

## SECTION IV: OPERATIONS

### G. EMERGENCY AND OTHER PROCEDURES

#### 1. Early Dismissal of Schools

At times during the school year, it may be necessary to dismiss students early for various reasons that may occur. Any decision regarding the early dismissal or emergency closing of school will be made by the Superintendent (or designee). In the event of an early dismissal of school, announcements regarding the decision will be made via telephone calls, the news media, and all other means available. The Transportation Department Staff and/or Principals will make every effort to notify every driver and bus attendant involved of the decision and of the procedures to be followed.

#### 2. Half-day or early release

Half-day or early release class schedules shall be announced by the Principal with the approval of the Superintendent (or designee). Drivers will be notified as far in advance as possible and must run their route in the same order as their regularly scheduled bus route. This requires drivers to fully complete their first run before beginning their second run and to complete their second run before beginning the third run, etc. In districts with first and second wave bell schedules, the first wave schools shall release at 11:30 A.M. and the second wave schools will release no earlier than 12:15 P.M. Drivers may not double-up or combine students from their various runs when this is not part of the regular route schedule.

#### 3. Breakdowns

In order to maintain safe, reliable, and efficient transportation, drivers are to perform all required inspections and conduct all periodic maintenance during periods of time that the bus will not be in service. The pre-trip inspection is critical in detecting disabling vehicle problems and must be performed well in advance of the time the bus is scheduled to leave its parking location. This will allow the necessary time to follow the procedures outlined below.

However, while it is recognized that mechanical failures do occur and buses may occasionally break down during the route, the bus driver has a contractual obligation to provide a bus for the route. This dictates that every driver should have a prearranged plan of action in the event they need a spare bus or have a mechanical failure.

If a bus is discovered to be inoperable and/or the route is expected to be delayed for more than ten (10) minutes, the driver is required to implement the following procedure:

- a. Drivers are to notify the area Field Coordinator about their circumstance and their plan to resolve the problem. If the plan is not acceptable, the Field Coordinator will direct the driver to an appropriate course of action. If the area Field Coordinator is unavailable, the driver is to contact another Transportation Department staff member to be advised.

- b. If the bus can not be repaired in a timely manner, the driver is to obtain a spare bus and run his entire bus route. The replacement bus must meet the minimum standards set by the Louisiana Department of Education (Bulletin 1213) and the TPSB. The driver may use their own spare bus, a spare bus obtained from another driver, a rental bus from a private owner or local bus vendor, a school-owned activity bus, or a Transportation Department "TD" bus.
- c. If no spare bus is available, the driver may contact a fellow bus driver and use the "Buddy System". This means that pre-designated drivers who are familiar with the route will transport the students regularly assigned to the driver having the emergency situation. After arrangements with the "buddy" are made, the driver (or someone acting in their behalf) advises all appropriate parties of the plan. The transporting of other students is allowed only if the capacity of the bus is not exceeded.
- d. If the above measures fail, the driver is to contact the area Field Coordinator again to be advised as to the appropriate course of action.

Drivers must contact and discuss their situation with the "Buddy Driver." Drivers may not call a school with instructions to place their passengers on another bus without that driver's knowledge. Leaving a message or voicemail does not constitute contact.

#### **4. Flat tires**

In the event that a driver experiences a flat tire on the steering axle of the bus, the bus shall not be used until the tire is repaired. When a bus has a flat tire on one of the dual rear wheels during the route, the operator may continue on the route at a reduced speed. A driver should not start their route if one of the dual rear wheels is flat. Driving with a tire that is significantly low on air pressure will cause the tire to overheat, resulting in internal damage to the tire sidewalls and belt structure.

#### **5. Weather**

Due to the extensive area covered by Tangipahoa Parish, weather conditions shall be considered a local condition. Drivers are to monitor the weather on a daily basis for the possibility of conditions that may affect their bus route. When severe weather is approaching, drivers should be prepared for the possibility of an early school dismissal and provide each of their schools with a means to contact them. In addition, buses may be held on campus by the Principal (or designee) if severe weather is imminent.

##### **a. Fog and Heavy Rain**

In the event of fog or heavy rain, drivers are required to make a decision determining on an individual basis if there is sufficient visibility to safely run the route. If the conditions do not allow for a bus to proceed safely, the driver is to contact his/her respective schools, students and Field Coordinator. The driver is to advise schools and families that the bus will run the route as soon as there is enough visibility and it is safe to

travel. When resuming the route, drivers should allow extra time for students to return to the bus stop and should agree upon a signal to announce the bus's arrival (i.e. bus horn).

When frequent or heavy rains have visited the area, drivers should be cautious that the road's shoulder may have become saturated and unable to support the weight of the bus. In such instances, the driver should keep the bus on road bed or pavement at all times.

b. Flooded Streets

Bus drivers should be very knowledgeable of their route's road conditions and make note of low lying areas and areas prone to flooding. In such areas drivers should make prior arrangements with parents/students as to an alternate transportation plan such as an alternate bus stop location outside the flood area or a relative/daycare location.

Drivers should avoid flooded roads and streets. If you are unable to travel safely down a roadway due to high water, consider an alternate route, contact a parent/guardian and instruct them to meet you at the nearest safe location, or return the student(s) to their assigned school.

c. Obstructed Roads

When fallen trees, utility lines, road construction, mobile homes, or similar occurrences obstruct a road, the driver should report the obstruction to their area Field Coordinator and seek an alternate route around the obstruction. If an alternate route is not available, the driver should attempt to contact the parent/guardian and have them meet the bus at the nearest safe location. If the parent/guardian can not be reached, the driver should return the students to their assigned where the school administration can assist in getting students home. In the case of road construction that will last for more than one (1) day, the driver shall contact the Transportation Department for assistance in planning an alternate route and notifying schools, parents and students.

d. Slick Roads

On occasion, roadways may become too slippery for a vehicle to pass safely. This may be due to gravel roads being freshly graded followed by rain, insufficient gravel, road construction where mud, clay or asphalt emulsion cover the roadway, oil film, or water under certain conditions. School bus drivers should reduce speed, exercising extreme caution while observing other vehicles on the road for signs that the roadway is unsafe. Under these circumstances, the driver should seek an alternate route around the impasse and report the problem. If an alternate route is not available, the driver should attempt to contact parents/guardians and if unsuccessful should return the students to school where the school administration can assist in getting students home.

**6. We Yield**

Due to the rural nature of Tangipahoa Parish, school bus drivers will often find themselves traveling on narrow roadways where they will

encounter other large vehicles that make passing a hazard. In order to reduce the likelihood of mirror contact or other types of accidents, school bus drivers shall pull to the right side of the roadway and come to a complete stop. When possible, drivers are advised to fold in the left side mirror to create additional room for the passing vehicle.

By taking a defensive posture, the driver minimizes the possibility of vehicle contact. When two school buses encounter one another, one driver will signal to the other to pass after both buses come to a stop on their right side of the roadway.

## **7. Tornado Safety**

When a tornado is sighted, the bus should seek emergency shelter for the passengers. If the bus is still on campus, evacuate the bus and take shelter in the building. If an underground shelter is not available, move to an interior room or hallway on the lowest floor and crouch down against a wall under a sturdy piece of furniture. Stay away from windows. Do not attempt to outrun a tornado in the school bus; instead, abandon it for a strong building. Administrators should consider holding buses at the school if severe weather is an imminent threat. Overpasses offer little protection from tornadoes and should only be used as a shelter of last resort. If caught in the open, take cover in a ditch or low spot. Remember, this will not provide the same protection as a sturdy building. Occasionally, tornadoes develop so rapidly that advance warning is not possible. Remain alert for signs of an approaching tornado. Flying debris from tornadoes causes the most deaths and injuries.

## **8. National Weather Service Alerts**

- a. Tornado Watch - Tornadoes are possible in the area. Remain alert for approaching storms.
- b. Tornado Warning - A tornado has been sighted or is imminent. If a tornado warning has been issued for your area, move to your pre-designated place of safety.
- c. Severe Thunderstorm Watch - Severe thunderstorms are possible in your area. Thunderstorms are defined as severe if they produce winds in excess of 58 mph, and / or produce hail 3/4 of an inch in diameter or larger.
- d. Severe Thunderstorm Warning - Severe thunderstorms are occurring or imminent. Keep in mind that tornadoes occasionally develop in areas where severe thunderstorm watches or warnings are in effect. Remain alert to signs of an approaching tornado and seek shelter if threatening conditions exist.
- e. Flash Flood Watch - Flash flooding or flooding is possible within the watch area.
- f. Flash Flood Warning - Flash flooding has been reported or is imminent. Take necessary precautions immediately.
- g. Winter Storm Watch - Significant snow, freezing rain, or ice is expected within 24 to 36 hours.

- h. Winter Storm Warning - Severe Winter Weather is occurring, imminent, or highly likely within 12 to 24 hours.
- i. Winter Weather Advisory - Winter weather advisories are issued for weather events which cause significant inconvenience but do not meet warning criteria.
- j. Freezing Rain/Drizzle Advisory - Freezing rain or drizzle advisory consists of light accumulation of freezing rain or drizzle that does not form on all exposed surfaces.
- k. Wind Advisory - Wind advisory consists of sustained wind speeds of 35 mph or greater that are expected for one hour or longer.
- l. High Wind Warning - High Wind Warning is issued when the following conditions are expected:
  - 1) Sustained wind speeds of 40 mph or greater and lasting for one hour or longer; or,
  - 2) Non-Thunderstorm winds of 58 mph or greater for any duration of time.
- m. Dense Fog Advisory - Dense fog advisory consists of fog which reduces visibilities to less than or equal to 1/4 mile.
- n. Short Term Forecast - Short term forecast is a brief, one to three hour forecast to keep you informed of rapidly changing weather conditions.

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<sup>i</sup> Revised Date July 1, 2008.