

Top 25 Security Program Action Items

School Bus Operations

The following Action Items identify the most important elements that school bus operations can incorporate into their Security Plans. These top twenty-five (25) items are based on good security practices identified by a variety of sources, including FTA, FMCSA, U.S. Department of Education, and school bus operators. NSTA encourages school districts and bus carriers to adopt these practices to the extent practical for their operations.

Management

1. Develop a written security program and emergency management plans in conjunction with school administrators, law enforcement, fire department, EMS, and emergency preparedness agency. The plan should address traditional crises such as fires, weather emergencies, serious accidents, and school evacuations as well as terrorist activities.
2. Review and modify emergency plans as necessary in light of increased threat levels from the Department of Homeland Security.
3. Develop a command structure for responding to a crisis. Know the roles and responsibilities of first responders, and determine the chain of command within your organization. Verify 24/7 contact information.
4. Identify multiple evacuation routes from schools and bus facilities; identify alternatives for regular routes that use key infrastructures, such as major bridges or tunnels, in time of increased or targeted security alerts.
5. Coordinate and stage a practice drill of emergency plans with local security partners above.
6. Develop a communications plan for getting information to schools, parents, law enforcement. Appoint a single person to communicate with the media and the community.
7. Ensure that updated route sheets and passenger lists are readily available for all buses and all schools.
8. Prohibit unauthorized persons from entering buses; establish authorization standards and procedures.

Facilities

9. Conduct a risk assessment of facilities, including bus yards, garages, dispatch locations, driver areas. Conduct a risk assessment of all routes and bus stops for security as well as safety, noting for example stops that are obscured by overgrowth of bushes where persons could hide.

10. Control access to bus parking areas, if possible. Restrict entry to one gate.
11. Install fencing, lights, locking gates, video surveillance, or other security measures as needed.
12. Arrange with local police to include your facility in their regular patrols.
13. Reduce your tolerance for “security anomalies,” such as overdue or missing vehicles, intrusions into the bus yard, unverified visitors, etc.

Equipment

14. Maintain a security system for bus keys.
15. Equip all buses with two-way communication.
16. Establish an “external trouble indicator” that drivers can use to alert law enforcement, such as all lights flashing. Be sure to discuss with law enforcement.
17. Install video surveillance, GPS, door locks, other equipment as needed and permitted by state law. Train employees in proper use.

Personnel

18. Provide IDs for all drivers (preferably photo ID).
19. Conduct background checks on employees if not provided by the state.
20. Advise employees to report suspicious incidents or persons at the bus facility or on route.
21. Provide security training for drivers and other employees.
22. Establish crisis codes that drivers can use to alert dispatch that they are in trouble.
23. Train drivers never to leave buses running, but to turn off the engine and take the keys when leaving the bus at any location.
24. Advise drivers to check buses for foreign objects inside and outside anytime a bus has been unattended, such as at an activity trip destination.
25. Establish a method of position reporting as needed during high alerts.

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