

HIGHWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Tradition of Excellence!



2024-2025

Bus Safety Handbook

- Be Responsible ● Be Wise ●
- Be Respectful and Kind ● Be Safe
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BUS BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES

1. Drivers are expected to maintain a regular schedule and are unable to do so if they must wait for pupils at the stop. The superintendent has instructed the drivers not to wait. Please have your child at the bus stop at the stated time. It will be assumed that students who are not at the bus stop at the stated time are absent and will not be in school. In addition, it is important that students board the bus immediately after school is out. Bus drivers will not wait before leaving the school grounds to deliver students home.
2. Situations can occur while riding the bus. Since the health and safety of our riding students is paramount, we are asking parents to be sure that their child is clothed appropriately for any emergency situation that may occur on a route.
3. The safe transportation to school is by far one of the most critical activities of the Highwood Public Schools. Our driver's take this responsibility very seriously and want to ensure that all students arrive at school or back home as safely as possible. As a result it is imperative that their attention is not unnecessarily diverted from their task at hand. Therefore, the following student rules will apply:
 - a. The general student code of conduct is applicable to conduct on school buses.
 - b. Students are expected to be orderly on the bus.
 - c. Please keep the level of conversation low so no individual voices stand out. Riders may talk to their seatmates, but not to anyone farther away.
 - d. Please face forward at all times.
 - e. Riders must keep their feet under the seat in front, and not in the aisle.
 - f. Riders must remain in their seats and not move around the bus.
 - g. Riders must avoid horseplay. Cap-snatching, keep away, jabbing, pinching or teasing are not allowed.
 - h. Riders must refrain from indecent language and name calling.
 - i. Please enter or leave the bus in an orderly fashion.
 - j. Please take pride in the appearance of the bus and help keep it clean.
 - k. Please do not hang out of the windows or shout at cars/people passing by.
 - l. Please remain seated at all times when the bus is in motion.
4. The bus driver is responsible for enforcing the rules and will work closely with a parent and superintendent to modify a student's behavior. Rules shall include a consistent model for student misbehavior. A recommendation for permanent termination of bus privileges, accompanied by a written record of the incident(s) that led to the recommendation, shall be referred to the Superintendent for final determination. The student's parent or guardian may appeal a termination to the Board. No further appeal shall be allowed. **See Policy 8124.**

The most important rule necessary to insure the safety of riders is to listen and respond quickly to the directives of the bus driver at all times.

PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The interest and assistance of each parent is a valued asset to the transportation program. Parents' efforts toward making each bus trip a safe and pleasant experience are requested and appreciated. The following suggestions are only three of the many ways that parents can assist.

1. Ensure that students are at the bus stop in sufficient time to efficiently meet the bus.
2. Properly prepare children for weather conditions.
3. Encourage school bus safety at home. Caution children regarding safe behavior and conduct while riding the school bus.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Board recognizes the unpredictability and resulting dangers with weather in Montana. In the interest of safety and operational efficiency, the Superintendent is empowered to make decisions as to emergency operation of buses, cancellation of bus routes, and the closing of school, in accordance with his or her best judgment. In the event of a cancellation, a messenger will be sent out through Infinite Campus to families.

ACCIDENT PROCEDURES

No two accidents are the same. The sequence suggested here may not be the same for every accident. Good common sense must be used. The drivers' primary responsibility is to the pupil passenger. Therefore, it is the driver's responsibility to remain calm. If the driver is unable to physically perform his or her duties, he/she should direct others to do them. Should this be the case, ask the oldest and most capable passenger(s) to help.

In the event of an emergency, the bus driver shall follow the emergency procedures developed by the Superintendent and outlined below. A copy of the emergency procedures will be located in every bus. To ensure the success of such emergency procedures, every bus driver will conduct an emergency evacuation drill as early as possible within the first two weeks of the first semester and within the first week of the second semester. Students must complete a bus safety drill regardless of whether they regularly ride the bus. The District will conduct other drills and procedures as may be necessary. **See Policy 8125**

The following procedure is recommended:

1. Turn off the ignition switch.
2. Set the park brake.
3. Remain calm and reassure your passengers
4. Check for any injuries to passengers:
 - a. If passengers are injured, follow first aid procedures and summon assistance.
5. Be alert regarding fire or the possibility of fire:

- a. Look for smoke.
 - b. Check for ruptured fuel tank and fuel lines
 - c. Check for electrical fire
 - d. Check for hot tires which may catch fire
6. Use warning devices such as reflectors or fuses where applicable.
7. Keep all passengers in the vehicle unless conditions warrant the possibility of fire, hazardous material spill or other danger which may warrant evacuation.
8. Account for all passengers: their presence as well as injury status.
9. Notify the dispatcher if you have a radio so that necessary assistance from police, fire, ambulance or rescue personnel may be obtained. If the school bus is not radio equipped then the alternative measure is to seek the assistance of an older, competent pupil passenger, a passing motorist or a resident of the area to call for help.
10. If possible, notify the school administration or transportation department of the accident.
11. Protect the scene:
 - a. Protect the passengers and the vehicle from further accidents and injuries.
 - b. Protect the scene from traffic and people so that evidence is not destroyed.
 - c. Under normal circumstances, the vehicle(s) involved should not be moved until law enforcement personnel advise the driver to do so.
12. When police, fire or emergency personnel arrive, they are in command of the scene. The driver does not maintain control over the scene of the accident. The driver should focus control over the pupil passengers.
 - a. Be prepared to provide a list of all passengers, ages, addresses and seating positions.
 - b. Give information about the school bus, insurance, owner and driver data. An emergency packet should be carried on the school bus and should include the registration information, emergency phone numbers, and any additional directives covering this subject.
 - c. Be patient, evaluate the questions and give clear concise answers.
 - d. Be sure to obtain the names, addresses and license numbers of any witnesses.
13. Follow any directives issued by state or local school districts in the event of an accident.
14. At the scene of an accident involving property damage, injuries, fire or hazardous materials such as leaking fuel, the incident commander has full responsibility for managing the scene. This will be the senior fire, emergency medical service or police officer. The school bus driver is not the incident manager, but is in charge of the pupils. The police have the responsibility for investigating the cause of the accident, for providing safety to scene workers and for directing traffic. If rescue operations are on the scene, they handle the emergencies under their authority. One of the big dangers when involved in an accident is to allow the passengers to get out of the school bus and mill around the scene or on the roadway. If you have to evacuate the bus because of fire danger or other reasons, be sure the passengers are moved to a safe location off

the roadway and kept under control until you are given further instructions from an officer or school operation administrator.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CONDUCTING EMERGENCY BUS EVACUATION DRILLS

REASONS FOR ACTUAL EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS:

1. **Fire or danger of fire.** Being near an existing fire and unable to move the bus, or being near the presence of gasoline or other combustible material is considered dangerous and pupils should be evacuated. The bus should be stopped and evacuated immediately if the engine or any other portion of the bus is on fire. Pupils should be moved to a safe place 100 feet or more from the bus and instructed to remain there until the driver has determined that the danger has passed.
2. **Unsafe position.** When the bus is stopped because of an accident, mechanical failure, road conditions, or human failure, the driver must determine immediately whether it is safer for pupils to remain on the bus or to evacuate the bus.
3. **Sight distance.** In normal traffic conditions, the bus should be visible for a distance of 300 feet or more. A position over a hill or around a curve where such visibility does not exist should be considered a reason for evacuation.
4. **Mandatory evacuations.** The driver must evacuate the bus when:
 - a. The final stopping point is in the path of a train or adjacent to railroad tracks.
 - b. The stopped position of the bus may change and increase danger (e.g. a bus comes to rest near a body of water or a precipice where it could still move and go into the water or over a cliff). The driver should be certain that the evacuation is carried out in a manner which affords maximum safety for the pupils.
 - c. The stopped position of the bus is such that there is danger of collision.
 - d. A hazardous materials spill has occurred. There is a need to quickly evacuate to an area upwind at least 300 feet from the incident.

IMPORTANT FACTORS PERTAINING TO SCHOOL BUS EVACUATION DRILLS:

1. Safety of pupils is of the utmost importance and must be first priority. Training, not teaching, is the key word, especially if there is a particular group that will not remember.
2. All drills should be supervised by the principal or by persons assigned to act in a supervisory capacity. Police, rescue and fire personnel should be invited to participate in this training event so as to be prepared for a school bus emergency.
3. The bus driver is responsible for the safety of the pupils. When the driver is incapacitated and unable to direct the evacuation, school patrol members, appointed pupils or adult monitors should be authorized to direct the evacuation. It is important to have regular substitutes

available. An effective driver and aide team is one that provides for a systematic arrangement of the vehicle environment which encourages appropriate pupil behavior.

Pupils appointed to assist with evacuation drills should possess the following qualifications (Many jurisdictions require parental consent for these pupils):

- a. Maturity.
 - b. Good citizenship.
 - c. Live near the end of the bus route.
4. Appointed pupils should know how to:
 - a. Turn off ignition switch/shut down engine.
 - b. Set emergency brake.
 - c. Summon help when and where needed.
 - d. Use emergency windows or emergency escape exits.
 - e. Open and close doors.
 - f. Account for all pupils passing their station.
 - g. Help small pupils off the bus.
 - h. Set out warning reflectors.
 - i. Use a two way radio to summon help.
 - j. Perform other duties as assigned.
 5. Drills should be scheduled in a manner similar to fire drills in schools. They should be held more often during fall and spring months and conducted when the bus arrives at the school building with the pupils.
 6. Drills should be restricted to school property and conducted under the supervision of school officials.
 7. Types of drills should be varied.
 8. Driver should stay in the bus during the evacuation drill. He/she must set the parking brake, turn the engine off and place the manual transmission in gear.
 9. Pupils should not be permitted to take lunch boxes, books, etc., with them when they leave the bus. The objectives are to get pupils off safely in the shortest time possible, and in an orderly fashion.
 10. Pupils should be directed to a safe area at least 100 feet from the bus in an emergency drill and remain there until given further directions.
 11. All pupils should participate in the drill, including those who ride only on special trips.
 12. Each pupil should be instructed in proper safety precautions.
 13. Pupils should be instructed in how and where to obtain assistance in emergencies. Written instructions and telephone numbers should be posted on the bus.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY DURING EVACUATION

Every rider should know the following:

1. Emergency doors
 - a. Location
 - b. Operation
 - c. Count the seats to the exit

2. Fire extinguisher
 - a. Location
 - b. Operation
 - c. How to remove from mounting bracket

3. First aid kit
 - a. Location
 - b. Types of units in the kit
 - c. **All capable riders should be familiar with the contents. Evacuation helpers may be incapacitated during an emergency.**

4. Exiting the bus
 - a. Front door
 - i. Use handrails provided.
 - ii. Do not push.
 - iii. Watch for traffic and/or pedestrians.
 - b. Floor level exits
 - i. Stoop down as low as possible
 - ii. Place hands on top of evacuation helpers hands. Do not grasp.
 - iii. Drop to ground

5. Evacuation helpers
 - a. All passengers should know who is assigned.
 - b. Have assigned seats.
 - c. Know the following:
 - i. Seats assigned to each exit
 - ii. Order of evacuation departure
 - iii. How to assist others from the bus
 - iv. How to exit themselves
 - v. Area to send evacuees to regroup
 - vi. How to control the group when rejoining the other passengers.
 - d. **The passengers should evacuate to an area at least 100 feet from the vehicle. It will be a safe area out of traffic and away from any other potential danger. It should be up-wind from any fire. Passengers shall gather in a group and remain there quietly until everyone joins them.**
 - e. The last two students out of the bus should obtain the first aid kit and the fire extinguisher.

FRONT DOOR EVACUATION

Driver's instructions:

1. Stop the bus in a pre-selected location on the school grounds.
2. Shut off the engine, and set the parking brake.
3. Place the transmission in first or reverse gear.
4. Remove the ignition key.
5. Stand, open the front door, face the children, and get their attention.
6. Give the command: "Front door emergency evacuation drill - remain seated."
7. Direct the two helpers to their places beside the front door.
8. Stand between the first occupied seats, facing the front of the bus.
9. Starting with the right-hand seat, ask the leader to lead all pupils 100 feet or 40 paces from the bus, and instruct the other occupants of the right seat to follow. WARN ALL PUPILS: "Walk. Do not run. Use the hand rails."
10. Hold your hand before the occupants of the left-hand seat in a restraining gesture.
11. When the pupils in the right-hand seat have moved forward enough to clear the aisle, dismiss the occupants of the left-hand seat.
12. Continue the evacuation procedure as described, right and left seats alternately, until the bus is empty.
13. When the last seat is empty, walk to the front of the bus, and check to ensure that everyone is out.

REAR FLOOR-LEVEL DOOR EVACUATION

Driver's Instructions:

1. Stop the bus in a preselected location on the school ground away from traffic. Be sure that ample adult supervision is at this location before drills are held.
2. Shut off the engine and set the parking brake.
3. Place the transmission in first or reverse gear.
4. Remove the ignition key.
5. See that the gym mat (4 x 6 feet) is placed on the ground in the center of the rear emergency door.
6. Stand, face the children, and get their attention.
7. Give the command: "Rear door emergency evacuation drill - remain seated."
8. Walk to the rear of the bus, and face the door.
9. Use the left hand to restrain occupants of the right rear seat.
10. Ask the helper to open the emergency door, jump out, and take a position. (The ideal method of exit is to sit on the floor with feet outside and ease out onto the ground)
11. Have the second helper jump out and take a position.
12. Have the leader stand in the doorway to lead the rest of the pupils off the bus to a position 100 feet or 40 paces from the bus.
13. Before the leader jumps, turn around, face the front of the bus, and explain in what rotation (starting with the right rear seat, then left, right and so on) the pupils are to leave their seats, reminding them to remain seated until it is their turn to move.

14. Face the doorway and move between the left rear seats to clear the aisle. Command the leader to assume a semi squat position, reach out with both hands, hop out, and go to a position 100 feet or 40 paces away from the bus.
15. Tell the pupils seated in the right rear seat to leave the bus, then call for the pupils in the next left seat to leave; then the next right seat, until the bus is empty.
16. Keep control at the rear door to prevent any shoving or pushing. Make sure each pupil has plenty of room to assume a semi squat position making sure they duck their head before jumping.
17. When the last pupil has exited, walk to the front of the bus and check to ensure that everyone is out.
18. Go out the front door and join the waiting pupils.

SIDE EMERGENCY DOOR EVACUATION

Driver's Instructions:

1. Stop the bus in the pre-selected location on the school grounds, away from traffic. **Be sure ample adult supervision is at the location before the drill is held.**
2. Shut off the engine and set the parking brake.
3. Place the transmission in first or reverse gear.
4. Remove the ignition key.
5. See that the gym mat (4 x 6 feet) is placed on the ground in the center of the rear emergency door.
6. Stand, face the children, and get their attention.
7. Give the command: "Side emergency door evacuation drill - remain seated."
8. Walk to the emergency door.
9. Ask helper number one to open the emergency door, and jump out to take a position.
10. Ask helper number two to jump out and take a position.
11. Ask the leader to jump out and lead the other pupils 100 feet or 40 paces from the bus.
12. Face the rear of the bus and ask pupils seated in the first right seat to leave, then left, then right, until all pupils have exited.
13. Face the front of the bus, and ask pupils in the first left seat forward of the emergency door to leave; then right, then left until the bus is empty.
14. See that all pupils remain seated until it is their turn to leave. Stay near the emergency door to space pupils so that each pupil has cleared the mat before allowing the next pupil to jump.
15. Check all seats to see that everyone is out, and leave through the emergency door in the same manner as the pupils and join the waiting pupils in the regrouping area.

EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR ACTIVITY TRIPS AND FIELD TRIPS

In order to ensure the safety of school bus passengers in an actual emergency, every school bus driver assigned to transport students on activity trips or field trips should assign an evacuation team prior to each trip. The team may consist of teachers, coaches, students or any other passengers. Remember that walkers may at times ride a school bus on field and activity trips and should receive ridership training. Passengers assigned to evacuation teams must be seated where they can effectively carry out their responsibilities in an emergency.

Each evacuation team should consist of at least the following:

1. A passenger assigned to set the parking brake, turn off the engine, turn on the hazard lights and call in on the radio or other means, and report the incident to the transportation department, in case the driver is unable to do so.
2. A passenger assigned to lead passengers to a safe location at least 100 feet from the bus and to take the first aid kit off the bus.
3. Two passengers will be assigned to stand outside the bus, next to the front door to help students exit the bus and to take the fire extinguisher.
4. Two passengers assigned to stand outside the rear and/or side emergency exit door(s) to help students exit the bus.

In addition to assigning an evacuation team, the following information should be discussed and/or demonstrated prior to each activity trip or field trip:

1. Location and use of the fire extinguisher.
2. Location of the first aid kit.
3. Location of the warning reflectors.
4. Location and use of all emergency exits.
5. How to shut off the engine and set the parking brake.
6. How to open the front door, to include safety releases on manual, air, or vacuum doors if so equipped.
7. Instruct passengers to keep aisles clear at all times and not to block emergency exits.
8. Passengers should leave all belongings and get off the bus.

HIGHWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ALLERGY AGREEMENT

The District endeavors to provide a safe environment for the education of all our students. Out of respect and consideration for the ever-growing number of children with peanut/tree nut allergies, the following policy is meant to minimize the risk of a life-threatening reaction for those with peanut/tree nut allergies that may be brought on by that of peanut dust/tree nut dust becoming airborne or by cross-contamination from peanut/tree nut proteins inadvertently being ingested by an individual with a peanut/tree nut allergy.

Buses

District policy disallows food of any type to be opened or consumed on any Highwood Public School Bus Routes. Due to heightened allergy risks in the confined space of buses, any food opened or consumed on Highwood Public School activity/athletic buses must not contain peanuts/tree nuts or that is made in a facility or on shared equipment with peanuts/tree nuts. To ensure students have consumables that will not put other students at risk, the District will endeavor to oversee the provision of approved foods.



