



BUS SAFETY

The school bus is by far the safest mode of transportation on the roads today. The focus on school bus safety started due to an accident that occurred on March 24 1972 in Congers, NY. This accident involved a train and a school bus. The crash stimulated citizens, transportation professionals and the state legislature to seek ways to improve bus safety to prevent future losses. It sparked the need for higher standards for bus drivers, regular monitoring of the drivers and improved training. Articles and regulations were established that require buses be designed and drivers be trained with student safety as the priority. Every school bus accident since the Congers crash that involves an injury is studied to help design an even safer bus and better-trained drivers. (“A death in a bus crash is a tragedy. To not learn from it makes it a greater tragedy.”)

Bus seats are specially designed to absorb the impact of passengers in the event of an accident that could cause them to be hurled forward from their seats. The seatback in front of them will cushion and slightly bend forward to ease the impact. This design is called compartmentalization seating. This seat design has saved several lives since its inception and will save many more as long as the passengers sit in them properly. Many other safety features have been designed to prevent passengers from doing things that have caused injuries in the past. One such feature is the windows which are now designed to open only five inches to keep students from sticking their heads and arms out. (This design change is the result of a tragic incident that ended in the death of a student.) Emergency exits were installed to allow a means of escape in any crash scenario.

Bus safety rules were established in order for the safety designs to be effective. All the rules were adopted because in the past someone was either injured or died due to a preventable situation. Some examples of these safety rules are listed below. **Parents please review these safety rules with your children:**

No blocking the aisle: (aisles are avenues for evacuation and cannot be blocked at any time).

Stay in your seat and sit facing forward: (sitting sideways or with your feet in the aisle can result in possible snapping of your back in the case of a sudden stop or an accident as your back is not designed to withstand a sudden sideways motion. If you are not sitting facing forward, then the compartmentalization seating will not protect you. You may wind up on the floor in the aisle with serious injuries. You must sit facing forward in order for the seat design to protect you).

No standing on the bus when the bus is in motion. The safety issue here should be self-explanatory but obviously nothing will protect you if you’re standing and the bus has to stop suddenly or is involved in an accident.

Keep head, hands and feet inside the bus: (for obvious reasons and, yes, someone in the past has lost their life and others have been seriously injured because of this exact reason.)

No eating or drinking on the bus: Many students have severe allergies these days. For students with peanut allergies, it only takes seconds to go into shock just from the smell of peanut butter. It can be just minuscule residue left on the floor or seat cushion from a previous rider. Additionally, the mold that can develop on the remnants of an old sandwich, candy bar or spilled drink stuffed down in the seat cushions can create serious health issues to several students.

Sit in your assigned seat: In the case of an accident, the bus driver is required to give the investigating officer a seating chart showing where each student was sitting at the time of the accident. This is to help the investigating team determine why one student was injured or killed while others were not. A study will help determine if it was because of a design flaw at that particular spot on the bus or if it was

something the student was doing or not doing. This would help determine if further engineering design improvements were warranted or additional safety rules needed to be established. There are also other reasons for assigned seating including accommodating parent requests for separating students on the bus and allowing drivers to monitor seat damage and/or graffiti.

While students may complain about the bus rules as I am sure they do about rules at home, please help them understand these rules are for their safety and the safety of others on the bus.

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