

The "Vehicle" that brings you information.

# Pupil Transportation "Vehicle"

Visit our website: <http://cfl.state.mn.us/FIN/transportation.html>

## SCHOOL BUSES AND TORNADOES Statewide Tornado Drill Day – April 19

**D**o your school bus drivers know what to do if they spot a tornado while driving their routes? The chances of this happening are small, however, drivers should be aware of the steps to take if they spot a tornado. Minnesota's Severe Storms Awareness Week will be observed April 16 – 20. This would be a good time to review your tornado safety plan with your school bus drivers.

The following information was obtained from publications prepared by the Minnesota School Bus Safety Committee in cooperation with the Rosemount and Roseville School Districts, the National Weather Service and the Tornado Project.

Bus drivers should listen to radio weather bulletins as well as using their two-way radios to stay in contact with the central office. The drivers should listen for a:

**Tornado Watch:** Tornadoes are possible in your area. Remain alert for approaching storms.

**Tornado Warning:** A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. Warnings are issued for counties and/or communities and include the tornado's location, direction, and speed. If the warning is for your area, follow the safety plan developed by the school district or company.



Remember, tornadoes occasionally develop in areas in which a severe thunderstorm watch or warning is in effect. Remain alert to signs of an approaching tornado or storm such as a dark, often greenish sky; wall cloud; large hail; and/or loud roar, similar to a freight train. If any of these threatening conditions exist, take immediate action. Occasionally, tornadoes develop so rapidly that advance warning is not possible. Remain alert for the signs of an approaching storm.

### Safety Plan

1. Upon first sighting a tornado, determine in which direction it is traveling and whether it will hit you.

- continued on next page -

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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF

*Children,  
Families &  
Learning*

**Pupil Transportation Unit  
Division of Finance and Management Services – District Support  
Services  
Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning  
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## ***SCHOOL BUSES AND TORNADOES, cont.***

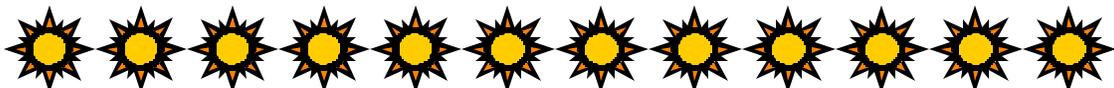
2. If the tornado is moving toward the area you are driving toward, do not continue in that direction. Instead, either stop if the storm is very close, or retreat at right angles to the storm's path if it is not nearby. Do **NOT** attempt to outrun a tornado which is bearing down on your vehicle.
3. If there is a likelihood that the tornado will hit your vehicle, and there is no escape route available:
  - a. Evacuate the bus.
  - b. Take the students to the nearest ditch, depression, or ravine upwind (on the storm side) of the bus far enough away from the bus so that bus will not roll over on them. Avoid areas with many trees.
  - c. Instruct the students to lie flat and to cover their heads with their arms.

Do not allow the students to take personal possessions other than coats and jackets. These items could be used to cover their heads and bodies. Take only the first aid kit.

Do not take the students to an underpass. It is not known how safe an underpass is or how much shelter it would provide from flying debris in a strong or violent tornado. Flying debris causes most of the deaths and injuries in tornadoes. It is much safer for the students to be in a ditch.

4. If you are driving when you hear a tornado warning or spot a funnel and there is no time to move the students to a ditch, have the students assume the protective position, remaining in their seats with their heads below window level. Shut off the vehicle, except for the lights, and get under the dash away from the door.
5. If there is a house or building nearby which offers shelter and there is enough time to reach it, move to the basement of the building away from the south and west walls. It would be best to have the students hide under a sturdy table or workbench away from crumbling walls, chimneys and debris that may fall into the basement. If there is no basement in the building, move to a inside room, without windows, on the lowest floor – like closets or bathrooms. If there are no closets or bathrooms, a center hallway would provide the best protection. Put as many walls as you can between the students and the tornado. Covering students with cushions, blankets or mattresses will prevent some flying debris from injuring the students.
6. After the tornado has passed, look for further funnel clouds. If none are apparent, see to the safety of your students. If the students are in a ditch, return them to the bus to avoid severe rain and hail which often accompanies a tornado. Attend to the injured students. Notify authorities as soon as possible.

It is very important that the bus driver remain calm and to keep the children calm. By reviewing the safety plan with your drivers, they will be prepared to take the steps necessary to keep their passengers as safe as possible.



## **VIDEO TAPES AVAILABLE AT CFL LIBRARY**

School districts, charter schools, school bus contractors and nonpublic schools can now borrow VHS videocassette training tapes from the Department of Children, Families & Learning (CFL) Library. The number of tapes available for loan is limited at the present time, but the Transportation Office plans to increase the number of tapes available as soon as possible.

The tapes available for loan include:

- Introduction to the Special Needs Bus
- Loading and Unloading the Special Bus
- Wheelchair Management
- Emergency Evacuation of the Special Bus
- Transporting the Emotionally Disturbed
- Students with Hearing Disabilities
- Students with Mental Disabilities
- Students with Orthopedic Disabilities
- Transporting the Physically Disabled
- Students with ADD/ADHD Disabilities
- Students with Visual Disabilities

These video-tapes are for drivers and aides of students with disabilities.

- Volume I – Early Childhood Education
- Volume II – Kindergarten
- Volume III – Primary Grades (1-3)
- Volume IV – Intermediate Grades (4-6)

These videotapes are for students from Early Childhood through sixth grade.

- “Trouble Spots” by Seven Oaks Productions – This videotape is a three-part series on school bus safety in the loading and unloading areas plus a silent positive safety rules segment.

Because the number of tapes is limited, we ask that you list a number of possible dates that you could use the tapes. If you are interested in checking out these tapes, visit our team’s website: <http://cfl.state.mn.us/FIN/transportation.html>. Select “CFL Library – Transportation Tapes” to obtain a copy of the tape-loan order blank.

## **SAFETY POSTER WINNER**

For the third time, Scott Woizeschke, a student from Windom, Minnesota, has won the National School Bus Safety Week Committee Poster Contest. Scott also won the national contest in 1997 and 1998. The safety theme for the 2000 contest was “School Bus Safety Show and Tell.”

Minnesota school districts recently received information about the 2001 Minnesota School Bus Safety Poster Contest. The theme for 2001 contest is “Danger – Know the Zone.” The top winners of the Minnesota contest will win a savings bond and the winning poster in each of the four divisions will be forwarded to the national contest. Contact the telephone number on the front page if you would like more information about the Minnesota contest.

## ***MEDICAL ASSISTANCE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR SOME PUPIL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES***

Beginning July 1, 2000, school districts are required to seek third party payment for services provided to children who receive special education services through an Individual Education Program (IEP) or an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). Eligible services include transportation when certain criteria apply.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has conducted training sessions and has developed a technical assistance guide to assist districts in claiming Medical Assistance (MA). If districts have questions about what services can be billed to the Medical Assistance Program, they are encouraged to call the DHS Customer Services Provider Help Desk at 651-282-5545 or 1-800-366-5411. In the CFL Special Education Unit, districts may contact Deb Maruska, Third Party Funding Consultant, at 651-582-8263, or Tom Delaney, Interagency Funds Specialist, at 651-634-2228.

Currently, MA covers IEP special transportation for a student who is transported to another MA covered IEP service. MA covers IEP special transportation when the student needs a special adaptation to the bus such as a wheelchair lift, special harness, safety vest or special car seat, or the student needs a one-on-one aide. In addition, transportation must be provided in a school bus inspected by the Department of Public Safety. Only direct mileage can be claimed – not route mileage. The mileage should be rounded to the nearest whole mile. The school bus driver or other individual (e.g., aide) who knows whether the student rode the school bus on the day that the student receives MA IEP services, must complete a daily trip log.



If school districts have hired billing agents or consulting firms, we recommend that school districts review Minnesota's eligibility criteria with them. These agents or firms may have worked for school districts in other states that have different eligibility criteria. It is important that they understand what is allowed in Minnesota.

According to an article in Education Week, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has frozen or flatly denied hefty payments to several states because it has found that school districts in those states have systematically overcharged the Medicaid program. These school districts are now scrambling to find ways to pay for health aides, nurses, social workers, etc. Because of the problems discovered in other states, federal and state auditors are carefully reviewing the districts' claims. Make sure your district has all the proper documentation for the claims made by the district and that only eligible services are being claimed so that future payments will not be withheld from your district.

New Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS) codes are being created so school districts can record the revenue they receive from third parties. Districts will still record all transportation expenditures in Finance Dimension 723. Districts will not be required to reduce the transportation expenditures reported in Finance Dimension 723, Disabled, by the amount of revenues they receive from third parties for the transportation services.

## ***THIS AND THAT***

Length of Contract. Minn. Stat. § 123B.52 provides that the terms of contracts must not exceed two years with an option on the part of the district to renew for an additional two years. At least once every four years, school districts must seek sealed bids or written quotations for their transportation services.

Leasing School Buses. School districts may lease their school buses to any person for any lawful purpose. The lease must not interfere with the transportation of pupils by the district. Minn. Stat. § 123B.88, Subd. 8, further provides that the lessee must procure insurance at the lessee's expense protecting the board and the district against claims for injuries and damages arising out of the use and operation of the bus. In addition, the words "School Bus" at the top of the bus must be removed or covered and replaced with the word "Charter," and the 8-light system must be disabled (turning off the master switch).

Seating Capacity of School Buses. The number of children on a school bus cannot be more than the number of passengers that can be fully seated. The seating capacity must be adjusted according to the passenger's individual size but cannot be more than the manufacturer's rated seating capacity of the bus. No child is allowed to stand while the bus is in motion (Minn. Stat. § 169.447).

Children of Divorced Parents. When divorced parents share joint physical custody of a child and the divorced parents reside in different school districts, for all school purposes, unless otherwise specified in law, the child must be considered a resident of the school district as indicated by the child's parents. When the child resides with parents on alternate weeks, the parents shall be responsible for the transportation of the child to the border of the resident district during those weeks when the child resides in the nonresident school district (Minn. Stat. § 127A.47, Subd. 3).

Federal Fuel Excise Tax. School districts can get an exemption from paying the federal fuel excise tax when they purchase diesel fuel for school purposes. Purchases must be made from a "registered ultimate vendor." Contact your vendor for more information about this program. You may also visit the website for the Internal Revenue Service at <http://www.irs.gov>. Select forms and publications. Publication 378, Fuel Tax Credits and Refunds, has more information on nontaxable uses. You may also call the IRS at 859-292-5732 or 606-292-5397 to obtain more information about this program.

Transportation Issues Committee. Each month the CFL Transportation Office hosts a meeting to discuss transportation issues facing school districts, contractors and others. In recent meetings, issues discussed included proposed legislation, transporting students to care and treatment programs, and purchasing school buses through the State School Bus Purchase Plan. Minutes of the meetings are posted on our website. The meetings are held on the fourth Wednesday of each month at the CFL Conference Center. The meetings begin at 9 a.m. If you are interested in attending, contact us at the telephone number on the front page of the "Vehicle."



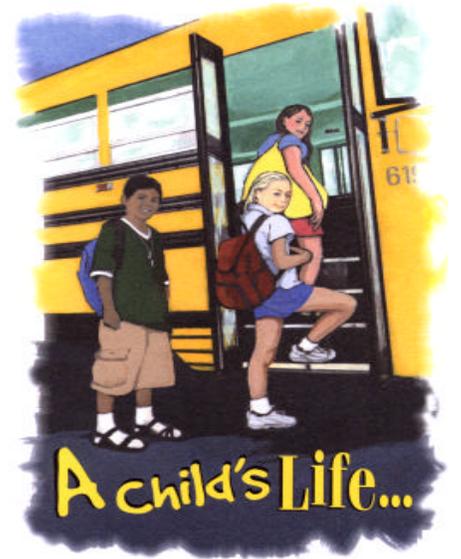
## SAFETY BROCHURE FOR PARENTS AND MOTORISTS

The Department of Public Safety recently developed a safety brochure to help parents and motorists understand the laws relating to school bus safety. The brochure reviews the danger zone around the school bus and when motorists need to stop for a school bus displaying flashing red lights and an extended stop arm.

The brochure, pictured at right, is 4" by 5 3/4" and will fit in a No. 10 envelope. You may request copies of the brochure from:

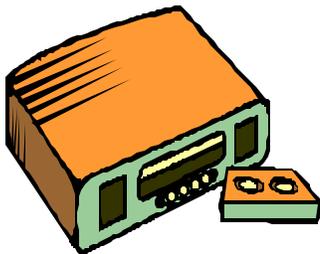
Department of Public Safety; Minnesota State Patrol; Pupil Transportation Safety; 444 Cedar St., Suite 130; St. Paul, MN 55101-5130.

You may also call Barb Anderson at 651-215-5777 to request copies of the brochure.



### VIDEO AVAILABLE FROM KARE-11

Last fall, elementary schools in Minnesota received a videotape on school bus safety. The videotape was developed by the family of Tara Bates, the 7-year-old girl who lost her life in a school bus accident last school year, and the KARE-11 community services show for teenagers called "Whatever." The 8-minute program covers six safety tips, such as how to safely board and exit a school bus. The video tape could be shown throughout the school year – especially to younger children who may forget the school bus safety rules they were taught at the beginning of the school year.



Additional copies of the School Bus Safety Video can be purchased for \$25 from KARE-11, NewsClips, 8811 Olson Memorial Highway, Minneapolis MN 55427. You may also call KARE-11 at 763-546-1111 and ask for NewsClips.

### RECALLS OF SCHOOL BUSES

The following recalls have been issued by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). You can obtain up-to-the-minute information on any recall by calling the toll-free Auto Safety Hotline at 1-888-327-4236. You can also find the recalls on the NHTSA's website: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>. Click on "Press Releases."

COMPANY	MODELS	RECALL	DEFECT
American Transportation Corporation	AmTran IC Year: 2001 Mfg. 3/00 – 10/00	00V420	Certain school buses were built using the wrong hardware to secure the driver's seat to the driver's platform. The seat could become loose and separate. This could result in the driver losing control of the bus,
Blue Bird Body Company	Blue Bird All American Blue Bird TC2000 Years: 1992-1994 Mfg. Unknown	00V321	On certain school and transit buses equipped with compressed natural gas (CNG) engines, the original pressure relief devices may vent unexpectedly. Gas leakage in the presence of an ignition source could result in a fire.