Although school buses provide one of the safest modes of transportation, there are still school bus-related injuries (and unfortunately some fatalities) every year. Some of these are due to crashes with other vehicles; some are due to the school bus striking a pedestrian, bicyclist, or a passenger. The responsibility borne by school bus drivers is considerable. This School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series addresses issues that should be of concern to school bus drivers in their efforts to safely transport their passengers.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) coordinated and implemented the development of this series. NHTSA was aided by the expertise and involvement of the following organizations:

- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Railroad Administration
- National Association for Pupil Transportation
- National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services
- National School Transportation Association
- Operation Lifesaver, Inc.

Representatives from several individual pupil transportation providers also participated:

- Fairfax (VA) Public Schools
- Laidlaw Transit Inc.
- Lincoln (NE) Public Schools
- Teton County (WY) School District 1

These school districts hosted pilot tests of the School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series:

- New Port Richey, Florida
- Fairfax County, Virginia
- York, Nebraska
- Tucson, Arizona

The Administrator Guide is specific to this training.
INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience is experienced school bus drivers. This is an in-service training program, not a training program for new drivers. It is anticipated that state and local pupil transportation agencies will adapt the series to local requirements.

SERIES CONTENT

The *School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series* has seven modules. The modules are:

- Driver Attitude
- Student Management
- Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety
- Vehicle Training
- Knowing Your Route
- Loading and Unloading
- Transporting Infants and Toddlers.

SERIES LENGTH

Each of the modules of the *School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series* is designed to be presented alone. The modules vary in length from 50 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. Two of the modules require additional practice time (see the individual module descriptions for more information).

Some of the modules support each other in their content and could be presented together. Here are some possible pairings:

- Driver Attitude
- Student Management
- Student Management
- Knowing Your Route
- Loading and Unloading
- Transporting Infants and Toddlers
- Loading and Unloading
- Transporting Infants and Toddlers
- Vehicle Training
- Knowing Your Route
- Student Management

MODULE DESCRIPTIONS

Each module is designed to be taught alone. The modules do not include time for introductions or an ice-breaker exercise. It is assumed that the series will be offered at the local level to groups of people who know each other. If this is not the case, time will have to be added for introductions.

**Driver Attitude**

Length: 50 minutes

The school bus driver sets the stage for how things will go on the school bus and throughout the students’ day. Safety starts with the driver and a driver’s attitude predicts how the students will
behave; a driver’s “baggage” shouldn’t get carried on to the school bus. School bus drivers also need to pay attention to other drivers and their attitude changes and know what to do to get help. At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. State the impact the school bus drivers’ attitude has on the way they drive and handle the bus, how the students behave, and how the drivers feel about the job.
2. Describe what they need to do to reduce stress on the job.

**Student Management**

The school bus driver must recognize that control of the bus is critical. The school bus driver has two responsibilities: driving safely and not being distracted. If the driver is distracted by and/or loses control of the students, it is a safety problem. At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of keeping control of student behavior on the bus.
2. State the standards for behavior in his/her school district.
3. Describe the situations that put school bus drivers most at risk.
4. Describe ways to maintain acceptable student behavior on the bus.

**Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety**

The school bus driver must be aware of the potential dangers at highway-rail grade crossings. The school bus driver must know how to cross a highway-rail intersection safely. At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Describe the potential dangers at highway-rail grade crossings.
2. Explain the appropriate procedures to make such a crossing safely.

NOTE: This module can be substituted for an Operation Lifesaver presentation, if you are unable to arrange one.

**Vehicle Training**

School bus drivers must be familiar with all of the buses they drive. At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Describe what handling characteristics they must learn about each bus.
2. Recognize when the mirrors on the bus are correctly adjusted.
3. Use the mirrors to gauge the space around the bus and to back up the bus.
4. Pass the wheelbase test (know how much room they need to turn).
Knowing Your Route

Length: 50 minutes

The school bus driver must be completely familiar with the route he or she drives. The school bus driver must know what to do with hazards on that route.

Hazards are defined as those things that pose a threat to school bus safety. For example, not all route intersections are hazards but intersections that have limited sight or high crash occurrence are route hazards. At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Identify the potential driving hazards on their own regular routes
2. Describe what they can do to eliminate, avoid, or deal with those hazards
3. Explain what to do for field or activity trips when the route is not familiar.

Loading and Unloading

Length: 1 hour 15 minutes (without film)

In every crash involving a child being struck by a school bus, driver error was indicated: The driver “lost” the child during loading or unloading. If the driver had done the job correctly, the student wouldn’t have been struck. At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. State what the danger zones are
2. Explain the importance of the danger zones
3. Teach students about the danger zones
4. Describe ways to keep track of students in the danger zones.

Transporting Infants and Toddlers

Length: 1 hour (without practice session)

School bus drivers need guidance on how to deal with child safety restraint systems (CSRSs). The safest way to transport a young child is in a CSRS. These include portable child safety seats, integrated (built-in) child safety seats, and other devices such as safety restraint vests. This curriculum focuses on the use and installation of child safety seats. For the remainder of the curriculum we will refer to Child Safety Restraint Systems as child safety seats (CSSs). School bus drivers need to know how to properly install a CSS on the bus and a child in a CSS. At the completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. State the local school district’s policy on the need for and the use of CSSs
2. Describe how a school bus must be equipped to use a CSS
3. Install a CSRS properly and install a child properly in a CSS
4. Take action if a CSS cannot be installed.
SERIES MATERIALS

The School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series includes these materials:

- A booklet for supervisors, For Pupil Transportation Supervisors: A Guide to the School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series
- An instructor guide that includes the following:
  - Administrator Guide
  - Curriculum
  - Participant handouts
- A disk containing all of the handouts.
- A folder containing all of the overhead slides.
- Two videotapes for the module, Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety. You will choose one of the videotapes to show during the module.
- A videotape for the module, Loading and Unloading.

PURPOSE OF BOOKLET

This booklet is just for the pupil transportation supervisor. It will help the supervisor make the best use of the Series. For each topic, the booklet describes what the supervisor can do to enhance the topic presented and provides additional resources about the topic. The supervisor’s support of the Series is critical if school bus drivers are to have the best skills possible. This booklet gives the means to provide that support.

CURRICULUM DESIGN

The first page presents an overview of the workshop: length, learning objectives, main topics, and materials needed to facilitate the module. If there is a practice session with the module, instructions can be found right after this overview page.

The design of the curriculum is a two-page, easy-to-use format. It may help to turn to one of the sections as you read this description.
**Left page**

The left page has two columns: Lesson Plan and Instructor Notes.

In the Lesson Plan column, the content is presented in outline form. The outline is detailed and complete. Suggested questions are included in the lesson plan. Possible answers are given in italics following the question.

In the Instructor Notes column, the notations indicate what action should be taken.

- Display Slide #_______
- Write on flipchart
- Distribute Handout #_______
- Show videotape

This column can be used to write down helpful words or key phrases.

**Right page**

The right page will be useful to you as you prepare to present the *Series*. This page includes additional detail about the content on the left page. The right page also provides explanations and directions for practice sessions and possible answers to questions.

Notice that the right page mirrors the left page. They both have the same page number. At times, the right page is blank because no additional detail is needed.

Use the right page to add your own anecdotes and examples or details that you want to include in your presentation.

**Participant Materials**

There is a no separate participant manual for this series. There are handouts with most of the modules. The instructor is responsible for making one copy of each handout for each participant. The handouts are also included on disk in Microsoft PowerPoint 6.0.
OVERHEAD SLIDES

Black and white paper copies of the overhead slides are included in a separate folder. Each slide is labeled with the name of the module. Each slide also has a number indicating the order in which it is used in the module. The numbers are displayed in the Instructor Notes where the slide should be shown. Make copies on overhead acetates to use during the workshop.
Lecture

The School Bus Driver In-Service Safety Series is intended to be interactive. While some of the material is presented in lecture form, it is expected that there will be considerable participant involvement in each module.

Guided Discussion

Suggested questions are offered to encourage participant participation. Instructors can use these questions as a starting place for a guided discussion. The participants have substantial expertise and prior experience. Not only will they be eager to share their knowledge with others, but you can take advantage of this wisdom to enhance the session.

Practice Sessions

Explicit directions are given for conducting the practice sessions. You should prepare for each practice session fully before presenting it. There are several techniques that will help you to conduct an effective session.

- Before your presentation, think through the practice session carefully. Visualize the purpose the session serves and how it will progress.
- Give clear instructions as to what you expect the participants to do.
- Monitor the participants closely as they work and help them when they have difficulty. Be available to answer questions.

Flipcharts

Suggestions are made for when to record group answers on the flipchart (or a blackboard or whiteboard). In the Instructor Notes column on the left page of the curriculum are notations indicating when you will want to write on the flipchart.
PRESENTATION METHODS USED DURING THE SERIES

Here are some tips for using flipcharts effectively.

- As you write on a flipchart, talk to the class, not to the chart. Be aware of where you place the easel and how you stand. The entire group must be able to see the flipchart.
- Write large enough for people in the back to see.
- Don't write in all caps. A reader reads all caps word for word. Using upper and lower case increases comprehension.
- Use bright colors that are easier to see. Avoid using all black or soft colors.
- Ask for volunteers to write on the flipchart to increase student participation.
- Use lined or grid paper. It helps keep your writing straight.
- Use watercolor pens, not permanent ones. They won't go through the paper to the next sheet or decorate your clothes.
- Use two flipcharts side-by-side if you want to keep some information visible while you develop additional facts or tape sheets to the walls for future reference.

OVERHEAD SLIDES

Overhead slides (also called transparencies and vu-graphs) are a great teaching aid. Participants can see the words as they hear them. This increases comprehension and retention.

Almost every module has overhead slides. Here are some tips for using overhead slides:

- Put the overhead slide up only when you need it and take it down when you are done.
- Turn the overhead projector off when not needed.
- Cover the overhead slide with a sheet of paper and slide the paper down to uncover points as you discuss them. In this way, participants will not read ahead of you.
- Lay a pen or pointer on the overhead slide to show which item you are discussing.
How can I make my presentation interesting?

- **Be conversational.**
  
  Always speak in simple, clear language appropriate to the participants. Be sure to use correct pronunciation and to enunciate clearly. Use a friendly tone of voice. Smile. Relax.

- **Face the participants.**
  
  Remember that you are talking to a group, not to a training aid. Practice writing on a flipchart and using overhead slides so that you can do so while still facing the group. Remember to maintain eye contact with the group.

- **Establish a comfort level.**
  
  Get to know your audience, even before the session starts. "Break the ice" at the beginning of the session. Express interest in participants' experiences and contributions. Connect to your audience by being authentic and accepting.

- **Use humor appropriately.**
  
  If the topic is serious, be very cautious in using humor. Use humor only if it is relevant and comfortable for you. It should be directed at yourself and not at others. Inappropriate humor can easily offend and you will have lost those offended for the rest of the session.

- **Guard against annoying mannerisms.**
  
  Repeated motions (tapping a pencil, twirling hair, stroking a beard, jingling coins, playing with jewelry, rocking back and forth) can be distracting. Participants will focus on them rather than on what you are saying.

- **Vary facial expressions, tone, speed of delivery, and volume.**

- **Move around.**
  
  Change your position in front of the group but avoid pacing. Moving around forces participants to follow you and keeps them from becoming bored. Don't stand behind a podium or table.
How do I ask good questions?

Questions serve to involve students in the session by drawing on their knowledge and expertise.

- Questions should be relevant and intended to expand upon course material.
- Ask questions in a friendly manner.
- Do not ask questions that can be answered with "yes" or "no." Ask open-ended questions that start with "how," or "why," or "what if." Vary the types of questions you ask.
- Repeat and acknowledge answers. Comment and expand upon them.

How do I handle questions asked of me?

- If you don't understand the question, ask the person to repeat it or rephrase it.
- Be sure the group can hear a question asked of you. If not, repeat it for the whole group.
- It is okay to say you don't know the answer to a question. Ask if anyone else in the group knows the answer. If not, make a note of the question and tell the asker you will find out the answer and get back to him or her.
- Sometimes you will be asked a diversionary or inflammatory question. There is no formula for handling this situation. Acknowledge the asker and get back on track as quickly as you can.
Feedback: How should I provide feedback? How should I look for feedback?

- Encourage participation by taking responses from everyone and by acknowledging every statement made.
- Reinforce positive contributions but respond to everyone, even if you think the comment is "off the wall."
- If you need more information than the comment contains, ask for more.
- If you cannot agree with the content of the comment, focus on the feeling being expressed and say something understanding or reassuring ("I can see that you feel strongly about that.")
- The point is to keep the group participating.
- Watch for signs of misunderstanding, confusion, or boredom. Actively seek feedback, acknowledge it, and modify your presentation accordingly.

How do I handle a problem participant?

- Expect that some members of the group may not cooperate or may not participate. Be prepared to handle people who fit one of these categories ("know-it-all," too talkative or silent, complainer, wanders off the subject).
- Respond to these participants by being respectful, assertive, and directive.
- If the problem persists, speak to the person outside of the session.
- Remember that you are in charge but don't insult the individual. Don't correct him/her in front of others.