



Information Report

Coronavirus and Student Transportation

The health crisis created by the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) and the disease it causes (COVID-19) have had effects throughout America and the world that are unprecedented in our lifetimes. The impacts have extended to all facets of society, including public education and student transportation. The National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) has developed this Information Report to help answer questions that student transportation professionals have either asked or that we are anticipating. The report is in a frequently asked questions (FAQs) format. It is not intended to be all inclusive; we welcome additional questions and comments. We will update the report as we gain more useful information. It is a living document.

School bus transportation professionals have done an excellent, unparalleled job in providing safe transportation to America's school students. Few of us are authorities on public health matters, however. The information herein is drawn from a variety of sources, including state directors, recent news reports of state and local school district practices, guidance and information published by other associations, and federal or state agencies. It should not be construed as recommendations or best practices, but it may prove useful as states, LEAs (local education agencies), charter schools, and contractors work to make their best, informed decisions about the many unforeseen matters the crisis has raised for student transporters.

We are attempting to provide resources to assist student transporters with their specific, unique tasks during this challenging time, but without duplicating the many excellent sources of public health information that are available. The report does not repeat how persons should wash their hands, for instance, but the Resources and Links list on the last page contains some overall sources of information on the pandemic. Our best defense is to stay informed, so we recommend that our members and others continue to monitor this wealth of public information.

FAQs:

Please contact NASDPTS at ExecDir@nasdpts.org with any corrections, comments, or additional questions on the information below, and we will address them in an update.

Q- What procedures should we consider for **cleaning and disinfecting school buses** before and after they are returned to service?

A- There are a number of federal government websites listed in the Resources and Links section of this document that provide guidance on safe, effective materials and procedures for cleaning and disinfecting school facilities, including school buses. Generally, the guidance we have seen recommends cleaning and then disinfecting high-touch surfaces at least daily on buses that are in service, using common cleaning products, followed by approved disinfectants like those listed on the [EPA coronavirus website](#). When possible, workers should use personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves, gowns, eye protection, and masks. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website provides guidance at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html>. King County (Washington) Metro authority has adopted the following cleaning protocol for its transit buses that includes some useful procedures which can be adapted to school buses: <https://kingcountymetro.blog/2020/03/03/march-3-metro-implements-new-cleaning-procedures-across-fleet-to-limit-spread-of-novel-coronavirus/>. Shortly, Thomas Built Buses will be posting comprehensive school bus cleaning and sanitizing/disinfecting procedures on its [website](#). The TBB procedures include specific recommendations for the types of products that may be used on different bus interior surfaces without damaging them. Avoiding degradation of bus interior materials, such as safety belts and seat covers, is an important consideration.

In order to augment these resources, NASDPTS is seeking information from LEAs and others who may have developed checklists and procedures specific to school buses and student transportation. Such information can be sent to www.execdir@nasdpts.org.

Q- While schools are closed many school buses are being used throughout the country to deliver ready to eat **student meals and food commodities** within local communities. Some buses are being used to provide continuity of education for students by providing **wi-fi hotspots** for virtual education in underserved areas or by delivering **written lesson plans and educational packets** to designated pickup spots. What are some examples that LEAs, charter schools, and contractors can model to duplicate these outreach efforts in their own communities?

A- There are many inspiring examples of school bus drivers and other transportation professionals working collaboratively during this crisis with teachers and school food service professionals to ensure nutritional needs are met and educational activities are provided for students and parents. We are seeing these examples from news reports all over the country. For those wanting to replicate or learn about these innovative programs we recommend an internet news search using the combination of the terms *coronavirus, school bus, meals, nutrition, school food service, wi-fi,*

lesson plans, and relevant terms. Trade publications like [School Bus Fleet](#) magazine and [School Transportation News](#) are also great sources of information.

Q- When our buses stop on public streets to deliver meals or other resources, should we use the **loading/unloading lights** and deploy **stop arms** as we would do for a normal student stop?

A- Children are at risk of injury as pedestrians, especially from other motorists, when they are in the vicinity of a stopped school bus on a public street. At least one state has authorized school bus drivers to use their eight-way student loading lights when stopped to deliver meals to children. Another state's police agency advised using the bus's 4-way hazard warning lights in this situation. NASDPTS recommends contacting your [state director of student transportation](#) and/or state police agency for guidance and requirements.

Q- What should school bus drivers who are delivering meals or other resources do to prevent transmission of the virus when they are **interacting with students and families**?

A- Readers may wish to consider asking local public health departments and/or their school food service authorities for guidance on this question, since the health risk would be the same as any other form of personal interaction. Local authorities are in the best position to provide such guidance, but there are well publicized precautionary measures, such as providing convenient hand sanitizer to all employees, maintaining social distance during interactions, directing students and others not to bunch together, not handing meals or other items directly to recipients, not allowing students or parents to get on the bus, requiring drivers and others to stand down and self-isolate if they have any possible symptoms of COVID-19 or believe they may be carrying the virus, and using available personal protective equipment (PPE), such as proper gloves. The CDC and other health agencies are recommending that persons who have no signs of infection and are not front line health care workers should NOT use [N95 filter masks](#). Such equipment remains in short supply and is more critically needed by front line health care professionals.

Q- What methods are states and LEAs using to **maintain gainful employment and continue paying** publicly employed and contracted school bus drivers and other transportation employees while schools are closed?

A- Decision making with regard to continuing employment and pay for salaried and hourly employees, whether publicly employed or contracted, is within the authority of LEAs, charter schools, and contractors. There are many examples in the news of employers authorizing or requiring alternative duties and services by employees, such as meal delivery and other services outlined above. These duties can allow personnel to remain gainfully employed during school closures. However, specific recommendations and the potential ramifications and legalities of these decisions is beyond the scope of this information report. We encourage transportation professionals to stay informed on this issue. Sources of information are evolving rapidly, but they include the Families First Coronavirus Response Act [H.R. 6201](#) and the [National School Transportation Association](#), which has been working to ensure that school bus drivers remain productively employed.

Q- What **waivers or exemptions from driver requirements** have been issued associated with school and transportation department shutdowns and their attendant difficulties, such as CDL licenses expiring, drug and alcohol random testing disruptions, medical examiner certificates (MECs) expiring, and the like?

A1- Drug and Alcohol Testing: The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) has issued an [emergency declaration](#) related to some FMCSA regulations in 49 CFR Part 390-399. In this declaration, they specifically state this is not an exemption from the controlled substances and alcohol use and testing requirements, 49 CFR Part 382. All testing, including random testing, should continue as required. However, if a school is shut down and no school bus driver is performing safety sensitive functions, testing cannot be performed. The employer will need to note why the randomly selected drivers were not tested during the selection period. Employers may wish to document the date the random test was scheduled and the dates the donor was not performing safety-sensitive functions. The employer will still be required to meet the random testing percentages for 2020 of 50 percent for drugs and 10 percent for alcohol. Once schools reopen and throughout the remainder of the calendar year, employers will need to increase their random testing to ensure compliance. Employers should work closely with their testing providers to monitor compliance and stay apprised of any waivers or delays that may be approved within the federal regulations.

A2- Commercial Driver Licensing and Medical Examiner Certificates: On March 24, 2020, the FMCSA issued a “Waiver in Response to the COVID-19 Emergency – For States, CDL Holders, CLP Holders, and Interstate Drivers Operating Commercial Motor Vehicles,” available [here](#). The waiver is multi-part and provides until June 30, 2020, a waiver from certain regulations applicable to interstate and intrastate commercial driver’s license (CDL) and commercial learner’s permit (CLP) holders and to other interstate drivers operating commercial motor vehicles (CMVs). It includes the following provisions:

- Extends until June 30, 2020 the maximum period of CDL validity by waiving 49 CFR 383.73(b)(9) and 383.73(d)(6) for CDLs due for renewal on or after March 1, 2020.
- Extends until June 30, 2020 the maximum period of CLP validity by waiving 49 CFR 383.73(a)(2)(iii) and 383.25(c) for CLPs that are due for renewal on or after March 1, 2020, without requiring the CLP holders to retake the general and endorsement knowledge tests.
- Waives the requirement under 49 CFR 383.25(e) that CLP holders wait 14 days to take the CDL skills test.
- Waives the requirement under 49 CFR 391.45 that CDL holders, CLP holders, and non-CDL drivers have a medical examination and certification, provided that they have proof of a valid medical certification that was issued for a period of 90 days or longer and that expired on or after March 1, 2020.
- Waives the requirement under 49 CFR 383.71(h)(3) that, in order to maintain the medical certification status of “certified,” CDL or CLP holders provide the State Driver Licensing Agency with an original or copy of a subsequently issued medical examiner’s certificate, provided that they have proof of a valid medical certification that expired on or after March 1, 2020.
- Waives the requirement under 49 CFR 383.73(o)(2) that the State Driver Licensing Agency change the CDL or CLP holder’s medical certification status to “not certified” upon the expiration of the medical examiner’s certificate or medical variance, provided that the CDL or CLP holders have proof of a valid medical certification that expired on or after March 1, 2020.
- Waives the requirements under 49 CFR 383.73(o)(4) that the State Driver Licensing Agency initiate a CDL or CLP downgrade upon the expiration of the medical examiner’s certificate or medical variance, provided that the CDL or CLP holders have proof of a valid medical certification or medical variance that expired on or after March 1, 2020.

- In accordance with 49 CFR 383.23(a)(1) and 391.41(a)(1)(i), FMCSA continues to recognize the validity of commercial driver's licenses issued by Canadian Provinces and Territories and Licencias Federales de Conductor issued by the United Mexican States, in accordance with 49 CFR part 383, when such jurisdictions issue a similar notice or declaration extending the validity date of the medical examination and certification and/or validity of the corresponding commercial driver's license due to interruption to government service resulting from COVID-19.

States, CDL holders, CLP holders, and interstate non-CDL CMV drivers are covered under this waiver without further action.

FMCSA will not issue a finding of noncompliance under 49 CFR part 384 against States for action or inaction consistent with this waiver.

Regarding Medical Examiner Certificates, although the federal ME regulations do not extend to most public school bus drivers *under federal authority*, many states have look-alike or more stringent regulations for medical examinations and qualifications of school bus drivers. NASDPTS recommends that you contact your [state director of student transportation](#) or other regulating state agency, as individual states may have instituted similar relief measures during the current crisis. Since this situation is evolving so rapidly, we recommend checking back frequently at the FMCSA Emergency Declarations page located [here](#).

Q- What NASDPTS-related events and activities have been postponed or canceled as a result of shelter-in-place guidance and travel restrictions from state and federal agencies?

A1- The National Congress on School Transportation, which is organized by several organizations, including NASDPTS, has been postponed for a year and is now scheduled for May 16-19, 2021. More information on registration refunds and other matters relating to the postponement can be found at www.ncstonline.org.

A2- The Tenth Annual NASDPTS Illegal Passing Survey, which involves school bus drivers documenting the incidence of illegal passing, was to have been conducted this spring. This survey collection has been canceled. More information is available [here](#) and at <http://www.nasdpts.org/StopArm/index.html>.

Conclusion:

Throughout this crisis NASDPTS and other groups and agencies stand ready to assist members and others. This Information Report cannot possibly encompass all the information that student transportation professionals and their families and friends need during this worldwide health emergency. This report is but one arrow in our collective quiver. NASDPTS commends all those in public health and education, including student transportation, who are working tirelessly to survive and recover from the coronavirus pandemic.

In closing, the Florida Association for Pupil Transportation granted us permission to reprint these thoughts that were sent to its members recently:

May those of us who are inconvenienced by these decisions remember those whose health may truly be at risk.

May those of us that have to cancel travel and or who may have to work from home remember those who have no safe place to go or work to go to.

May those of us who feel the fear and anxiety around us reach out to each other with care and compassion.

Resources and Links:

Federal Agencies:

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)- www.fema.gov/coronavirus
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)- www.cdc.gov
- Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)-
<https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/coronavirus/index.html>
- Transportation Security Administration- www.tsa.gov
- Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration- www.fmcsa.dot.gov
- Environmental Protection Agency- www.epa.gov
- US Department of Education- www.ed.gov

Trade Publications:

- School Bus Fleet Magazine- www.schoolbusfleet.com
- School Transportation News- www.stnonline.com

National Student Transportation Associations:

- National Association for Pupil Transportation- www.napt.org
- National School Transportation Association- www.yellowbuses.org
- National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services- www.nasdpts.org
- National Congress on School Transportation- www.ncstonline.org

Other Resources:

- John Hopkins University Coronavirus Map-
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>
- National Association of School Nurses- <https://www.nasn.org/home>
- American Public Health Association- <http://aphagetready.org/coronavirus.htm>

This paper is intended to provide information; it is not a legal document. Readers are encouraged to review the listed links and resources and consult others for complete information on this topic. NASDPTS encourages questions and comments.

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