Violence

Bus drivers often work with students whose behavior puts them, other students, and staff at risk of harm. Drivers must also contend with the stress of conflicting demands: keeping the bus on schedule while monitoring student behavior and, in some cases, helping to resolve conflicts. Bus drivers share in the responsibility for the safety of children under their supervision. That responsibility extends to protecting or reducing the severity of potential student injuries, including those from fighting or assaults. Physical intervention is not required if it would create a physical danger to you. However, common sense and reasonableness require the use of steps such as:
• Calling for assistance or calling 911 if the altercation is out of control.
• Dispersing the crowd. By removing the audience, the motivation to fight may be reduced.
• Removing or pushing aside items from the area. This will reduce the risk of further injury due to falls. It will also keep students from using these objects as weapons.
• Insisting that administrators assist with difficult or violent situations.

You can protect yourself and minimize the risk of assault through your local association by:
• Seeking inservice training on topics such as:
  • Interpreting safely in student fights and conflicts.
  • Reducing staff victimization.
  • Handling angry parents.
  • Weapons awareness.
• Joining or helping to form an association health and safety committee to work on these issues by:
  • Ensuring that any school safety plan puts the full responsibility on the district for protecting employees, and involves administration and law enforcement.

Ergonomics is the study of the interaction of equipment and tools with employees who work with them. Drivers work with a standardized piece of equipment – the bus. Badly designed buses can often cause injuries.

Bloodborne pathogens

Bus drivers often risk on-the-job contact with blood and other body fluids in their work with students. These materials may contain pathogens, organisms that can cause serious disease. The Bloodborne Pathogen Standard was created to protect employees with anticipated occupational exposure to these organisms.

What is the PEOSH Bloodborne Pathogen Standard?

In 1991, the federal OSHA adopted the Bloodborne Pathogen Standard that protects workers in the private sector who come in contact with blood or other body fluids that may cause serious disease. Of major concern are:
• Hepatitis B virus (HBV)
• Hepatitis C virus (HCV)
• Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the cause of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

In 1993, the federal OSHA Standard was adopted under the New Jersey Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) Act to protect public employees in New Jersey.
Bloodborne pathogens
(continued)

What are the major requirements?
• The employer must provide an exposure control plan that includes:
  • Job classifications of those responsible for clean-ups.
  • Job classification task and procedures in which employees have occupational exposure.
  • Schedule and methods for implementing the requirements of the standard.
  • Procedures for documenting the circumstances surrounding an employee’s exposure.
• The plan must be accessible to employees and updated at least annually.
• Methods to prevent exposure:
  • Universal precautions (such as employer provided gloves, masks, and eye protection) require the handling of all potentially infectious materials as if they were contaminated.
  • Engineering controls used to contain or remove hazardous materials such as puncture resistant containers or splash guards.
  • Work practice procedures and the equipment to implement them.
  • Hepatitis B vaccinations for all employees who have anticipated exposure to blood or other bodily fluids.
  • Medical evaluation and follow-up for all employees who are exposed.
  • Employee training for all employees with the potential for exposure.
  • Confidential records about employee exposures must be kept for the length of employment plus 30 years.

Ergonomics

The Injury Problem
The U.S. Department of Labor and the National Safety Council rate the transportation field one of the four most dangerous areas of employment in terms of injury and death. The predominant injuries reported are to the back, neck, and shoulders. But drivers report injuries to almost all parts of the body ranging from chronic and severe headaches to cumulative trauma disorders of the foot. School bus driving is repetitive and involves long periods of time sitting in awkward and uncomfortable positions.

This and other factors can lead to cumulative trauma disorders (CTDs).
Prevention is possible and cost effective. Ergonomic injury begins with the relatively minor strains and sprains. These early disorders, untreated and aggravated year after year by a badly designed bus, too often spiral into chronic illness, possibly resulting in permanent disability. The risk factors that initiate this dangerous and expensive cycle are identifiable.

For more information
New Jersey Healthy School Facility Environments
www.state.nj.us/health/healthyschools/
Access to the online resources of seven New Jersey state agencies and federal agencies on issues such as indoor air quality, mold, hazardous substances, and construction dust and noise.

EPA Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids
https://www.epa.gov/schools
EPA Healthy Schools, Healthy Kids is a gateway to online resources to help facility managers, school administrators, architects, design engineers, school nurses, parents, teachers and other staff to address environmental health issues in schools.

New Jersey Education Association (NJEA)
180 West State Street
PO Box 1211
Trenton, New Jersey 08607-1211
609 599 4563
njea.org click on Issues for Health and Safety

National Education Association (NEA)
1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-3290
202 833 4000
www.nea.org
http://nea.healthyfutures.org

PEOSH – NJ Dept. of Health (Health hazards complaints)
PO Box 360
Trenton, NJ 08625-0360
609 984 1865
http://nj.gov/health/peosh

PEOSH – NJ Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development (Safety hazards and discrimination complaints)
PO Box 386
Trenton, NJ 08625-0386
609 633 3996/800 624 1644
http://www.nj.gov/health/workplacehealthandsafety/peosh/ conformform.shtml

New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC)
(Labor, community, environment coalition)
7 Dunmore Ave., First Floor East
Ewing, NJ 08618
609 982 5100
E-mail: info@njwec.org
www.njwec.org

PROBLEM
Nonadjustable seat
Door openers requiring too much force
Whole body vibration caused by diesel engines
Nonsupportive accelerator
Incorrectly placed mirrors
Excessive noise caused by engines and students

INJURY
Lower back pain
Neck, back, and shoulder injuries
Sciatica and lower extremity disorders
Lower extremity problems
Overstretching and straining
Hearing loss and voice strain

SOLUTION
Fully adjustable seats with proper back support
Power-assisted door openers
Sufficient damping to isolate engine vibration
Wide articulated pedals with heelrests
Consultations with drivers on safe placement of mirrors
Sound barrier ceilings and microphones