Section 4
TRANSPORTING PASSENGERS SAFELY

This Section Covers

- **Vehicle Inspection**
- **Loading**
- **On the Road**
- **After-trip Vehicle Inspection**
- **Prohibited Practices**
- **Use of Brake-door Interlocks**

Bus drivers must have a commercial driver license if they drive a vehicle designed to seat more than 16 or more persons, including the driver.

Bus drivers must have a passenger endorsement on their commercial driver license. To get the endorsement you must pass a knowledge test on Sections 2 and 4 of this manual. (If your bus has air brakes, you must also pass a knowledge test on Section 5.) You must also pass the skills tests required for the class of vehicle you drive.

4.1 – Vehicle Inspection

Before driving your bus, you must be sure it is safe. You must review the inspection report made by the previous driver. Only if defects reported earlier have been certified as repaired or not needed to be repaired, should you sign the previous driver's report. This is your certification that the defects reported earlier have been fixed.

4.1.1 – Vehicle Systems

Make sure these things are in good working order before driving:

Service brakes, including air hose couplings (if your bus has a trailer or semitrailer).
Parking brake.
Steering mechanism.
Lights and reflectors.
Tires (front wheels must not have recapped or regrooved tires).
Horn.
Windshield wiper or wipers.
Rear-vision mirror or mirrors.
Coupling devices (if present).
Wheels and rims.
Emergency equipment.

4.1.2 – Access Doors and Panels

As you check the outside of the bus, close any open emergency exits. Also, close any open access panels (for baggage, restroom service, engine, etc.) before driving.

4.1.3 – Bus Interior

People sometimes damage unattended buses. Always check the interior of the bus before driving to ensure rider safety. Aisles and stairwells should always be clear. The following parts of your bus must be in safe working condition:

Each handhold and railing.
Floor covering.
Signaling devices, including the restroom emergency buzzer, if the bus has a restroom.
Emergency exit handles.

The seats must be safe for riders. All seats must be securely fastened to the bus.

Never drive with an open emergency exit door or window. The "Emergency Exit" sign on an emergency door must be clearly visible. If there is a red emergency door light, it must work. Turn it on at night or any other time you use your outside lights.

4.1.4 – Roof Hatches

You may lock some emergency roof hatches in a partly open position for fresh air. Do not leave them open as a regular practice. Keep in mind the bus's higher clearance while driving with them open.

Make sure your bus has the fire extinguisher and emergency reflectors required by law. The bus must also have spare electrical fuses, unless equipped with circuit breakers.

4.1.5 – Use Your Seatbelt!

The driver's seat should have a seat belt. Always use it for safety.

4.2 – Loading and Trip Start

Do not allow riders to leave carry-on baggage in a doorway or aisle. There should be nothing in the aisle that might trip other riders. Secure baggage and freight in ways that avoid damage and:

Allow the driver to move freely and easily.
Allow riders to exit by any window or door in an emergency.
Protect riders from injury if carry-ons fall or shift.

4.2.1 – Hazardous Materials

Watch for cargo or baggage containing hazardous materials. Most hazardous materials cannot be carried on a bus.

The Federal Hazardous Materials Table shows which materials are hazardous. They pose a risk to health, safety, and property during transportation. The rules require shippers to mark containers of hazardous material with the material's name, identification number, and hazard label. There are nine different four-inch, diamond-shaped hazard labels. See Figure 4.1. Watch for the diamond-shaped labels. Do not transport any hazardous material unless you are sure the rules allow it.

Hazard Class Definitions		
Class	**Class Name**	**Example**
1	Explosives	Ammunition, Dynamite, Fireworks
2	Gases	Propane, Oxygen, Helium
3	Flammable	Gasoline Fuel, Acetone
4	Flammable Solids	Matches, Fuses
5	Oxidizers	Ammonium Nitrate, Hydrogen Peroxide
6	Poisons	Pesticides, Arsenic
7	Radioactive	Uranium, Plutonium
8	Corrosives	Hydrochloric Acid, Battery Acid
9	Miscellaneous Hazardous Materials	Formaldehyde, Asbestos
None	ORM-D (Other Regulated Material-Domestic)	Hair Spray or Charcoal
None	Combustible Liquids	Fuel Oils, Lighter Fluid

Figure 4.1

4.2.2 – Forbidden Hazardous Materials

Buses may carry small-arms ammunition labeled ORM-D, emergency hospital supplies, and drugs. You can carry small amounts of some other hazardous materials if the shipper cannot send them any other way. Buses must never carry:

Division 2.3 poison gas, liquid Class 6 poison, tear gas, irritating material.
More than 100 pounds of solid Class 6 poisons.
Explosives in the space occupied by people, except small arms ammunition.
Labeled radioactive materials in the space occupied by people.
More than 500 pounds total of allowed hazardous materials, and no more than 100 pounds of any one class.

Riders sometimes board a bus with an unlabeled hazardous material. Do not allow riders to carry on common hazards such as car batteries or gasoline.

4.2.3 – Standee Line

No rider may stand forward of the rear of the driver's seat. Buses designed to allow standing must have a two-inch line on the floor or some other means of showing riders where they cannot stand. This is called the standee line. All standing riders must stay behind it.

4.2.4 – At Your Destination

When arriving at the destination or intermediate stops announce:

The location.
Reason for stopping.
Next departure time.
Bus number.

Remind riders to take carry-ons with them if they get off the bus. If the aisle is on a lower level than the seats, remind riders of the step-down. It is best to tell them before coming to a complete stop.

Charter bus drivers should not allow riders on the bus until departure time. This will help prevent theft or vandalism of the bus.

4.3 – On the Road

4.3.1 – Passenger Supervision

Many charter and intercity carriers have passenger comfort and safety rules. Mention rules about smoking, drinking, or use of radio and tape players at the start of the trip. Explaining the rules at the start will help to avoid trouble later on.

While driving, scan the interior of your bus as well as the road ahead, to the sides, and to the rear. You may have to remind riders about rules, or to keep arms and heads inside the bus.

4.3.2 – At Stops

Riders can stumble when getting on or off, and when the bus starts or stops. Caution riders to watch their step when leaving the bus. Wait for them to sit down or brace themselves before starting. Starting and stopping should be as smooth as possible to avoid rider injury.

Occasionally, you may have a drunk or disruptive rider. You must ensure this rider's safety as well as that of others. Don't discharge such riders where it would be unsafe for them. It may be safer at the next scheduled stop or a well-lighted area where there are other people. Many carriers have guidelines for handling disruptive riders.

4.3.3 – Common Accidents

The Most Common Bus Accidents. Bus accidents often happen at intersections. Use caution, even if a signal or stop sign controls other traffic. School and mass transit buses sometimes scrape off mirrors or hit passing vehicles when pulling out from a bus stop. Remember the clearance your bus needs, and watch for poles and tree limbs at stops. Know the size of the gap your bus needs to accelerate and merge with traffic. Wait for the gap to open before leaving the stop. Never assume other drivers will brake to give you room when you signal or start to pull out.

4.3.4 – Speed on Curves

Crashes on curves that kill people and destroy buses result from excessive speed, often when rain or snow has made the road slippery. Every banked curve has a safe "design speed." In good weather, the posted speed is safe for cars but it may be too high for many buses. With good traction, the bus may roll over; with poor traction, it might slide off the curve. Reduce speed for curves! If your bus leans toward the outside on a banked curve, you are driving too fast.

4.3.5 – Railroad-highway Crossings Stops

Stop at RR Crossings:

Stop your bus between 15 and 50 feet before railroad crossings.
Listen and look in both directions for trains. You should open your forward door if it improves your ability to see or hear an approaching train.
Before crossing after a train has passed, make sure there isn't another train coming in the other direction on other tracks.
If your bus has a manual transmission, never change gears while crossing the tracks.
You do not have to stop, but must slow down and carefully check for other vehicles:

- At streetcar crossings.
- Where a policeman or flagman is directing traffic.
- If a traffic signal is green.
- At crossings marked as "exempt" or "abandoned."

4.3.6 – Drawbridges

Stop at Drawbridges. Stop at drawbridges that do not have a signal light or traffic control attendant. Stop at least 50 feet before the draw of the bridge. Look to make sure the draw is completely closed before crossing. You do not need to stop, but must slow down and make sure it's safe, when:

There is a traffic light showing green.
The bridge has an attendant or traffic officer who controls traffic whenever the bridge opens.

4.4 – After-trip Vehicle Inspection

Inspect your bus at the end of each shift. If you work for an interstate carrier, you must complete a written inspection report for each bus driven. The report must specify each bus and list any defect that would affect safety or result in a breakdown. If there are no defects, the report should say so.

Riders sometimes damage safety-related parts such as handholds, seats, emergency exits, and windows. If you report this damage at the end of a shift, mechanics can make repairs before the bus goes out again. Mass transit drivers should also make sure passenger signaling devices and brake-door interlocks work properly.

4.5 – Prohibited Practices

Avoid fueling your bus with riders on board unless absolutely necessary. Never refuel in a closed building with riders on board.

Don't talk with riders, or engage in any other distracting activity, while driving.

Do not tow or push a disabled bus with riders aboard the vehicle, unless getting off would be unsafe. Only tow or push the bus to the nearest safe spot to discharge passengers. Follow your employer's guidelines on towing or pushing disabled buses.

4.6 – Use of Brake-door Interlocks

Urban mass transit coaches may have a brake and accelerator interlock system. The interlock applies the brakes and holds the throttle in idle position when the rear door is open. The interlock releases when you close the rear door. Do not use this safety feature in place of the parking brake.

Section 4
Test Your Knowledge

1. Name some things to check in the interior of a bus during a pre-trip inspection.
2. What are some hazardous materials you can transport by bus?
3. What are some hazardous materials you can't transport by bus?
4. What is a standee line?
5. Does it matter where you make a disruptive passenger get off the bus?
6. How far from a railroad crossing should you stop?
7. When must you stop before crossing a drawbridge?
8. Describe from memory the "prohibited practices" listed in the manual.
9. The rear door of a transit bus has to be open to put on the parking brake. True or False?

These questions may be on your test. If you can't answer them all, re-read Section 4.