

On the Road Again!

Safety Reminders for Buses Back on the Road

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The new school year has begun, and school buses are back on the road! When it comes to student transportation, the beginning of a new school year always comes with challenges, but social distancing concerns due to the COVID-19 pandemic makes fall 2020 transportation a new conundrum.

Normally, full sized school buses transport anywhere from 50 – 75 passengers, while smaller buses typically accommodate 14. Based on local health department guidance, many Districts reduced passenger limits in all student transportation vehicles. While this strategy gets the job done health-wise, it is also likely to increase the number of routes needed to accommodate students. More routes mean heightened driver demand, and schools may end up with less experienced employees behind the wheel. Districts could also choose to meet the sudden demand by having drivers spend additional time on the road. Both options could increase opportunities for accidents. Preparing your drivers with adequate knowledge and skills, and ensuring continued adherence to CDE requirements, is the best way to prevent accidents and keep your community safe.

Common Accidents

Collisions in Areas of Concentrated Traffic



One recent claim occurred in an apartment complex. The school bus driver needed to turn around in order to pick up a student, however the area where the bus could have safely turned around was full. The bus driver backed up and tried to make a hard-left turn to get through the gate. The driver misjudged the tail swing of the bus, which resulted in damage to the apartment complex gate.

Distracted Driver

A case of distracted driving resulted in an accident and subsequent claim when a distracted bus driver ran a red light causing the bus to collide with the passenger's side of claimant vehicle. Based on the photos of claimant's vehicle, it was fortunate nobody was in the passenger's seat.

Another incident involved a bus driver who was making a right turn into a school lot that required turning across a bike lane. The bus driver failed to properly use the bus mirrors and did not see an approaching bicyclist in the bike lane. As a result, the bus driver failed to yield to the bicyclist causing the bus and bicycle to collide.

Driving in Severe Weather Conditions



When temperatures drop, chances of black ice on the road rises. Drivers should always take weather conditions into account when transporting passengers. One chilly day, a Member's employee was driving a school bus in inclement weather. The bus hit a patch of black ice causing it to lose control and roll over. Multiple students were

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injured. While these types of claims are seasonal, they happen often. Drivers should remain vigilant even in the spring and fall, as black ice can develop any time temperatures drop below freezing.

Safety Tips to Help Prevent Common Accidents

School bus safety starts in the driver's seat! Ultimately, bus drivers are responsible for the safety of their passengers, and safe drivers know that their own well-being counts. Good self-care on and off the job helps drivers remain alert and focused. Implementing clear safety expectations will help drivers perform better and can prevent the most common types of accidents. Make sure your drivers understand the following safety components before they hit the road and give veteran drivers the opportunity to review these principles at regular intervals.

- **Big Picture:** In a bus, the “big picture” means understanding what is happening inside and outside the vehicle at all times. Drivers should know how to use their mirrors and windows efficiently and make a mental note whenever another vehicle enters and exits a hard-to-see area.
- **Aim High:** Looking down the road and seeing what is ahead will allow for plenty of time to avoid obstacles, anticipate any potential problems, and adjust the vehicle pacing to avoid uncomfortable and potentially unsafe stops and starts.
- **Keep Your Eyes Moving:** On the road situations change quickly. Quick and purposeful eye movement will help drivers stay alert and aware of conditions developing inside and outside of the vehicle. Changing focus every two seconds promotes safety.
- **Cushion Space:** Maintaining a cushion space around the bus is critical to safety because it gives drivers time to react when other drivers, pedestrians, or bicyclists behave unpredictably. This is particularly important at intersections, railroad crossings, and bus stops, but should be top-of-mind throughout a driver's day.
- **Know Your Bus:** Know how big your bus really is. Remember that there is a large section of the bus behind the rear wheels. Tail swing collisions make up a large percentage of the vehicle accident claims submitted to CSDSIP. Ensure that you have enough space and time before making your turn to keep your bus from pinching and/or side swiping objects once the bus begins to pivot.
- **Adverse Weather Conditions:** We all know that Colorado weather changes quickly! Drivers should be aware of the daily weather forecast and adjust their driving speed accordingly. Remember, black ice can occur any time the temperature falls at or below 32 degrees Fahrenheit, even if the sun is out.
- **Managing Passengers:** School bus drivers are responsible for passenger safety, and that often means keeping an eye on behaviors inside the bus in addition to outside. Ensure that your drivers have adequate mirrors, angled such that they can easily check that all passengers are seated while the vehicle is in motion. Train your drivers to properly handle behavior problems before they arise, so they can act swiftly and confidently in the moment.

NEW Tool! CSDSIP's Accident Information Exchange Forms

Unfortunately, accidents do happen. We get it! When they do, confusion over next steps can make a stressful situation even worse. Quick reporting is the best way to get our CSDSIP Claims Team on the case, and CSDSIP is here to help. We created [Accident Information Exchange forms](#) as a tool to help

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ease some of that post-accident stress by making next steps clear, concise, and easy to follow. Check out [this short video](#) to watch it work! If you have not received these forms or have any questions regarding the forms, contact our office by calling 303-722-2600.

CSDSIP Coverage

In general, auto liability claims include student/passenger injuries, damage to the Member's vehicle, damage to the other party's vehicle and bodily injury claims by occupants of the other vehicle. When CSDSIP receives any of these claim types, we begin our accident investigation to confirm facts and then determine liability.

Regardless of who is at-fault for the accident, any passenger injured while on or boarding a Member's vehicle at the time of the accident is eligible for CSDSIP Auto Medical Payment Coverage. This limited coverage provides for reasonable costs incurred for necessary medical services caused by an accident involving a Member's vehicle.

If it is determined that a Member is at fault for the accident, CSDSIP's Auto Liability Coverage would also cover damages and injuries to the other party, subject to the limitations provided by the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act (CGIA), the Member's Limit Per Accident, and the Member's Auto Liability Deductible.

Damage caused to our Member's bus would fall under CSDSIP's Auto Physical Damage (APD) Coverage, provided the Member carries such coverage, subject to the Member's Per Auto deductible. If it is determined that the other driver was at-fault for the accident, CSDSIP would pursue a subrogation claim against the at-fault party and their insurance company.

Additional Resources

Colorado Guidelines for Establishing a Safe Student School Bus Stop

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/sites/default/files/documents/cdenutritran/download/pdf/transsafestopguide.pdf>

Please go to Section 224.04 Procedures for Loading and Unloading Students

<http://www.sos.state.co.us/CCR/GenerateRulePdf.do?ruleVersionId=2990>

Oftentimes, Member procedures will be more stringent than State guidelines. When that is the case, always follow district procedures. Article 4204-R-235.01 states that "None of these rules shall preclude a school district from establishing a more rigid standard or policy when deemed necessary by the local board of education."