



Tips for School Bus Drivers

Operation Lifesaver would like to remind school bus drivers to stay alert at highway-railway crossings. Provincial laws and regulations governing school bus driver actions at highway-railway crossings vary in each province. Be aware of your provincial legislation to ensure that you are in compliance at all times. Also know that local law and company policy may require further action.

Following these recommended procedures at highway-railway crossings can prevent needless tragedies:

General Safety Tips for All School Bus Drivers

1. Approaching the crossing, slow down by shifting to a lower gear (manual transmission) and test your brakes.



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2. Look beyond the tracks to see if there is traffic congestion, a signal or **STOP** sign. Is there enough space to allow the bus to completely clear the crossing when stopped? Are you absolutely sure?
3. Turn off the audio equipment and fans and silence the passengers.
4. Open the driver's window, look and listen for an approaching train.
5. If a train is approaching, **STOP**.

Additional Safety Tips for School Bus Drivers Required to Stop at All Crossings

1. Activate the four-way hazard lights approximately 60 metres before the crossing.
2. Scan your surroundings and check for traffic behind you. Make sure your intentions are known.
3. Stop no closer than 5 metres from the nearest rail where you have the best view of the tracks.
4. Place the transmission in neutral and press down on the service brake or set the parking brakes.
5. If your laws and policies permit, open the service door and driver's window. Look and listen for an approaching train.
6. Check the crossing signals again before proceeding.
7. At a multiple-track crossing, stop **ONLY** before the first set of tracks. When you are sure no train is approaching on any track, proceed across all of the tracks until you have completely cleared them.
8. Cross the tracks in a low gear. Do not change gears while crossing.

Other Considerations

Police Officer or Flag Person at the Crossing

If a police officer or properly-identified railway flag person is at the crossing, obey directions. Remember, however, that you are not relieved of the responsibility to ensure the safety of all passengers and you must confirm that it is safe to cross the tracks by looking and listening for the approach of a train.

View of Tracks at Crossings

Do not attempt to cross the tracks unless you can see far enough down the track to ensure that no trains are approaching. Be especially careful at crossings without gates, flashing lights or bell. Even if there are active warning signals and they do not indicate a train is approaching, you must look and listen to be sure it is safe to proceed.

Vehicle Size and Clearance

If it won't fit, don't commit! Know the length of your bus and the amount of space available on the other side of the highway-railway crossings on the bus route. When approaching a crossing with a signal or **STOP** sign on the opposite side, pay attention to the amount of available room. Be certain the bus has enough space to completely clear the railway tracks on the other side. Remember that the train will be a metre wider than the rails on both sides.

Evacuating a Bus

If your bus stalls on a crossing, get all the occupants out of the bus and away from the track immediately. Move quickly to a point at least 30 metres away from the track and the bus. This will reduce the chances of being struck by flying debris if the train hits the stalled vehicle.

Contact the railway. Many railway companies post their emergency numbers prominently at crossings. If this cannot be located immediately, call 911 or your local emergency number.

Reporting Hazards

Report any conditions at highway-railway crossings that may be dangerous to highway or rail traffic. If there is no flag person and you believe the signals are malfunctioning, call the railway, 911 or your local emergency number.

Ensure that your dispatch centres know which railways operate in the area and that they have appropriate railway emergency telephone numbers.

For additional railway safety information, please visit:

- › **Website:** www.operationlifesaver.ca
- › **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/oplifesaver
- › **Twitter:** www.twitter.com/oplifesaver

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