

OKLAHOMA

SCHOOL BUS DRIVER MANUAL



TRAINING MANUAL FOR OKLAHOMA SCHOOL BUS DRIVER CERTIFICATION





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STATE SUPERINTENDENT *of* PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

OKLAHOMA STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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RAILROAD CROSSINGS INTRODUCTION

The worst school bus collision that can possibly occur is one involving a train. The tremendous size and massive weight of a train, at any speed, has the potential for a catastrophic collision. Statistics show that collisions involving a train and a school bus have resulted in serious injuries and/or death of the bus passengers. A moment's negligence by a bus driver at a railroad crossing could result in a tragic collision that costs many lives. At every railroad crossing remember: "Stop, look, and listen!"

Railroad Crossing Law

Oklahoma state traffic law (47 O.S. 11-702) states that the driver of **any school bus** shall:

- Not cross a railroad track or tracks unless the driver stops the bus within fifty (50) feet of, and not closer than fifteen (15) feet of the tracks.
- Listen and look in each direction along the tracks for an approaching train, and ascertains that no train is approaching.
- When it is safe to do so, the driver may drive the bus across the tracks in a gear that permits the bus to complete the crossing without a change of gears.
- The driver shall not shift the gears while crossing the tracks.
- Stop at all railroad crossings whether or not they are carrying passengers.

Railroad Crossing Maneuvers and Safety Education

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Railroad-Highway Crossings

When approaching railroad crossings in a school bus it is important to know what kind of crossing you are about to encounter. Although drivers who run the same route everyday are very aware of the locations and types of railroad grade crossings on their route, drivers who substitute or who drive activity trips must be alert to the signs and signals that indicate railroad crossings. These signs include valuable information to assist drivers who must face railroad crossings.

Types of Crossings

Passive Crossings. This type of crossing does not have any type of traffic control device. You must stop at these crossings and follow proper procedures. However, the decision to proceed rests entirely in your hands. Passive crossings require you to recognize the crossing, search for any train using the tracks, and decide if there is sufficient clear space to cross safely. Passive crossings have yellow circular advance warning signs, pavement markings and crossbucks to assist you in recognizing a crossing.

Active Crossings. This type of crossing has a traffic control device installed at the crossing to regulate traffic at the crossing. These active devices include flashing red lights, with or without bells and flashing red lights with bells and gates.



Warning Signs and Devices

Advance Warning Signs. The round, black-on yellow warning sign is placed ahead of a public railroad-highway crossing. The advance warning sign tells you to slow down, look and listen for the train, and prepare your bus to stop at the tracks.



Pavement Markings. Pavement markings mean the same as the advance warning sign. They consist of an “X” with the letters “RR” and a no passing marking on two-lane roads. There may be a white stop line painted on the pavement before the railroad tracks. The front of the school bus must remain behind this line while stopped at the crossing.

Crossbuck Signs. This sign marks the crossing. It requires you to yield the right-of-way to the train. If there is no white line painted on the pavement, you must stop the bus before the crossbuck sign. When the road crosses over more than one set of tracks, a sign below the crossbuck indicates the number of tracks

Multiple Tracks Sign. When there is more than one set of tracks at a crossing, there is a sign beneath the crossbuck with a number indicating how many tracks are present. Watch for additional trains coming from either direction.

Flashing Red Light Signals. At many highway rail grade crossings, the crossbuck sign has flashing red lights and bells. When the lights begin to flash, stop! A train is approaching. You are required to yield the right-of-way to the train. If there is more than one track, make sure all tracks are clear before crossing.

Gates. Many railroad-highway crossings have gates with flashing red lights and bells. Stop when the lights begin to flash and before the gate lowers across the road lane. Remain stopped until the gates go up and the lights have stopped flashing. Proceed when it is safe. If the gate stays down after the train passes, do not drive around the gate. Instead, call your dispatcher.

Procedure for Railroad Grade Crossings

The following section provides instruction to help drivers comply with the law and operate safely.

The driver of a school bus must conduct the following steps at each railroad grade crossing.

A. When making stops for railroad crossings, carefully observe all traffic. Activate the 4-way hazard warning lights between 300

and 100 feet of the railroad grade crossing, and tap the brakes to test them and to communicate to traffic that the bus is about to stop. This will help to avoid startling motorists behind the bus, which could cause panic stops or rear-end collisions.

B. Choose an escape route in case your brakes fail or there is a traffic tie-up in front of or behind you.

C. The driver must bring the school bus to a complete stop not closer than fifteen (15) feet and not farther than fifty (50) feet from the rail nearest to the bus.

D. Keep your foot on the brake so that you can't move or be shoved into the path of the train.

E. On multiple-lane roads, stop only in the right lane unless it is necessary to make a left turn immediately after crossing the railroad tracks.

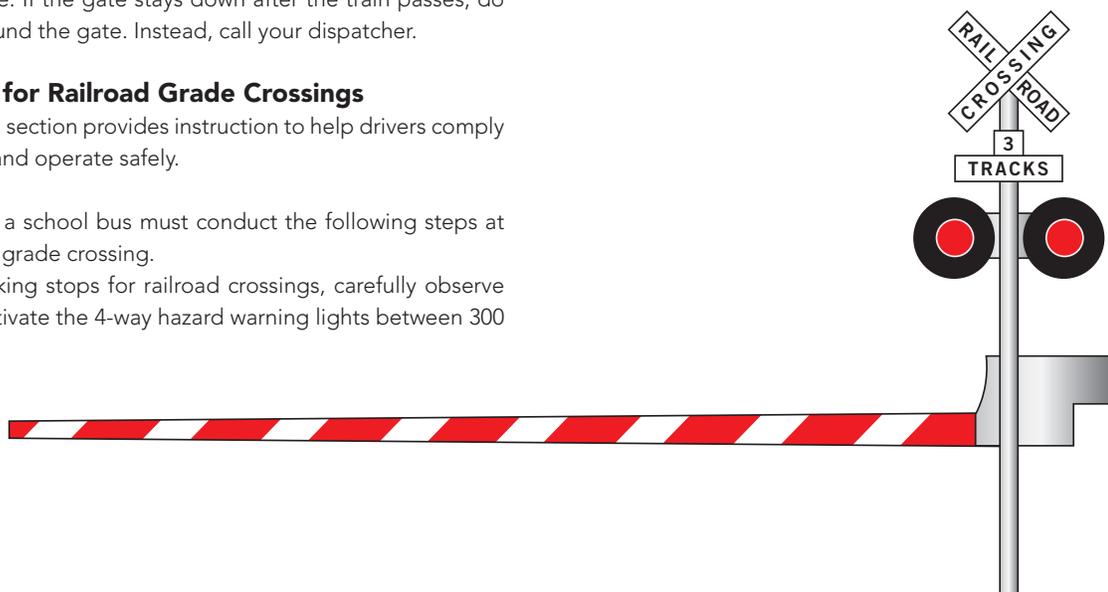
F. After stopping the bus, fully open the entrance (service) door and the driver's side window, turn off all noisy equipment (radios, fans, etc.), instruct students to be quiet and look and listen in both directions along the track or tracks for approaching trains. In instances where the school bus loading/unloading red warning lamps are activated by opening the entrance (service) door, deactivate such lamps by using the master control switch.

G. If the view of the railroad track or tracks is not adequate, do not attempt to cross the tracks.

H. For railroad crossings equipped with warning devices such as lights, bells and/or gates, always obey the signals. Never ignore railroad crossing signals. If a police officer or flagman is present at the crossing, obey their directions, but be sure to make your own visual check.

I. Before crossing the tracks, ensure there is adequate room on the other side of the tracks and train right-of-way for the entire bus. It is always possible that the bus may have to stop immediately after crossing the railroad tracks. Remember, “If it won't fit, don't commit.”

J. If a train is approaching, hold the bus in position and activate the parking (emergency) brake. Once the train has passed, and you have made sure another train from another direction is not on the track or tracks, proceed to the next step.



K. When the tracks are clear, completely close the bus entrance door and place the transmission in a gear that will not require changing gears while crossing the tracks. In instances where the loading/unloading red school bus alternately flashing signal lamps are activated by opening the entrance door and such lamps were deactivated by using the master control switch, reactivate the school bus loading/unloading lamps. Leave all noisy equipment turned off, and continue looking in all directions as the bus crosses the tracks. After safely crossing the tracks, turn off the hazard warning lamps.

L. If the bus stalls while crossing the tracks, evacuate the students and move them a safe distance away from the bus as quickly as possible. If a train is approaching, have everyone walk in the direction of the train at a 45 degree angle away from the train tracks. If a radio or telephone is available, notify the school dispatcher of the situation.

M. Report malfunctioning railroad signals or hazardous railroad crossing conditions to the appropriate school transportation personnel.

Operation Lifesaver provides a training supplement to help bus drivers remember the steps to cross railroad tracks;

1. Advance Warning- when you see this sign slowdown because tracks are ahead.

2. Check Traffic Behind- Engage bus' parking lights, pull out of lane, if necessary.

3. Prepare Bus- Quiet Students before stopping, turn off radio and fan.

4. Stop Bus- Stop at least 15 feet from the crossing, further back if necessary.

5. Look and Listen- For train in both directions. Open the door, and the window to listen. Doubletake before crossing.

6. Go- If no trains are in sight- move out!

Special Situations

EVACUATIONS ON CROSSINGS

If a school bus "stalls" on train tracks and **there is a train approaching**, the bus driver must:

1. Evacuate the bus immediately, using both the service door and the emergency exit.
2. Direct the children to walk at a 45-degree angle away from the tracks, in the direction of the approaching train. (It has been proven that any debris from the impact of a collision would travel in a direction away from the children who are standing at this location.) If possible choose a landmark as a gathering point for the children. Communicate this point to the children as they evacuate.

If a school bus "stalls" on train tracks and **there is no train approaching**, the bus driver must follow these safety procedures:

1. Do not attempt to restart the bus engine after it stalls.
2. Immediately evacuate all passengers/children from the bus. Have all children gather in one place at least 100 feet perpendicular to the tracks (following drill procedures).
3. Contact the school district for assistance with the disabled bus and transporting passengers.

Activated Warning Signal

If a railway warning signal is activated, it is never legal for a school bus to be driven across the track unless a representative of the railroad or a police officer directs the school bus driver that it is safe to proceed. (This could only happen if a signal is activated in error due to a technical problem.) If there is no police officer, and you believe the signal is malfunctioning, call your dispatcher to report the situation and ask for instructions on how to proceed.

Multiple Tracks

At a multiple-track crossing, stop only before the first set of tracks. When you are sure no train is approaching on any track, proceed across all of the tracks until you have completely cleared them.

Gate Lowers as Bus Begins to Cross

If the gate comes down after you have started across, drive through it even if it means you will break the gate.

Obstructed View of Tracks

Plan your route so it provides maximum sight distance at highway-rail grade crossings. Do not attempt to cross the tracks unless you can see far enough down the track to know for certain that no trains are approaching. Remember you are to stop between 15 to 50 feet of the tracks. Use this space to find a position that maximizes your view of the tracks you are about to cross. Passive crossings are those that do not have any type of traffic control device. Be especially careful at passive crossings. Even if there are active railroad signals that indicate the tracks are clear, you must look and listen to be sure it is safe to proceed.

Containment or Storage Areas

If it won't fit, don't commit! Know the length of your bus and the size of the containment area at highway-rail crossings on the school bus route, as well as any crossing you encounter in the course of a school activity trip. When approaching a crossing with a signal or stop sign on the opposite side, pay attention to the amount of room there. Be certain the bus has enough containment or storage area to completely clear the railroad tracks on the other side if there is a need to stop. As a general rule, add 15 feet to the length of the school bus to determine an acceptable amount of containment or storage area. In some situations you will need 15 feet in front and back of your bus, or in most cases 70 feet. Examples might include the distance between 2 sets of tracks, the distance between a set of tracks and an upcoming stop sign, or a set of tracks and an unmarked intersection.

Additional information and training materials on railroad crossing safety are available from:
Operation Lifesaver, Inc.

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