (34 CFR 300.560) and the Education Code (EC 56347) require that information in the IEP (even if confidential) shall be made available to related service providers to transport students safely. **School bus drivers are school officials who perform the IEP-mandated transportation related service.** Information on the handicapping condition, medical/health issues, and other personal characteristics is provided to transportation staff to assist in the orderly and safe transportation of a student protected by the provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Transportation staff shall be trained regarding confidentiality requirements.

## IV. Emergency Dismissal Procedures

School closure decisions are made after considering the safety of Thermalito staff and students. Factors which affect the decision to close are, weather conditions, power outage, flooded or icy streets, damage to a school, and other considerations. The Superintendent or his/her designee is responsible for making any decisions pertaining to school closures. The decision is made after consulting with various agencies and our personnel.

Schools are designated as "safe" havens for many emergencies. Students are perhaps more safe at school than in other structures. In the future, on stormy days, students will remain at school for the duration unless parents pick them up. If buses cannot run, all admin and managers would be notified. Then all parents and guardians are to be notified by phone and a notification on our social media accounts/website.

## V. Procedures for Severe Atmospheric Conditions

Atmospheric Conditions: According to VC 34501.6, "the governing board of a local educational agency that provides for the transportation of pupils shall adopt procedures that limit the operation of school buses when atmospheric conditions **reduce the visibility on the roadway to 200 feet or less** during regular home to school transportation. Policies for atmospheric conditions **shall give school bus drivers discretionary authority to discontinue school bus operation** if the driver determines that it is unsafe to continue because of reduced visibility."

### In Accordance With VC 34501.6

Because a school bus driver may encounter severe weather conditions throughout the school year, the following procedures have been established in order to ensure the safety of students.

- If a driver is caught in severe weather conditions, **the 1<sup>st</sup> step of ensuring safety is to SLOW DOWN.**

### The Decision to Evacuate the Bus

Most often, **student safety and control** are best maintained **by keeping students in the bus** during an emergency and/or impending crisis situation. **However**, if remaining in the bus exposes students to **greater risk or injury**, then the decision to evacuate the bus must be promptly enacted. A decision to evacuate students should include consideration of the following conditions:

1. Is there a fire involved?
2. Is fuel leaking?
3. Might the bus roll or tip, thereby causing further threat to safety?
4. Is the bus likely to be hit by other vehicles?
5. Is the bus stranded on railroad tracks?
6. Is the bus likely to slide down a cliff or drop off?
7. Is the bus in the direct path of a sighted tornado or other natural disaster, such as rising water?
8. Would evacuating students expose them to speeding traffic, severe weather or other dangerous environment?
9. Considering the medical, physical and emotional condition of the students, does staying in the bus or evacuating the bus pose the greater danger to the student's safety?
10. If unexpected weather conditions present a hazardous situation or a driver is unable to reach a safe location, the driver:
  - Should pull the bus well off of the roadway to a safe location and stop the vehicle. Select a location that is away from trees, electric lines and poles.

- Should turn on 4-way emergency flashers in order that other motorists can see that the bus is stopped.
- Should assess if student safety will be best maintained by remaining on the bus or by evacuating the bus.

## Flooding

1. Never attempt to drive through flood waters. If the bus route crosses small streams or runs along a river and flood waters are encountered, **seek an alternate route** or return to school.
2. Do not enter road sections that cannot be seen beneath the water. They may be undermined or the water may be deep enough to stall the bus.
3. Never enter flooded underpasses.
4. If water appears to be flowing across the road, do not proceed. The bus could act as a barrier and the water could lift and move it.
5. If water is flooding over or around a bridge, do not cross it; the foundation of the bridge may be compromised and the bridge could collapse from the weight of the bus.
6. Water levels can rise rapidly. The force of flowing water on a vehicle is very powerful and a foot of water may be all it takes to push a vehicle into deeper waters or flip it over.
7. Water on brake drums will reduce braking efficiency. A light application of the brakes can prevent excessive water between the drum and brake pads.
8. During excessively wet conditions or after passing through standing water, it may be necessary to apply the brakes slightly for a short distance to dry them out and restore normal braking.
9. If the driver is caught in an unavoidable situation, seek higher ground immediately.
10. If the bus stalls and the water is rising, abandon the bus and take the students to higher ground before the situation gets out of control.
11. However, the depth and swiftness of the water must be carefully considered before evacuating students. Remaining on the bus may be less dangerous than having students traverse through moving water in an effort to reach a safer location.

## Lightning

All thunderstorms produce lightning, by definition. If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to the storm to be struck. Take proactive actions. It need not be raining. Lightning can strike 10 to 15 miles away from the rain portion of the storm.

1. If caught in a lightning storm, students should remain in the bus with the windows rolled up.

2. When unloading during lightning, get **as close as safely** possible to the structure the student intends to enter.

### Important warning

If you feel your hair stand on end, you are in immediate danger of being struck. Unless you can instantly jump inside a shelter, **drop to a crouching position**, bending forward and keeping your feet close together with your hands on your knees. The object is to be as low to the ground as possible and yet have as little of your body touching the ground. If in a group of people, **spread out**, keeping several yards apart from each other.

#### First Aid:

If a person is struck by lightning, check to see if the person is breathing. If not, begin mouth to mouth resuscitation. If no pulse is present, begin CPR. Lightning often has a paralyzing effect that is temporary. Even though a person appears to be dead, they may be resuscitated. Victims may experience temporary paralysis of legs, be stunned and disoriented, or have burns on their body. Give first aid for shock and stay with the victim until help arrives.

### High Winds

Strong winds can affect the handling of a school bus. **It may be harder to steer** and stay within the lane of travel during high winds. Wind gusts can push on the side of the bus, causing it to thrust sideways. **Overcompensated steering can cause the bus to tip over** or leave the lane of travel.

Strong winds increase just prior to, and in the beginning of a change in weather. During thunderstorms, dust storms, and blizzards, visibility can be severely impaired. Wind may blow around debris that can hit the bus causing damage or injuries.

#### If caught in strong winds

1. Slow down to lessen the effect of wind on the school bus
2. Keep a firm grip on the steering wheel.
3. Anticipate gusts. Expect the wind to be worse in higher and more exposed places. Such as:
  - a. Crossing bridges and overpasses
  - b. Crossing between hills
  - c. Exiting tunnels
  - d. Open straight-always
  - e. Passing high-profile vehicles



4. If weather conditions present a serious hazardous situation (i.e. flying debris, etc.) or a driver is unable to reach a safe location, the driver:
  - a. Should pull the bus well off of the roadway to a safe location and stop the vehicle. Select a location that is away from trees, electric lines and poles.
  - b. Should turn on 4-way emergency flashers in order that other motorists can see that the bus is stopped.
  - c. Should notify the transportation office of your location and reason for stopping.
  - d. Should, when circumstances warrant, have the students protect their head by lowering their face against their upper legs so that they are below the window level. Students should cover their faces with a jacket, book, etc. to protect themselves from flying debris.
  - e. Should assess if student safety will be best maintained by remaining on the bus or by evacuating the bus.

## Low Visibility

Encountering fog, dust, haze and other similar elements can result in a driving condition of low visibility. Statistically, **driving in heavy fog is the most dangerous driving hazard**. Driving in conditions of extreme low visibility is like driving a vehicle blindfolded. Drivers must be extremely cautious when encountering conditions of low visibility. **The best option in extremely low visibility is to wait it out**. It is better to get students to school later as opposed to taking a risk. Remember, when the visibility on the roadway is reduced to **200 feet or less** during regular home to school transportation. Policies for atmospheric conditions give **school bus drivers discretionary authority to discontinue school bus operation** if the driver determines that it is unsafe. (*VC 34501.6*)

### If driving in conditions of low visibility, keep the following safety tips in mind

1. Slow down and allow extra time to reach your destination.
2. Keep an eye on the speedometer. Studies show that some drivers acclimate themselves to foggy conditions and unconsciously increase their speed over time.
3. A proper speed is determined by the **ability to stop the bus within ½ the distance visible** to the driver.
4. Make the vehicle visible to others by using the low-beam headlights since this means the taillights will also be on. Use fog lights if the vehicle is so equipped.
5. **Never use high-beam lights**. Using high beam lights causes glare, making it more difficult to see what is ahead.
6. Do not rely on vehicles in front of the bus to guide one's driving. The vehicle in front may not be on the right side of the road at all.

7. Leave plenty of distance between the bus and the vehicle in front in order to account for sudden stops or changes in the traffic pattern.
8. Use the right edge of the road (aka fog line) as a guide rather than the center line, to avoid running into oncoming traffic or becoming distracted by their headlights.

In extremely dense fog where visibility is near zero, the best course of action is to first turn on the hazard lights, then simply pull into a safe location such as a parking lot of a local business and stop. Remember, **when the visibility on the roadway is reduced to 200 feet or less** during regular home to school transportation. Policies for atmospheric conditions give **school bus drivers discretionary authority to discontinue school bus operation** if the driver determines that it is unsafe. (VC 34501.6)

If there is no parking lot or driveway to pull into, pull the vehicle off to the side of the road as far as possible. Upon coming to a stop, turn off all lights except your hazard flashing lights, set the emergency brake, and take your foot off of the brake pedal to be sure the tail lights are not illuminated so that other drivers don't mistakenly run into the bus.

## Tornado

1. If there is a tornado watch warning the district should monitor for the changing status of the weather. Drivers should continue their route under extreme caution and monitor their 2-way radio for changing conditions.
2. If there is a tornado warning at dismissal time, the school should hold the children until the warning is lifted. Drivers should wait inside the school with the children.
3. If drivers are already on their route and become aware that a tornado warning has been issued they should proceed to the nearest educational facility or other shelter and take the students inside. Drivers need to be aware of schools, and alternate sites such as fire stations, public buildings, emergency shelters, or places of safety located on their route. If feasible notify dispatch of your shelter location. Drivers and students should remain in the shelter until the warning is lifted.

## If caught in the pathway of a tornado

1. Park the bus downwind.
2. Evacuate students to a ditch or ravine approximately 200' from the bus. Assist students in lying face down with their hands over their heads. Make sure students are far enough away from the bus so that it cannot roll over on them.
3. When the tornado is over, check for injuries or shock.

4. Contact the district office and/or transportation office for further instructions.
5. Complete the route only when it is safe to do so.

### **Additional Considerations**

- Do not allow students off of the bus to move trees, limbs, cables, or power lines.
- Do not allow students to disembark the bus if there are power lines down in the area.
- Contact the District Office or Transportation Office if the bus cannot be moved due to blockage of the roadway.

## **VI. Field Trips**

While on special trips, field trips, or sport trips, **bus drivers will require all students to leave the bus at one time.** Students will be required to take everything needed upon exiting the bus, and will not be allowed back on the bus until the completion of the trip when boarding is required for returning back to the school.

1. No bus driver will leave a field trip site without **accounting for all passengers.** Care must be taken to ensure that no student is left behind at the field trip site.
2. The school **bus driver has the final authority to decide when he/she must leave** the field trip site.
3. No student shall be transported by parents/guardians/staff members to and/or from an off-site activity in a vehicle **other than** a Thermalito Union Elementary School District vehicle, or properly chartered vehicle **unless** a "personal vehicle use form" is properly filled out and signed off by the District.
4. When District transportation is provided, students may be released from using District transportation for the return trip, only with the written permission of their parents/guardians, and the approval of the designated TUESD site staff member.

### **Bus Drivers**

Field Trips shall be distributed by rotating through the appropriate seniority list in a continuous order maintained by the Maintenance operations transportation assistant. If only a Van is needed for a field trip, than van drivers will also be included into this rotation.

## VII. Hijacking and Kidnapping Procedures

In the past, school buses have been hijacked both by a student aboard the bus and by individuals who were not passengers. Consequently, this is a subject that must be addressed.

The following classifications identify the various causes for which hijacking or kidnapping occur

- Predation:** - *Kidnapping for money or personal gain*  
**Pathological:** - *Abduction for homicidal, suicidal, or sexual motives*  
**Escape:** - *Abduction as a means of escaping capture or escaping confinement by legitimate authority.*  
**Political/Social:** - *Hostage taking as a means of securing political, social, or personal objectives.*

### If Hijacked

Although the likelihood of being hijacked is minimal, the following provides guidelines for the bus driver to enact when facing such events:

1. If possible, initiate the notification plan designed for this purpose.
2. The first 15 to 45 minutes are the most dangerous for all concerned.
3. Don't be a hero. Accept your situation and be prepared to "wait" until help arrives.
4. Try to **appear calm and this will calm your passengers** and the stressful situation will be diffused.
5. Follow the instructions of your captor(s). The longer you are together, the less likely you are to be hurt by the captor(s).
6. Don't speak unless you're spoken to or only when necessary. **Try to be friendly** if possible, **but not fake.**
7. Don't make suggestions to captor(s). If your suggestion goes wrong, he or she may think you planned it that way.
8. Don't try to escape unless you are the only hostage. Be certain that you can make good your escape before trying it.
9. If you have the opportunity, **ask your captors to permit you to give necessary instruction to the pupils.** If you are firm and calm, your passengers will be more likely to follow your instructions.
10. If anyone needs special medication, inform your captor(s).

11. Be observant of everything you see and hear. Try to memorize the number of captors, their description and conversations, weapons carried, numbers and identities of other hostages. You may be released and your information will help the police.
12. If you are permitted to speak on the phone, you should **follow the instructions of your captor very carefully**. Be prepared to answer "yes" or "no" only to questions asked by the person with whom you are speaking on the telephone.
13. Don't be argumentative to captors or other hostages. Put forth an effort to be cooperative.
14. Don't turn your back on your captors unless directed to do so; but **don't stare at them either**. Eye contact can be good. People are less likely to harm someone that they are looking at.
15. Avoid physical resistance. You have little chance of success and **may increase the risk of harm of the other hostages**.
16. **Be patient**. Even though the police may appear to be doing nothing, they are engaged in a complete program designed to rescue you and your kids unharmed as soon as possible

### Unauthorized Enter

WARNING: (EC. 39842, 13 CCR 1256.5) Any person who enters a school bus or school pupil activity bus **without prior authorization of the driver** or other school official with intent to commit any crime **and who refuses to disembark after being ordered to do so by the driver** or other school official is guilty of a misdemeanor and is punishable by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than six months, by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by both.

## VIII. Other General Rules and Provisions

### Mechanical Breakdown

When a school bus is disabled due to a mechanical failure and students are aboard that require transportation, the relief vehicle should drive to the front of and pull in line with and as close to the disabled vehicle as possible. Vehicle Code Section 22112(d) states that a school bus disabled due to mechanical breakdown and/or the relief bus shall NOT activate the flashing red light system while loading and unloading passengers. The drivers of both vehicles should activate the hazard lights prior to the unloading and loading of passengers.

### Prior Notification of Change of Address

When a student requests a change of address, a 24 hour notice is required for effective change of bus routing. Prior to such notice, parents are responsible for transporting their student. Our rationale is that anytime less than a 24 hour notice to the Transportation Department, may result in

students being delivered to the wrong address, thus incurring added risk to the student and added liability to the District.

In the event of a new student registering during the school year, the registration occurs after 10:00am on a school day, the parent is responsible to transport the student the following day. This is due to constraints of time in adding the new student to a route, and possibly a change to that route.

### **Audio/Video Surveillance**

The district uses video and audio surveillance systems inside the buses to assist in monitoring student activity and providing students with the safest possible ride.

### **Idling**

When at school, school bus, school activity bus, and any other commercial motor vehicle drivers are required to turn off the engine upon arriving at a school, and restart it no more than 30 seconds before departing. Commercial diesel vehicles are prohibited by law (13 CCR 2485) from idling a vehicle's engine for more than 5 minutes at any location. Parents and visitors must also turn off their engine as soon as they park and must not wait for a student with the engine running generally for more than 5 minutes but 10 minutes in the extreme weather conditions.

*No Student Left Unattended Procedure SB 1072*

### **Bus Driver Training**

During the last 12 months of the special driver certificate validity, the 10 hours of instruction shall also include the procedures to ensure that a pupil is not left unattended on a school bus, SPAB or youth bus.

School bus drivers shall receive the following training:

- \*Necessary first aid practices (VC 12522)
- \*Actions to be taken in the event that a school bus is hijacked (ED 30847)
- \*The proper installation for mobile seating devices in bus securement system for Special Education students (ED 56221)
- \*School bus drivers shall be subject to drug and alcohol testing in accordance with School board policy and requirements of federal law.

### **Consequences for Bus Driver Gross Negligence**

Public school superintendents and private school owners/operators that provide transportation to or from school or school activities must notify the DMV within five (5) calendar days after

ordering and upholding disciplinary action against a driver who was found to have left the immediate vicinity of his or her assigned vehicle with an unsupervised pupil onboard in a manner that constitutes "gross negligence" (defined as the want of even scant care or an extreme departure from the ordinary standard of conduct.) Being reported will be grounds for the DMV to refuse to issue or to revoke a bus driver's certificate.

### **Operational Child Safety Alert System**

Each school bus, shall be equipped with an operational child safety alert system. A "child safety alert system" is a device located at the interior rear of a vehicle that requires the driver to either manually contact or scan the device before exiting the vehicle, thereby prompting the driver to inspect the entirety of the interior of the vehicle before exiting.

Each school bus driver is required to check their bus after each run/route/trip once finished. The driver must physically walk the entire length of the bus checking the interior for sleeping students and articles that may have been left behind before exiting the vehicle. Upon checking the entire bus, the driver is then required to push the child safety alert button in order to confirm that no students are aboard.

### **Exception for SPABs under Limited Circumstances**

Under the law, a school pupil activity bus is not required to be equipped with an operational child safety alert system if all of the following apply:

1. The school pupil activity bus is not used exclusively to transport pupils.
2. When a school pupil activity bus is used to transport pupils, the pupils are accompanied by at least one adult chaperone selected by a school official.
3. If an adult chaperone is not a school employee, the chaperone shall meet the requirements for a school volunteer established by the policies of the school district, county office of education, charter school, or private school.
4. One adult chaperone has a list of every pupil and adult chaperone, including a school employee, who is on the school pupil activity bus at the time of departure.
5. The driver has reviewed all safety and emergency procedures before the initial departure and
6. The driver and adult chaperone have signed a form with the time and date acknowledging that the safety plan and procedures were reviewed.
7. Immediately before departure from any location, the adult chaperone shall account for each pupil on the list of pupils, verify the number of pupils to the driver, and sign a form indicating that all pupils are present or accounted for.

8. After pupils have exited a school pupil activity bus, and before driving away, the driver shall check all areas of the bus, including, but not limited to, overhead compartments and bathrooms, to ensure that the bus is vacant.
9. The driver shall sign a form with the time and date verifying that all required procedures have been followed.
10. The information required to be recorded pursuant to subparagraphs (D), (E), and (G) may be recorded on a single form. These forms shall be retained by the school district, county office of education, charter school, or private school for a minimum of two years.

## **IX. Legal Reference**

### **EDUCATION CODE**

- 38050 Operating bus in violation of order or regulation or without operator's qualification
- 38155-38168 Training required to obtain or renew bus driver certificate
- 39831.3 Transportation safety plan
- 45125.1 Criminal background checks for contractors
- 56221 Adoption of policies

### **VEHICLE CODE**

- 1808.8 Dismissal for safety-related cause
- 2570-2575 Transportation of students
- 12517.2 Medical report; physical examination
- 12522 First aid training for school bus drivers
- 13376 Driver certificates; revocation or suspension; sex offense prosecution
- 22112 School bus signals; roadway crossings
- 25257.2 School bus used for transportation of developmentally disabled person
- 34501.6 School buses; reduced visibility
- 34508.5 Investigation of accidents

### **CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 5**

- 14103 Authority of the driver

### **CODE OF REGULATIONS, TITLE 13**

- 1202 General provisions
- 1219 School bus regulations
- 1227 School bus stops

### **CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS, TITLE 49**

- 571.222 Federal motor vehicle safety standard # 22



