School Transportation Security and Emergency Preparedness Writing Committee

State Delegation Ready Proposals

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School Transportation Security –Editorial Updates Pages 192 through 206

Proposed Change, Pages #: 192, 193 & 194

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION SECURITY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

INTRODUCTION

Following a systematic and reasonable plan will help transporters not only to improve their ability to prevent acts of terrorism, but also to strengthen their ability to react to the more common events that plague the transportation industry. Transporters will be better prepared to address vandalism, property loss, petty theft, fights or disturbances, child abductions and sexual predators, **hijacking/kidnapping** thus giving an added bonus of increased level of student and employee protection and safety.

The information in this segment is not intended to be a comprehensive guide on school transportation security or to supersede any federal, state or local policies and plans. Rather, the purpose of this information is to assist school transportation officials and school transportation service providers when establishing or revising their state or local policies and plans concerning school transportation security. Another resource to consider is Security **Action Items (SAI) or best practices** ~~Options~~ for **c**~~C~~onsideration published by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). (See APPENDIX H.)

School transportation providers should also seek to be part of the community emergency management plans. It is important to know where school buses fit into the larger picture. Transportation departments need to know where their buses are on the priority scale compared to other segments of the community, should a large-scale emergency occur in the local area. Things to consider may vary, depending on time of day (i.e., route time) or year. Transportation departments can also play a vital role during emergency situations that require a large-scale evacuation from an area. In addition to moving students from school buildings, unutilized buses can serve the community as well. The Transportation Department should be aware if they are part of another groups plan. Often times too many group's (unrealistically) count on school buses. There may not be enough available buses for

Planning and Policy Considerations

   H.   Does the plan/policy provide information on how to recognize suspicious people, activities, packages and devices as outlined by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) First Observer Plusᵀᴹ Program?
   L.   Does the plan/policy contain directives on incident management and command as outlined by the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS)?
   M.   Does the plan/policy cover enroute incidents/emergencies?

Page continued: 195

Security Assessments

Vigilance, which requires an awareness of vulnerabilities, is the first step to better security. In order to determine and understand the threat level to the student transportation system, a system-wide security assessment shall be conducted, understood and updated annually. The assessment should include participation by school administrators, local and state police and medical and hospital administrators and local emergency managers. The assessment will help to identify weaknesses and strengths within the operation. The assessment should begin at the front line of any transportation system—the driver— and support employees (i.e., cleaning and fueling personnel) and continue up through all levels of the organization. This should also include any viable means by which to immediately detect or prevent threats on board. After completing the security assessment, appropriate plans/policies and procedures can be developed and implemented.

A security assessment should consider the following security issues:

    A.   The complete assessment team should review the current security plans/policies and procedures by asking the following questions:

        1.   What security plans/policies and procedures exist?
        2.   Do they address facilities, equipment, personnel and passengers?
        3.   Have these plans/policies and procedures ever been tested in an exercise?
        4.   Have the plans/policies and procedures ever been used for a real emergency?
        5.   Were the plans/policies effective?
        6.   Do the security plans and policies identify a "security coordinator" for each school and facility with written responsibilities?
        7.   Do the security plans/policies include policies and procedures for vetting of transportation personnel?
        8.   Were the security plans and policies developed in cooperation with local first responders?
        9.   **Are the security plans/polices annually reviewed and updated?**

Page continued: 195

>>   **10.   Where are the security plans/policies stored? 11.   Is there a central person responsible for security plans, policies and training?**
>>   **12.   Is the "security coordinator" available to school and emergency responders on a 24/7 basis?**

>   B.   Review operational security by asking the following questions:
>   1.   Are all vehicle doors, hatches and compartments locked when vehicles are unattended? Are keys left in the bus or ignition?
>   2.   Are facilities and buses equipped with camera or video surveillance equipment or intrusion alarms that are monitored?
>   3.   Do plans/policies and procedures for locking doors and gates exist? Are the codes or combinations changed regularly?
>   4.   Are off-site parking locations secure?
>   5.   Is the exterior of the transportation facility, administration building and maintenance facility secure?
>   6.   Is the bus yard secure?
>   7.   Are fencing, walls or vehicle or personnel gates and lighting available?
>   8.   Is there surveillance equipment being monitored and/or recording? What is being surveyed?
>   9.   Is the interior, (i.e., all rooms, storage areas and closets) of the transportation facility, administration building and maintenance facility secure?
>   10.   Are roofs secure?
>   11.   Are all bus routes being evaluated with safety and security issues considered?
>   12.   Where are buses staged during the route if there is a layover period?

Page continued: 197, 198

13.   Are buses left unattended at schools **or other secured areas** during layover periods?

14.   Are all schools and school parking areas safe and secure?

15.   Are commonly used school activity sites safe and secure?

16.   Do drivers leave the bus to watch the activity?

~~16.~~**17.** **Is a walk-around safety and security inspection of the bus performed prior to departure and after the vehicle has been left unattended?**

~~17.~~**18.** Is there a pre-trip inspection prior to departure for home?

~~18.~~**19.** Do computer and communications systems exist?

~~19.~~**20.** How is access to computers or systems controlled? What are their limitations?

~~20.~~**21.** How can computers be compromised? If they can be compromised, what can be done to prevent it?

~~21.~~**22.** Is the communication system (e.g., two-way radio, land telephone line, cellular telephone, etc.) capable of recording?

~~22.~~**23.** Is the bus fleet equipped with real time GPS**? Does the public have the ability to track the bus location?**

~~23.~~**24.** Does the communication system have redundancy, and is it routinely tested? Are all trained in the appropriate level of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), is it reviewed regularly, and is everyone (drivers, dispatchers, administrators) familiar with NIMS?

~~24.~~**25.** Do emergency back-up systems for information and communication exist? What are their limitations?

~~25.~~**26.** How can emergency back-up systems be compromised, and if they can be compromised, what can be done to prevent it?

~~26.~~**27.** Are the back-up systems stored off site? Are they secure?

~~27.~~**28.** Is there a plan available that does not require electrical energy? Does the transportation department have a ~~back up~~ **backup** generator?

Page continued: 199, 200

TRANSPORTATION PERSONNEL AND THEIR TRAINING

School transportation already focuses on safety training. A security assessment likely will indicate a need for renewed and expanded focus on security—especially extreme threats. Security training should be a primary element of plans/policies and procedures. Individual awareness is among the best weapons for preventing crime and increasing personal and business security. Any person armed with awareness is less likely to become a victim or to allow a crime to be committed. Armed with awareness, most school bus drivers and administrators can either eliminate or significantly reduce property losses and crime. While not the primary goal of a good security program, it is highly likely that routine vandalism and crime will be reduced.

Drivers should be thoroughly familiar with their vehicles, their students, the area and conditions on their routes **and stop locations**. They should have a thorough knowledge of the operational plans, policies, procedures and training on possible threats. Armed with this knowledge, drivers can better assess the level of threat in any given situation and respond according to established plans and policies.

Suggested Training Topics

    B.   Identification and Prevention
        1.   How to determine the threat level;
        2.   How to identify, report and prevent suspicious, criminal or terrorist activity;
        3.   How to identify and prevent entry of suspicious people, packages and placement of suspicious packages or devices;
        4.   How to identify illegal entry (structure or vehicle); and
        5   .How to identify and respond to improvised explosive devices (IEDs) **and suspicious items/packages.**
    C.   Response and Reports
        7.   How to raise drivers' level of awareness to identify suspicious people, activities, packages and devices. (Transportation Security Administration (TSA) First Observer **Plusᵀᴹ** Program)

Page continued: 200, 201

D. Safety and Security Equipment
Instructions ~~H~~how to use all the safety and security equipment **should be** available to drivers.
Training processes should include the use of drills and tabletop exercises to test and practice the plans/policies and procedures.

Unauthorized Riders and Visitors

School bus transportation systems have dealt with unauthorized visitors, from the neighborhood dog to upset parents. Once an uninvited person enters the bus, drivers **jeopardize** loss **of** ultimate control of their vehicle. The only persons authorized to gain access to a school bus are those students who meet the eligibility requirements, school administrators, law enforcement and transportation personnel. Non-students, including the driver's friend, are never allowed on a school bus. The driver should make every effort short of physical confrontation to ensure that students who are not eligible are not permitted on the bus. Districts should have procedures in place that address whether or not parents are allowed to enter the school bus even if it is to assist with the securement or loading and unloading of their children. Drivers should receive training and education on these policies. If the district allows a guest to ride home with regular riders, districts should have a procedure that has written documentation giving parental approval that includes the date. Drivers should be trained to be aware of surroundings at bus stops. This should include a plan if an unrecognized or suspicious person is loitering at the bus stop. For the safety of all students, once the students board the bus, they will not be allowed off the bus until the bus reaches their assigned stop.

VULNERABLE ACTIVITIES

A. Bus Stop
School bus drivers must participate in transportation security and emergency preparedness activities. During these activities, drivers should learn how to recognize situations which could create an incident. When the bus driver opens the door, an entrance into the school bus is created where the driver has little control over who will enter the bus. At school bus stops, drivers should be aware of abnormal behavior or unidentified people loitering or parked cars that usually are not parked at the stop. Regular drivers learn to recognize waiting parents, but if strangers are at the stop, it would be appropriate to ask students who is at the stop to meet them. If other adults are not present, it may be best for the school bus driver to wait before opening the door to give more time to observe the behavior of the person in question. Drivers should be trained to observe gang clothing and clothing that may obscure weapons.

Page continued: 202, 203, 204

Additionally, drivers should be alert to people taking photos or making suspicious notes at bus stops or schools.

Special note about bus stop alertness: Many urban school systems partner with municipally-operated mass transit agencies for the right to have (generally older) students ride to and from class rather than devote a classic "yellow school bus" to that route. While the practice reduces urban congestion and very effectively fits urban needs, access to the bus cannot be controlled as it is with dedicated student service. Under federal transit rules, drivers may not deny service to anyone waiting at a designated transit bus stop lest they risk loss of federal operating assistance.

For systems utilizing this cooperative model it is important to ensure transit vehicle drivers understand the new and heightened level of responsibility that transport of minor students places on them. Every new rider could pose a threat to students. School transportation agreements for open transit ridership should include additional security awareness training for transit-employed operators.

B. Activity Trips

Often drivers are allowed to leave their buses during activities when students are engaged elsewhere. Districts should have policies and training that inform the driver about what action they should take when returning to their vehicles. The vehicle should be locked when the driver is not present and a post-trip inspection completed prior to departure. **Similarly, on return to a bus after an extended layover when the vehicle has not been attended, a complete safety and security walk-around inspection should be conducted prior to departure.**

C. Rented or Leased Buses

Operations that allow school buses to be rented or leased ~~should~~ **must by federal law and by many statutes** have a process in place to assure that the driver is properly licensed. Consideration should be given to the security threat of allowing vehicles to be used in high risk areas.

Page continued: 205
WEAPONS

Weapons (or objects that look like and/or could be used as weapons) are not permitted on school buses or school grounds. Drivers should receive training to learn behaviors that students may exhibit when carrying a weapon. Unusual gait, pocket sag and nervous behavior are all identifiable. Any time students say they have a weapon, the situation should be treated as **a potential threat** ~~such~~. Drivers should practice steps they would take to protect other students. Conversations that promise retaliation should be taken seriously. Student transportation providers should have policies and procedures in place that prohibit weapons on campus, and the policies and procedures should extend to the school bus.

PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE 17TH NATIONAL SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION SPECIFICATIONS AND PROCEDURES (NSTSP)
Submitted by ____School Transportation Security & Emergency Preparedness Writing Committee
Excerpts from the 2015 NSTSP publication; **inserted language, red, bold & underlined;** ~~deleted language strike through.~~

FACILITIES AND BUS PARKING

School bus facilities should have limited access both during the day and night. Fencing and gates should be installed around the premises. **Plants and trees should be kept away from the fences and gates to deny hiding places for potential predators.** Keys should not be left in the ignition when the buses are unattended. If the facilities are equipped with camera or video surveillance equipment, the district should have plans in place to monitor the cameras. The plan should include what is surveyed and recorded. Transportation centers should have policies and procedures for locking doors and gates. If codes or combinations are used, then a procedure should be in place to routinely change the codes. If keys are used, a process should be in place to retrieve keys from employees who separate from employment. The security plan should address school buses that are routinely stored off site.

SCHOOL BUS EQUIPMENT GUIDE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT AND FIRE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL

School transportation providers should **establish relationships with and** work with local emergency responders (law enforcement, fire departments, medical services, etc.) to ensure that they have appropriate fleet information when responding to an emergency involving a school bus. Information required by emergency responders will vary, depending on their individual needs and abilities. Good communication with emergency responders prior to an emergency occurring will ensure that responders will have the information that they need. Information issues to discuss include variation of fleet vehicles, ways to quickly identify bus specifics (e.g., passenger capacity and presence of wheelchairs) and how to operate the various emergency exits of their buses.

Page continued: 206

RESOURCES

Indiana State Police Unarmed Response to an Active Shooter Event,
https://secure.in.gov/isp/index.htm **https://www.in.gov/isp/3495.htm**

Rationale for Change: Editorial update

Fiscal Impact if Any: None Noted

END