[Garrett County Public Schools and Garrett County Emergency Management Joint School Bus Accident Standard Operating Guidelines]

These procedures are to inform staff of their roles and responsibilities if they are involved in or responding to a school bus accident. These procedures are to be operated in concert with the Garrett County Public Schools and Garrett County Emergency Management Joint School Bus Accident Standard Operating Guidelines.

A. Definitions

1. ACCIDENT: An occurrence or action involving a driver of a school vehicle operated by or under contract to a local school system, which results in an injury or fatality to an individual or damage to a motor vehicle or property, when said property damage is "appreciable damage," meaning in excess of $1,500. COMAR 13A.06.07.01.

2. COUNTY EMERGENCY MANAGER: The individual responsible for managing the emergency response teams in Garrett County.

3. INCIDENT: Any occurrence involving a school vehicle, other than an accident, that does not result in individual injury, and/or incurs property damage not exceeding $1,500. An example of an incident is when a bus might travel off the road into a ditch, but no individual injury or significant property damage has occurred.

B. Reporting Goals

The report of any school bus accident or incident shall result in immediate action to achieve the following:

1. Attention to the health and safety of students, staff, chaperones, and/or bus operators
2. Report and disclosure to the Superintendent’s Office
3. Timely notification of parents
4. Investigation by law enforcement and school officials

C. General Provision
1. A list of students that are normally transported will be maintained and carried in a secure location on each bus. This list will have duplicate copies and can be used as reference during an accident.

2. When a school bus is involved in an unfortunate event, it is of utmost importance that it be immediately classified as either an incident or an accident, as this will determine the level of emergency response and the amount and type of resources needed.

D. School Bus Driver Duties

   1. Unless physically unable, due to injury, the school vehicle driver shall report to the Director of Transportation a school vehicle incident or accident as soon as practicable.

   2. The school vehicle driver shall specify whether it is an accident or incident, based on his/her best educated guess referencing known information.

   3. If the report is given over a two-way radio, discretion is advised on the amount of information given; however, in order to expedite assistance, the office must know what is required.

   4. If the school vehicle driver cannot reach the transportation office within 15 seconds, then he/she must call the central office and give an appropriate administrator the necessary information.

   5. In the event neither the transportation nor the central office can be reached, the driver shall use the necessary measures to:

      a. Summon medical and law enforcement personnel; and
      b. Continue to try notifying transportation office/central office.

   6. Pursuant to COMAR 13A.06.07.07, a school vehicle driver or trainee who is able but fails to report an accident as soon as practicable following the accident is disqualified from operating a school vehicle. The duration of the disqualification is at the discretion of the Director of Transportation.

E. Director of Transportation Duties

   1. If the first report is from a bystander or person other than the school vehicle driver, the Director of Transportation must make his/her best guess of an accident or incident from the information provided. If unable to gather enough information, the Director should err on the side of caution and identify the event as an accident until further information is available, and he/she should immediately call 911 to ensure the emergency response system has been activated.

   2. Upon the occurrence of any school bus accident involving public school students and/or staff, the Director of Transportation shall:

      a. Immediately notify emergency medical personnel, the Central Office, and law enforcement officers.
      b. Go to the scene as soon as possible.
      c. Arrange for appropriate transportation for students when they are ready to be released.
      d. Ensure a copy of the accident report is sent to the Maryland State Department of Education when property damage is over the amount referenced in the current COMAR regulation.

F. School Officials and Superintendent Duties

   1. When a school administrator is notified of a bus accident involving public school students and/or staff, he/she shall immediately notify the Superintendent of schools and the county emergency manager.
2. The Superintendent or designee will then notify all other school administrators and necessary office and support staff. If appropriate, staff will be mobilized to provide needed communication and support services.

3. The Superintendent or designee shall immediately go to the school bus accident site for examination and evaluation of the situation.

4. The Superintendent or designee will make notifications to all parents of any student involved in a bus accident.

5. The Superintendent, with the support of the emergency manager, shall coordinate the release of bus accident information to be disseminated through the GCPS Public Information Office.

6. Following a bus accident, the Superintendent shall prepare a report to the Board of Education.

7. The Superintendent may use a school bus inspector to investigate an accident.

G. Accident Site Procedures and Release of Public School Students and Employees

1. No public school student or staff member shall be released from the scene of an accident except by a school official.

2. In determining need for release, school officials will yield to the more conservative position of student and employee safety.

3. Any student or staff complaint of any injury, or any cause for doubt, shall be cause for evaluation by appropriately trained medical personnel, including transportation to a hospital as necessary.

4. All decisions regarding the treatment, disposition or hospitalization of students will be made by the emergency medical personnel at the site.

5. The senior school administrator on the site will be the decision maker for any student matters not under jurisdiction of emergency medical personnel. The senior school administrator may act "in loco parentis" for students in any matter not under the jurisdiction of emergency medical personnel. The senior school administrator on the site will retain responsibility for any students not in need of medical treatment as deemed appropriate by emergency medical personnel.