

School Shuttle Safety

Kimberley Independent School understands emergencies can happen. We ensure that in these circumstances the risk has been mitigated and procedures are in place to keep everyone safe.

Legislation and Regulation

Legislation

To operate in British Columbia, school districts and other school shuttle operators must follow the laws and regulations that apply to the operation of commercial vehicles (trucks and buses), which includes, but is not limited to:

- The Highway Traffic Act
- Motor Vehicle Act Regulations
- Dangerous Goods Transportation Act
- Motor Vehicle Transport Act
- National Safety Code
- Environmental Protection Act

School shuttle operators must comply with Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Standard D250, a prescriptive manufacturing standard that school shuttles must be built and maintained to throughout the service life of a school shuttle.

Regulation

The Ministry of Transportation's Commercial Vehicle Safety Enforcement (CVSE) monitors school shuttle operators throughout the province. Facility audits, carrier safety ratings, annual inspections and spot checks are performed to ensure school shuttle companies operate with the highest integrity.

Facility Audit

During a facility audit, school shuttle operators are measured against their stated maintenance policies. Vehicles maintenance files are also inspected to ensure they are compliant with legislated standards, daily/annual vehicle inspection records are in order, and driver records and logbooks have been filled out properly.

Carrier Safety Rating

CVSE determines a Carrier Safety Rating for each school shuttle operator based on performance. Collisions, inspections, and convictions, as well as the results of facility audits influence the Safety Rating.

Regular Inspections

In addition to regular mechanical maintenance and daily vehicle inspections by the driver, a government licensed CVSE office will perform at least one inspection each year on every school shuttle in British Columbia.

Spot Checks

School shuttles are subject to roadside safety inspections. Unlike other kinds of commercial vehicles, they typically take place at the intended destination rather than at the roadside. The inspections are unannounced and are routine checks. The results of the inspection are reported to the driver and the school shuttle company and can affect the operator's rating.

Driver Hours of Service

The number of hours a school shuttle driver can drive and be on-duty in a day, and over a seven day period, is monitored to ensure fatigue does not compromise the safety of passengers. The Record of Duty Status logbook makes it easy for drivers, their employers, and the CVSE to track their hours and determine compliance.

Vehicle Design and Construction

Seat Belts

Transport Canada has confirmed that seat belts on school shuttles do not offer the same protection to passengers as they do in a car. In fact, seat belts in a school shuttle have the potential to cause head and neck injuries to passengers. For a seat belt to be effective, it must be worn correctly; snug and on the upper thighs. School vehicles carry passengers from the very young to high school students, therefore if seat belts were used they would need to be properly adjusted for each student and their use closely monitored. A seat belt not worn correctly can cause serious injuries.

Operational Policies and Procedures

School shuttle companies, school boards and other school transportation operators establish emergency contingency plans in the event of a crash, school closure, route change or unexpected medical situation.

School Shuttle Safety Rules

There are procedures performed by school shuttle drivers on a daily basis including the loading and unloading of children. This is one of the most important responsibilities that a driver has, as most incidents occur outside the bus and frequent stops are made on each route. Education and awareness about the correct way to enter and exit the bus, cross the street and to stay away from the "danger zone" is crucial to child safety.

Key safety messages to teach children about the "danger zone" include the following:

- If you can touch the bus, you are too close.
- Use 10 GIANT STEPS to take you out of the danger zone.
- Be sure you can see the driver and that the driver sees you.
- If you drop anything in the danger zone, never stop to pick it up.
- Ask an adult or the driver to help.

Passenger Capacity

For maximum protection, seating capacity is adjusted according to the size of the passengers being transported. Compartmentalization is only effective when the student can sit fully on the bench. If the students are too big to assign three to a seat, it needs to be reported to the school shuttle operator. The number of passengers in a school shuttle should never exceed the bus manufacturer's designed seating capacity.

Routes

School boards or school transportation operators determine the bus stop locations along each route. The routes are determined by set criteria including distances between stops and to major intersections, posted speed limits, traffic volume, types of roadways, etc. School shuttle drivers are responsible for making sure each student is picked up and dropped off at the assigned stop location. Children under a certain age must be met by a parent or guardian in most situations.

The amount of time a child rides the school shuttle is also a consideration.

All routing decisions are made by the school board or transportation consortia. Contact information for school boards can be found at the following.

Driver Qualifications

School shuttle drivers in British Columbia are held to the highest standards of safety, supervision, and preparedness considering the precious cargo they transport. They receive hours of specialized training, both in the classroom and on the road, to provide safe and reliable transportation. Drivers must demonstrate their knowledge of traffic laws, policies and procedures in addition to demonstrating exemplary driving skills and operation of a school shuttle. Driving records are screened and criminal background checks are performed during the hiring process and regular medical exams are required. There is a program in place for Drivers License Status Checks, this service is a reliable way for bus operators to confirm at regular intervals that their bus drivers continue to hold a valid license and that has been no contraventions since the last check .

Training and instruction include the following elements: proper use of school shuttle equipment, daily pre-trip and post-trip vehicle safety inspections, safe driving techniques including defensive driving skills, procedures for loading and unloading passengers, procedures for entering and exiting school zones, student management, accident and emergency response including evacuation, First Aid/CPR, route instructions, use of electronic communications. Many drivers take certified driver improvement courses and periodic re-examinations to learn about new techniques and improve their skills.

Bus Incident Protocol

In the event the school bus is involved in an incident, the following steps must be taken.

- Ensure the school emergency backpack is taken off the bus
- Evacuate the bus
- Call 9-1-1
- Call the school
- Ensure the students are in a safe area
- Help to keep the situation calm and wait for help to arrive.

All bus incidents have to be reported immediately using the Incident reporting Procedures.