

NDE Pupil Transportation Reminders 2021/2022 School Year



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Pupil Transportation and COVID-19

- CDC will be updating recommendations for the fall when school starts and will be available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/operation-strategy.html> and at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-staff.html>. Currently, the CDC recommends that drivers and passengers continue to wear masks.
- Even though there are no restrictions or special guidelines remaining due to COVID-19, some of the practices could continue depending on local policies:
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces on school buses between use as much as possible.
 - Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.
 - Drivers should follow the same practices the CDC recommends to bus transit operators.
- Cleaning and sanitation of pupil transportation vehicles will be important when school starts in August. The following links are to bus manufacturer disinfecting instructions:
 - Blue Bird <https://www.blue-bird.com/buses/disinfection-best-practices>
 - Thomas: https://thomasbuiltbuses.com/content/uploads/2020/06/COVID19-Cleaning-Instructions_June2020.pdf
 - International <https://www.icbus.com/blog/cleaning-an-ic-bus>

Nebraska Safety Center Level I and II Classes

- In-person Level trainings are being held as scheduled following the suspension of in-person trainings due to COVID-19 Directed Health Measures. Level I and Level II trainings are offered via zoom so your drivers will have the option on how they can complete the training to be ready to drive for the upcoming school year. Register for those classes with the Nebraska Safety Center at <https://nepupiltransportation.com/>.
- Before offering the Level I or Level II zoom training option to drivers, districts should review the Zoom Online Expectation document provided by Nebraska Safety Center at https://www.unk.edu/offices/safety_center/how-to-zoom-general.pdf This provides guidance on providing access to this Zoom training and includes most situations that might be encountered during a training session. Even though drivers can be trained remotely, NDE and the Nebraska Safety Center expect drivers to participate in these on-line Zoom courses in a similar fashion as they would in person.
- Small vehicle drivers attend first three hours on the first day of the Level I class. Drivers of school buses complete the entire eleven hours of the Level I class.

Nebraska Safety Center Driver Database

- Nebraska Safety Center's database is available for all drivers and schools to utilize. The database will allow the school to do the following:
 - Download a list of Drivers
 - View level dates for all of their drivers
 - Register Drivers for courses
 - Upload Pre-Drive forms
 - Edit driver contact information - ***Level expirations are sent via email from the system, so it is important emails are entered and correct***
 - If you need drivers removed from your list of drivers, please email a list of those drivers to the Nebraska Safety Center to be removed.
- This database be found at <https://nepupiltransportation.com/>.
 - If you need access to a school account for database, please email the Nebraska Safety Center at bus@unk.edu with your name, school, email and phone number to obtain a login. For a password reset, please email us at this same address.

Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Reminders

The following is a partial list of requirements that impact school bus drivers. The full list of requirements can be found at <http://www.dmv.nebraska.gov/examining/CDL.html>

- In order to take the skills tests for a CDL, drivers must first have a Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) for 14 days. All applicable knowledge tests must be passed in order to obtain a CLP.
- ALL CLP/CDL applicants are required to show proof of U.S. Citizenship or lawful status. A list of acceptable documents for proof of citizenship, lawful status, identification and principal address can be found on the DMV website at www.dmv.ne.gov. Applicants will only have to provide proof of citizenship one time after July 2015 during the licensing process.
- A CDL School Bus Pre-Trip Inspection video is available on the DMV website at

http://www.dmv.nebraska.gov/examining/School_Bus_pretrip_video.html

- For more information about these requirements, please contact the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) at 402.471.3861
- **Please note:** CDL skills tests are only administered at 22 DMV locations throughout the state and appointments for skills testing must be made in advance. (CDL knowledge tests can be taken at all Driver Licensing Services Offices.) Keep in mind that in order to schedule an appointment for the CDL Skills test, drivers must have held a valid Nebraska CLP for 14 days. Contact DMV at 402.471.7983 to find locations for the skills test and make appointments for skills tests. Drivers also have the option to be tested by a CDL Third Party Examiner for a fee.

Driver Physicals (Medical Exams)

- Medical exams for pupil transportation driver (*school bus and small vehicle on routes*) **are valid for two years** unless the health profession approves the exam for a shorter period of time due to medical issues of the driver.
- Drivers will provide the Medical Examiner's Certificate (last page of medical exam document) to their employer. Only drivers holding a CDL will provide a copy of the Medical Examiners Certificate to DMV when required by Federal CDL Regulations.
- The medical exams must be performed by a health professional that is a "Certified Medical Examiner" that is also listed on the FMCSA's (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) National Registry. For more information and to locate for health professional nearby: <https://nationalregistry.fmcsa.dot.gov/NRPublicUI/home.seam>

DOT Alcohol and Controlled Substances Testing

- Schools are *required* by the U.S. DOT Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to implement an Alcohol and Controlled Substances Testing Program for their employees who drive school buses requiring a CDL.
- Visit the FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse page for more information [Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse - \(dot.gov\)](#)
- If you have questions, please contact Jennifer Lancaster with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Nebraska Division at 402-437-5928.

School Bus Driver In-Service Training

- Employers of drivers are required to provide in-service to **all** their drivers – **this includes small vehicle activity drivers**. This in-service must be at least two hours and must include the following topics at a minimum:
 - Emergency Evacuations.
 - Loading/Unloading.
 - Student management.

- Vehicle inspections.
 - School's Safe Pupil Transportation Plan.
- The Nebraska Safety Center provides a pupil transportation driver in-service program for employers. Please contact the Nebraska Safety Center at 308-865-8256 or you can register online for the training at: https://unk.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_700kDjLEHmwpjip.

Functional Capacity of Pupil Transportation Drivers

- Schools are required to **annually confirm** their driver's ability to conduct the daily tasks of safely transporting students and conduct emergency evacuations.
- Schools can develop their own functional capacity testing procedures **conducted on an annual basis** that is best suited for their district with the intent of keeping students as safe as possible at all times.
- This requirement was added in response to the school bus fire in western Iowa in 2017 where a driver and a student were killed because the driver had very limited mobility. The Iowa school district was found to be liable for damages since this driver was allowed to drive one of their pupil transportation vehicles.

Emergency Evacuations

- Twice during each school year, schools must provide an opportunity for each student to take part in instruction in safe riding practices and emergency evacuation drills.
- The instruction and drills must be provided to students whether the school owns the vehicle or transportation is provided by a private contractor and are required to be conducted by a qualified school bus driver per Rule 91. Guidelines are available in the appendix of NDE Rule 91.
- Superintendents verify the emergency evacuations were conducted during the school year through the Pupil Transportation Report located in the NDE Portal within the Consolidated Data Collection (CDC).
- NDE has been receiving reports that some schools or contractors are not conducting emergency evacuation drills for their students. Please note that this is a statutory requirement and verification of the drills are required in the Pupil Transportation Report.

Vehicle Inspections

- Vehicles (*including contracted vehicles*) that transport students must have been inspected according to NDE Rules 91 and 92. These inspections include:
- *Pre-Trip Vehicle Inspection* done **before each trip** if an hour has passed since the last trip. (New requirement in Rule 91)
 - *80-day inspections* done before school and every 80 days thereafter
 - *Post-trip Vehicle Inspection* for any students left on board
- Documentation of the Pre-Trip, 80-day and Post Trip inspections must be kept in school files for a period of at least five years. This documentation would be a critical piece of information for the school during an investigation of a school vehicle accident with students involved.

Contracting for Pupil Transportation

- Private providers of pupil transportation are also required to follow all of the Rule 91 regulations for driver qualifications and vehicles to transport students.
- **Be aware that responsibility is yours as the administrator to assure these contractor-owned vehicles have been documented as safe pupil transportation vehicles.** Like any pupil transportation vehicle, you must have documentation for the inspections of these contracted vehicles on file at the district.
- Require the vehicle identification numbers (VIN) be included on all invoices from the contractor. In the past, some contractors may not have been forthcoming with that information. Since schools are required to submit that information on the Pupil Transportation Report each spring, we have instructed many schools to hold payment until accurate VINs have been provided. Please do not accept a list of VINs for vehicles that may or may not have been actually used by your school.

Licensing Drivers

- School Bus Permits no longer exist since they were eliminated in statute effective January 1, 2019.
- A description of requirements for pupil transportation drivers are available at <https://www.education.ne.gov/fos/pupil-transportation/requirements-to-drive-a-pupil-transportation-vehicle/>

Driver Records

- Each year, schools must verify or obtain a record of satisfactory driving from DMV **for all drivers**. Policy established by local governing boards determines each school's definition of "satisfactory driving." (*NDE Rule 91 – 003.03A3*) ***This does include drivers of activity trips.***
- A criminal background check is required before a driver is hired and for **every** driver during the calendar year that coincides with the expiration of the individual's motor vehicle operator's license (every five years). Contact the Nebraska State Patrol for more information. (*NDE Rule 91 – 003-03A5*) ***This does include drivers of activity trips.***

Contents of Pupil Transportation Driver Files:

- The following documents should be included in **each** of the driver's files:
 - Documentation of Level Training (Small vehicle activity drivers exempt)
 - *Valid for 5 years*
 - Medical Certificate (Small vehicle activity drivers exempt)
 - *Valid for 2 years*
 - Criminal Background Check
 - *Valid for 5 years*
 - DMV Driving Record
 - *Must be updated annually*

Retention of Pupil Transportation Records

- Schools need to keep all pupil transportation records for at least five years.
- This includes driver physicals, driver driving records and background checks, driver training documentation, and all vehicle inspection records.

Hiring Out-of-State Drivers

- Drivers residing in bordering states (Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Iowa, and Missouri) may be eligible to become a qualified pupil transportation driver without holding a current Nebraska License after completing the licensing process.
- A driver from a state other than the bordering states must first receive a Nebraska Driver's License prior to registering for a Level I Training Course.
- Contact the Department of Motor Vehicles at 402-471-3890 for more information.

“Need a Driver Today!”

- If a situation arises where students have to be transported in an emergency situation, a School Bus Permit is not required “when approved by the school administrator or person designated by the governing school board.” (*NDE Rule 91 - 003-01A*)
- *This only applies to small vehicles such as a car or van...it does not include school buses because a CDL is required.*
- Emergency situations should be carefully defined in local policy. These situations could include that the parent of a sick child has no transportation available and their child needs to be taken home and no drivers are available.

Questions? Please contact Stephanie DeGroot at stephanie.degroot@nebraska.gov or Bryce Wilson at bryce.wilson@nebraska.gov.