

**Guidelines for Ensuring Safety of Students on
Student Service Vehicles –
For School Bus Service Operators to Observe**

- (1) Each passenger should be allocated a seat. A passenger shall not be permitted to travel in the vehicle unless seated in a properly constructed seat secured to the bodywork of the vehicle. Operators should ensure that their vehicles do not carry passengers in excess of the number specified in the registration documents of that vehicles and every passenger shall be counted. If any person driving a vehicle on a road carries in the vehicle passengers in excess of the number specified in the registration document of that vehicle, the driver commits an offence and is liable on first conviction to a fine of \$5,000 and imprisonment for 3 months and on second or subsequent conviction to a fine of \$10,000 and imprisonment for 6 months.
- (2) To meet the demand for student transport services as far as possible and to better utilise existing fleet resources, although Regulation 53(1) of the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap. 374G) allows that a child under the age of 3 years shall not be counted, and 3 children aged 3 years or above but each not exceeding 1.3 metres in height shall be counted as 2 persons for the purpose of counting the number of persons that may be carried in a vehicle, it is also stipulated in Regulation 53(2) of the same Regulations that drivers shall ensure that each passenger must be seated in a properly constructed seat secured to the bodywork of the vehicle. Operators are reminded *to accord priority to student safety on board and obtain prior consent from schools and parents/guardians before exercising flexibility given by law in counting the number of persons that may be carried in a vehicle.* For more information, please contact 1823 or 2804 2600.
- (3) To avoid confusion, students travelling on different vehicles should wear labels of distinct identification.
- (4) It must be ensured that students behave well when travelling on the vehicles, e.g.
 - (i) they must remain seated unless boarding or alighting;
 - (ii) they must not talk to the drivers or shout;
 - (iii) they must refrain from playing;
 - (iv) they should not eat or drink for the sake of keeping the vehicle clean;
 - (v) they must not put their heads, hands or any part of bodies out of the windows of the vehicles;

- (vi) they must not board or alight from the vehicle until the vehicle has come to a standstill;
 - (vii) they must not play with the emergency exits; and
 - (viii) must not play with the seat belts or unfasten the seat belts during the journey.
- (5) Operators should ensure that the vehicles have come to a standstill before the students are allowed to board or alight. Parking facilities or lay-by available in schools should be fully utilized to set down students. For pick-up / set-down points outside schools, operators should identify safe and convenient locations, e.g. general loading/unloading area or podium deck with less traffic within the residential estates or along a road section with less traffic; and which will not cause any blockage of the other vehicular traffic.
- (6) As a licensing condition in the Passenger Service Licence, every school bus and school private light bus carrying primary and kindergarten students should provide an escort while in operation. Operators should provide each escort with an updated name-list of the students travelling on the vehicle to ensure that no student is missing or riding on the wrong vehicle. The practice of transferring students from one vehicle to another during the journey increases the risks of student missing and is therefore not recommended.

According to “Explanatory Notes to Passenger Service Licence Conditions”, the definition and role of an escort are as follows:

- (i) should be an adult who has attained the age of 21 years and has good physique.
- (ii) should ensure that each student be allocated a seat on a school bus according to the capacity permitted by law.
- (iii) should ensure that students board and alight from a school bus properly only after the bus has come to a complete standstill.
- (iv) should escort students during the journey and ensure that all students are properly seated and the doors of the school bus are properly closed.
- (v) should ensure that no student is missing and students reach schools safely and are collected by their parents/guardians on their homeward journey.
- (vi) should enforce discipline of students travelling on school transport vehicles and help students to keep calm to avoid unnecessary panic in case of emergency.

In recent years, various kinds of extra-curricular activities have been organized by schools keeping the students at school after normal school time. As a result, students would be on their way home at irregular time slots and student service vehicles need to pick up students various times which causes difficulties in deploying escort for every trip. In this light, schools and parent-teacher associations should work in collaboration with operators to agree on several fixed time slots for picking up students. This would not only facilitate operators to comply with the PSL conditions on provision of escort, but also ensure student safety while riding on student service vehicles.

- (7) School private light buses manufactured on or after 1 January 1984 should be provided with an approved seat belt for the nearside front seat, where there is such a seat on the vehicle. School private light buses registered on or after 1 June 1996 should be provided with an approved seat belt for the middle front seat, where there is such a seat on the vehicle. In addition, after consulting the trades, Transport Department (TD) adopted administrative measures to require seat belts to be provided on all passenger seats on procuring new student service vehicles. Seat belts on passenger seats should observe the seat belt requirements of Part I of Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic (Safety Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 374F). Operators may select and install suitable and approved seat belts (i.e. body restraining seat belt or lap belt) according to their operation need.
- (8) Operators should remind drivers and escorts to ensure that themselves and students are properly seated with seat belts worn (if fitted), before moving off the vehicles. The seat belt must be worn properly. It should securely fasten the wearer to the seat. Two or more persons should not share a seat belt at the same time. Drivers may consider refusing to move off the vehicle if a passenger refuses to wear a seat belt installed on the vehicle.
- (9) Operators should ensure that the vehicles are kept clean at all times.
- (10) Parents/guardians should be informed of the details of the routes, including the pick-up points and times of arrival at these points.
- (11) Care should be taken to ensure that students reach schools safely and are collected by their parents/guardians on their homeward journey.
- (12) Unless with the prior agreement of schools and parents/guardians, operators should not alter the routings and make alternative

arrangements for their services. Any alternative arrangements subsequently agreed should be announced by the schools on behalf of the operators.

- (13) For those additional passenger seats provided by operators in the student service vehicles without permission from TD, such as movable seats or temporary seats built with wooden planks or large tool boxes beside the driver cabin or at the rear compartment, the operators concerned shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to a fine of \$10,000 and imprisonment of six months.
- (14) Operators should ensure that all necessary warning devices for the emergency exits and any power-operated doors are in good working order.
- (15) In order to enhance safety, an improvement package on school bus safety has come into operation since 1 May 1997 as follows:
 - (i) An external rear view mirror of sufficient size should be installed at the nearside front of all school buses and school private light buses;
 - (ii) Warning devices should be installed at all power-operated doors rearward of the driver's seat of all school buses and school private light buses;
 - (iii) Warning devices should be installed at emergency exits of all school buses and school private light buses, with the exception of school private light buses that have a passenger seating capacity of not more than 12;
 - (iv) A public address system should be installed in the driver's compartment on all school buses and school private light buses (in view of the prohibition of using hand-held telecommunications equipment by driver while the vehicle is in motion, hand-free devices should be adopted by the driver when using the public address system);
 - (v) All school private light buses registered on or after 1 May 1997 should adopt a new colour scheme comprising of a purple waist band against a yellow body; and
 - (vi) A “**CAUTION CHILDREN** 小心學童” sign board should be displayed, while student service is in operation, at the rear of all school buses.

Besides, according to Passenger Service Licence Conditions, a sign board “**STUDENT SERVICE** 學生服務” should be displayed on the

windscreen of the school bus while student service is in operation. The signboard shall not be displayed when the service is not in operation.

- (16) Operators should ensure that no illicit fuel is used in their vehicles. Use of illicit fuel would not only constitute an offence of revenue fraud but also easily create fire hazard.
- (17) Operators should ensure that at least one fire extinguisher of an FSD approved type is readily accessible and available for use on board the vehicle, which should be maintained in good and efficient working order and that the extinguisher is not yet expired.
- (18) In case of emergency or accident, or adverse weather that warrants the announcement of suspension of schools by the Education Bureau, the operators should first contact the school and then make immediate arrangements to send the students to schools or back home as appropriate as soon as possible.
- (19) In case of accident, schools/parents should be informed accordingly in the first instance. It is highly desirable that the operators should have a remote control system to enhance communication with all their vehicles, and provide a first aid kit on each vehicle.
- (20) Operators should well brief and train the drivers and escorts that in case of emergency or accident, they should help the students to keep calm to avoid unnecessary panic and lead the students to evacuate the vehicle safely if necessary. If any person gets injury on board, the driver should stop the vehicle. The driver should report the accident to the police as soon as reasonably practicable and arrange to inform the school/parents of the accident in the earliest possible opportunity.
- (21) The Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) stipulates that in every student service vehicle registered on or after 1 May 2009, the vehicle will be required to be fitted with “safer seats”. For details, please refer to “Requirements for Passenger Seats in Student Service Vehicles” at **Annex**.
- (22) TD encourages the trade shall preferably deploy the student service vehicles fitted with “safer seats” and seat belts on passenger seats for carrying primary and kindergarten students.

Requirements for Passenger Seats in Student Service Vehicles
(Generally known as “Safer Seats”)

According to the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A), every student service vehicle registered *on or after 1 May 2009* shall be required to be fitted with “safer seats”. In addition, after consulting the trades, Transport Department (TD) adopted administrative measures to require seat belts to be provided on all passenger seats on new student service vehicles with first registration *on or after 1 July 2022*. Seat belts on passenger seats should observe the seat belt requirements of Part I of Schedule 2 of the Road Traffic (Safety Equipment) Regulations (Cap. 374F). Operators of student service vehicles may select and install suitable and approved seat belts (i.e. body restraining seat belt or lap belt) according to their operation need.

Safer seats are strong and closely spaced, with high and energy-absorbing backs, which can reduce the risk of students being thrown out of their seats and reduce the degree of injury in case of collisions. Overseas research proves that the use of safer seats is effective in protecting students on student service vehicles. Compared with seat belts, safer seats offer protection to passengers without requiring any action, thus they are suitable to be used on student service vehicles.

Definition of Student Service Vehicles

- (1) a public bus authorised for providing student service (**A03**) as specified in section 4(3)(d) of the Public Bus Ordinance (Cap. 230);
- (2) a private bus authorised for providing student service (**B01**) as specified in section 27(5)(a) of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374); and
- (3) a school private light bus.

Standards of the Passenger Seats

- seats, barriers and their anchorage shall conform to the requirements of any specification or standard specified in the legislation;
- seat backs, barriers and controlled surface shall be made of impact energy absorption material that conforms to the requirements of any specification or standards specified in the legislation;
- no folding table or folding table or folding accessories shall be installed on any controlled surface;
- seats and restraining barriers shall be made of fire resistant material that conforms to the requirements of any specification or standard specified in the legislation;
- every seat shall be forward-facing; and
- space of the passenger seat and the height of seat back should meet the requirement specified in the legislation.

Notes to Applicants for Provision of Student Service

- Any student service vehicle which is registered on or after 1 May 2009 shall be fitted with passenger seats of the standards as stipulated in the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A).
- Any student service vehicle which is firstly registered on or after 1 July 2022 must be fitted with seat belts for all passenger seats as required under the administrative measures.
- Approval will NOT be given for issuance of Passenger Service Licence or student service endorsement to those vehicles which are not in compliance with the legislative requirement on passenger seats and/or the administrative measures on seat belts.

Enquiries

For requirements of passenger seats details, please contact Vehicle Safety and Standards Sub-Division of TD by phone:

Vehicle Safety and Standard Division (Vehicle Examination Centre)

For examination of buses - Tel. no.: **2333 3112**

For examination of school private light buses - Tel. no.: **2759 7573**

For application details, please contact Public Vehicles Unit of TD by phone or fax:

Public Vehicles Unit

Non-franchised Public Bus - Tel. no.: **2804 2574**

Private Bus - Tel. no.: **2804 2450**

School Private Light Bus - Tel. no.: **2804 2263**

Fax. no. - **2865 1227**