

540 CMR: REGISTRY OF MOTOR VEHICLES

540 CMR 8.00: SCHOOL BUS DRIVER TRAINING PROGRAMS AND SCHOOL BUS DRIVING INSTRUCTORS

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8.01: Purpose, Scope and Applicability

540 CMR 8.00 is adopted by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles pursuant to M.G.L. c. 90, § 8A to establish uniform standards and requirements for the issuance of School Bus Driving Instructor's Certificates, and for the operation of School Bus Driver Training Programs.

8.02: General Qualifications for School Bus Driving Instructor's Certificate

- (1) An applicant for a School Bus Driving Instructor's Certificate (Instructor's Certificate) shall submit such application and other information as required by the Registrar.
- (2) In order to qualify for an Instructor's Certificate, an applicant must have at least two years of licensed school bus driving experience, in addition to satisfying all of the requirements of M.G.L. c. 90, § 8A.
- (3) At all times while instructions are being conducted, the holder of an Instructor's Certificate shall have the Certificate available for inspection by a police officer or other person authorized by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. The instructor shall permit such officer or person to examine the certificate in hand, and shall sign his or her name if requested to do so by such officer or person.
- (4) Licensed School Bus Driving Instructors shall from time to time, be required to attend and successfully complete a training program within four years sponsored or sanctioned by the Registry of Motor Vehicles, to maintain or update the Instructor's knowledge, skills or abilities in regard to school bus operation, equipment, maintenance or instruction. A School Bus Driving Instructor's Certificate may not be renewed if the Instructor has failed to successfully complete a required training program.

8.03: School Bus Driving Training Programs (Pre-service and In-service) General Requirements

- (1) No school bus driving instructor (Instructor) may certify any person in a school bus driver training program unless the person has satisfactorily completed a pre-service training program established under the provisions of M.G.L. c. 90, § 8A consisting of approximately 60 hours, and has passed a written examination with a grade of at least 75%. Such written examination shall be prepared, administered and evaluated by the Registry of Motor Vehicles and shall consist of questions based on the course content of the training program.

Entry-level Driver Training; Required Minimum Program of Instruction for Class B and C CDL Applicants. The required minimum program of instruction for for Class B and Class C CDL Applicants seeking licensure qualifying them to operate a school bus shall include the following Sections and Units:

- (a) Section 1-Basic Operation.
 - Unit 1.1 Permit Training
 - Unit 1.2 Orientation
 - Unit 1.3 Unique Features of the School Bus
 - Unit 1.4 Vehicle Inspection (Pre & Post Trip)
 - Unit 1.5 Control Systems
 - Unit 1.6 Proficiency Development

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(b) Section 2-Safe Operating Practices.

- Unit 2.1 Mirrors & Reference Points, Visual Search
- Unit 2.2 Off Road Skills
 - Unit 2.2a Offset Alley
 - Unit 2.2b Parallel Park (Conventional & Sight Side)
 - Unit 2.2c Alley Dock
- Unit 2.3 On Road Skills
 - Unit 2.3a Turns, Right & Left
 - Unit 2.3b Intersections
 - Unit 2.3c Backing
 - Unit 2.3d Highway Driving
 - Unit 2.3e City Driving
 - Unit 2.3f Winter Driving
 - Unit 2.3g Night Driving
 - Unit 2.3h Communications (Radio Procedures/Cell Phone Restrictions)
 - Unit 2.3i Vehicle Dimensions (Height/Weight/Length)
- Unit 2.4 Proficiency Development

(c) Section 3-Advanced Operating Procedures.

- Unit 3.1 Hazard Perception
- Unit 3.2 Defensive Driving
 - Unit 3.2a Following Distance
 - Unit 3.2b Space Cushion
- Unit 3.3 Skid Control and Recovery
- Unit 3.4 Special Situations
 - Unit 3.4a Student Pick-up & Drop-off
 - Unit 3.4b RR Crossings
 - Unit 3.4c Student Management & Bullying
 - Unit 3.4d Special Needs Students
 - Unit 3.4e School Bus Evacuation
- Unit 3.5 Proficiency Development

(d) Section 4-Vehicle Maintenance.

- Unit 4.1 Vehicle Systems
 - Unit 4.1a Anti-idling Regulations
- Unit 4.2 Diagnosing Malfunctions
- Unit 4.3 Preventative Maintenance
- Unit 4.4 Out of Service Criteria

(e) Section 5-Non-driving Activities.

- Unit 5.1 Crash Procedures/Safety Equipment
- Unit 5.2 First Aid/Blood Borne Pathogens
- Unit 5.3 Terrorist & Security Training
- Unit 5.4 Trip Planning (Charter & Field Trips)
- Unit 5.5 Required General Knowledge Test for School Bus Drivers
- Unit 5.6 Hours of Service Requirements

Commercial Driver License (CDL) applicants must complete a minimum of 32 hours behind-the-wheel training as well as a minimum of 28 hours classroom training with a certified Massachusetts School Bus Instructor.

Current CDL holders who need to obtain a Registry of Motor Vehicles MV or Department of Public Utilities issued school bus driver's certificate must complete a minimum of 40 hours which shall consist of any combination of classroom and behind the wheel training to be determined by the certified School Bus Instructor.

For Class B applicants, the mandatory minimum hours of behind-the-wheel training must be conducted in a representative vehicle for that class of license.

For Class C applicants, the mandatory minimum hours of behind-the-wheel training must be conducted in a school bus having a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of at least 14,000 pounds. For school buses a vehicle designed to transport sixteen or more passengers including the operator shall be used.

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(f) Section 1-Basic Operation. The units in Section 1-Basic Operation must cover the interaction between the driver and the Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV). The entry level Commercial Driver License (CDL) driver-trainee will receive instruction in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) and will be introduced to the basic vehicle instruments and controls. The units in this section must also teach students how to properly perform vehicle inspections and control the motion of the vehicle under various road and traffic conditions. During the driving exercises at off-highway locations required by this section, students must first familiarize themselves with the basic operating characteristics of the CMV. Students must be able to perform the skills learned in each unit to a level of proficiency required to permit safe transition to on-street driving.

Unit 1.1-Permit Training. This unit prepares the applicant to take an exam, testing their knowledge and understanding of Mass Motor Vehicle and CDL laws. To prepare for their permit the applicant should study the Commercial Drivers License manual available at the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV). All applicants who wish to drive a school bus must take the general knowledge test, passenger test, school bus test, and air brake test if vehicle is equipped with air brakes. Tests are given at the RMV. A learner's permit gives the applicant permission to drive with a certified school bus instructor to practice their driving skills. All applicants must meet eligibility requirements listed in 49 CFR Part 391 or 540 CMR 2.06 and 14.00.

Unit 1.2-Orientation. This unit must introduce students to the driver training curriculum and the components of the vehicle. The student will learn the safety fundamentals, essential regulatory requirements (*i.e.*, overview of FMCSRs/School Bus regulations), and driver responsibilities not directly related to driving. This unit must also include an overview of the applicability of state and local laws relating to the safe operation of the CMV.

Unit 1.3-Unique Features of the School Bus. This unit must cover the many different features of the school bus such as flashing school lights, stop arm, emergency exits (windows, doors and roof hatches), signage, color (national school bus yellow), *etc.*

Unit 1.4-Vehicle Inspection. This unit must stress to students the importance of vehicle inspections and help them develop the skills necessary for conducting pre-trip, *en-route*, and post-trip inspections. M.G.L. c. 90, § 7B.

Unit 1.5-Control Systems. This unit must introduce students to vehicle instruments and controls. The student will learn to read gauges and instruments correctly and learn correct use of vehicle safety components, including use of mirrors and proper safety belt use for both driver and passengers.

Unit 1.6-Proficiency Development. The purpose of this unit is to enable entry-level CDL driver-trainees to gain proficiency and demonstrate the skills taught in Units 1.1 through 1.5. The activities of this unit must consist of driving exercises that provide practice for the development of basic control skills and mastery of basic maneuvers. Nearly all activity in this unit will take place on the driving range or on streets or roads that have low-density traffic conditions.

(g) Section 2-Safe Operating Practices. The units in Section 2-Safe Operating Practices teach the practices required for safe operation of the vehicle on the highway. Entry-level CDL driver-trainees must be taught how to apply their basic operating skills in a way that ensures their safety and that of other road users under various road, weather, and traffic conditions.

Unit 2.1-Mirrors & Reference Points, Visual Search. The purpose of this unit is to enable students to visually search the road for potential hazards and critical objects.

Unit 2.2-Off Road Skills. The purpose of this unit is to evaluate your basic skills in controlling the vehicle.

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Unit 2.2a-Offset Alley. The purpose of this unit is to evaluate lane changes and backing skills, while using proper mirror use and reference points.

Unit 2.2b-Parallel Park (Conventional & Sight Side). The purpose of this unit is to evaluate your skills when parking your vehicle in a parallel parking space that is on your right and left side, you must drive past the parking space and back into it without crossing over boundaries and stop within the required distance while using mirrors and reference points.

Unit 2.2c-Alley Dock. The purpose of this unit is to sight-side back your vehicle into an alley without crossing over any boundaries stopping the rear of your vehicle within the required distance using reference points and mirrors.

Unit 2.3-On Road Skills. The purpose of this unit is to ascertain the overall driving skills of the applicant. You will drive over a test route that has a variety of traffic situations. At all times during the test you must drive in a safe and responsible manner.

Unit 2.3a-Turns, Right & Left. The purpose of this unit is to check traffic in all directions, use turn signals and safely get into the lane needed for the turn. Keep both hands on the steering wheel during the turn and do not change gears during the turn, constantly checking mirrors to make sure the vehicle does not hit any object on the inside of the turn.

Unit 2.3b-Intersections. The purpose of this unit is to check traffic thoroughly in all directions, decelerate gently and cover the brake pedal, brake smoothly and if necessary change gears. Keep your hands on the wheel.

Unit 2.3c-Backing. This unit must prepare students to back the vehicle safely particularly related to the safety of pedestrians.

Unit 2.3d-Highway Driving. The purpose of this unit is to check traffic, use proper signals, merge smoothly into the proper lane of traffic, maintain proper lane positioning, vehicle spacing, vehicle speed, and continue to check traffic thoroughly in all directions.

Unit 2.3e-City Driving. The purpose of this unit is to make regular traffic checks and maintain a safe following distance. Your vehicle should be centered in the proper lane (right-most lane) and you should keep up with the flow of traffic but not exceed the posted speed limit.

Unit 2.3f-Winter Driving. The purpose of this unit is to educate drivers on the hazards of winter driving whenever practical. You should practice driving in winter conditions, because motor vehicles handle much differently on ice and snow than they do on warm dry pavement. Reduce your speed according to road conditions. Drive cautiously and accelerate gently. Increase the space between your vehicle and others. Make sure your windshield wipers, washers and defrosters are in good condition.

Unit 2.3g-Night Driving. The purpose of this unit is to make the driver more aware that night driving is more dangerous. Drivers can't see hazards as soon as in daylight, so they have less time to re-act. Drivers caught by surprise are less able to avoid a crash. The problems of night driving include: the driver, the roadway, and the vehicle. Some causes of dangerous driving may include vision, glare, fatigue and lack of alertness and poor lighting.

Unit 2.3h-Communications (Radio Procedures/Cell Phone Restrictions). The purpose of this unit is to convey to the driver mobile phone restrictions. No person shall operate a moving bus while using a mobile telephone except in the case of an emergency. M.G.L. c. 90, § 7B.

Unit 2.3i-Vehicle Dimensions (Height/Weight/Length). The purpose of this unit is to be aware of and to keep weights, height and lengths within legal limits. M.G.L. c. 90, § 19.

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Unit 2.4-Proficiency Development. This unit must provide entry-level CDL driver trainees an opportunity to refine, within the on street traffic environment, their vehicle handling skills learned in Section 1, and the Safe operating practices learned in Section 2. Driver-student performance progress must be closely monitored to determine when the level of proficiency required for carrying out the basic traffic maneuvers of stopping, turning, merging, curves, lane changing, passing, driving through traffic restrictions, driving through intersections, and parking has been attained. Driver-students must also be assessed for compliance with all traffic laws. Nearly all activity in this unit will take place on public roadways in a full range of traffic environments applicable to the vehicle configuration. To the extent possible, this must include urban and rural uncontrolled roadways, expressways, or freeways, under light, moderate, and heavy traffic conditions.

(h) Section 3-Advanced Operating Procedures. The units in Section 3-Advanced Operating Procedures must introduce higher level skills that can be acquired only after the more fundamental skills and knowledge taught in sections one and two have been mastered. Qualified driver instructors must teach the perceptual skills necessary to recognize potential hazards, and must demonstrate the procedures needed to handle a CMV when faced with a hazard.

Unit 3.1-Hazard Perception. The purpose of this unit is to enable students to recognize potential dangers in the driving environment and to take appropriate defensive action(s) before the dangers develop into emergencies. The unit must provide instruction addressing the principles of recognizing hazards in sufficient time to reduce the severity of the hazard and neutralize possible emergencies. Students must identify road conditions and other road users that are a potential threat to safety of the vehicle and suggest appropriate adjustments. Emphasis must be placed upon hazard recognition, road rage, visual search, and response to possible emergency-producing situations encountered in various traffic situations. Included in this unit should be a discussion of driver/passenger relationships relating to driver distraction issues.

Unit 3.2-Defensive Driving. The purpose of this unit is to discuss equipment failures, bad weather conditions, unskilled drivers on the road, unpredictable pedestrians, and drivers who ignore traffic regulations. As a defensive driver, you should constantly look ahead of and around you, and frequently check your mirrors, be aware of the road conditions or possible hazards that lie in front and to the sides and behind you.

Unit 3.2a-Following Distance. The purpose of this unit is to understand the need for space ahead. You need space ahead in case you must suddenly stop. According to accident reports, the vehicle that buses most often run into is the one in front of them. The most frequent cause is following too closely. Avoid caravan situations whenever possible.

Unit 3.2b-Space Cushion. The purpose of this unit is to communicate the needs for the space ahead, space behind, space to the sides, space overhead, space below, space for turns, and space needed to cross or enter traffic.

Unit 3.3-Skid Control and Recovery. The purpose of this unit is to teach the causes of skidding and techniques for avoiding and recovering from skids. The student must be able to maintain directional control and bring the CMV to a stop in the shortest possible distance while operating over a slippery surface.

Unit 3.4-Special Situations. The purpose of this unit is to communicate to drivers the ability to recognize potential dangers, and appropriate safety procedures.

Unit 3.4a-Student Pick-up & Drop-off. The purpose of this unit is to alert drivers to the appropriate pick-up and drop-off procedure, and to make drivers aware of the potential dangers during the loading and unloading of students.

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Unit 3.4b-Railroad Crossings. The purpose of this unit is to make the driver aware that railroad crossings are always dangerous. Every such crossing must be approached with the expectation that a train is coming. In addition, all school bus drivers shall be made aware of proper railroad crossing procedures. M.G.L. c. 90, § 15.

Unit 3.4c-Student Management & Bullying. The purpose of this unit is to make school bus drivers aware of the signs of behavioral problems on the school bus.

Unit 3.4d-Special Needs Students. The purpose of this unit is to make drivers aware of the many challenges that some students face. Prior to transporting students with disabilities, the driver should receive appropriate training in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) P.L. 101-476 IDEA under part B regulations. They appear in 34 CFR Part 300, §§ 300.7 through 300.18. Requirements under IDEA mandate that children with disabilities be served to the greatest extent possible with their nondisabled peers.

Unit 3.4e-School Bus Evacuation. The purpose of this unit is to make drivers aware of the importance of drills in the event of an actual emergency. M.G.L. c. 90, § 7B.

Unit 3.5-Proficiency Development. This unit must provide entry-level CDL driver trainees an opportunity to refine, within the on-street traffic environment, their vehicle handling skills learned in Section 1, the safe operating practices learned in Section 2, and the advanced operating procedures learned in Section 3. Driver-student performance progress must be closely monitored to determine when the level of proficiency required for carrying out the basic traffic maneuvers of stopping, turning, merging, curves, lane changing, passing, driving through traffic restrictions, driving through intersections, and parking has been attained. Driver-students must also be assessed for compliance with all traffic laws. Nearly all activity in this unit will take place on public roadways in a full range of traffic environments applicable to the vehicle configuration. To the extent possible, this must include urban and rural uncontrolled roadways, expressways, or freeways, underlight, moderate, and heavy traffic conditions.

(i) Section 4-Vehicle Maintenance. Section 4-Vehicle Maintenance is intended to provide entry level CDL driver-trainees with sufficient knowledge of the CMV and its systems and subsystems to insure that they understand and respect their role in vehicle inspection, operation, and maintenance and the impact of those factors upon highway safety and operational efficiency.

Unit 4.1-Vehicle Systems. The purpose of this unit is to teach students to identify major CMV systems. The goal is to explain their function, and how to check all key vehicle systems (*e.g.* engine, engine exhaust auxiliary systems, brakes, and drive train). The student will be provided with a detailed description of each system, its importance to safe and efficient operation, and what is needed to keep the system in good operating condition.

Unit 4.1a-Anti-idling Regulations. The purpose of this unit is to prevent idling school buses from polluting air in and around the bus. Exhaust from buses can also enter school buildings through air intakes, doors, and open windows. Diesel bus exhaust from excess idling can be a health concern. M.G.L. c. 90, § 16A.

(j) See 310 CMR 7.11 and 7.52 (Department of Environmental Protection).

(k) Section 5-Non-driving Activities. The units in Section 5-Non-driving Activities are designed to prepare entry-level CDL driver-trainees to handle those responsibilities of a CMV driver that does not involve operating the vehicle. The units in this section must ensure these activities are performed in a manner that ensures the safety of the driver, vehicle, passengers, cargo, and other road users.

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Unit 5.1- Crash Procedures/Safety Equipment. The purpose of this unit is to inform drivers of required procedures in the event of a crash/injury, also the proper usage of safety equipment.

Unit 5.2-First Aid/Blood Borne Pathogens. The purpose of this unit is to prepare drivers for the basic course in first-aid.

The Legislature, in St. 2008, c. 397, has imposed a new requirement for all original applicants for a new school bus driver certificate.

As of March 17, 2009, all original applicants for a new school bus driver certificate are required, in addition to all existing requirements, to have completed a basic course in first aid, which must include training relative to the administration of an epinephrine auto injector. The legislation requires that the registrar approve all such first aid courses.

The Registry of Motor Vehicles has identified and approved the following first aid course providers:

1. The American Red Cross
2. The National Safety Council
3. The American Heart Association

In addition, persons certified by the above organizations as an Instructor (*e.g.* firefighter/emt, paramedic, school nurse) are approved to provide the required first aid courses. Note that they must be certified as an instructor in order to provide the required first aid course and to then issue documentation that the course has been successfully completed.

Unit 5.3-Terrorist & Security Training. The purpose of this unit is to make drivers aware of potential terrorist acts: educate school bus professionals on how to identify, evaluate and report unusual activity: and inform drivers and support staff of security issues to the school bus community.

Unit 5.4-Trip Planning (Charter & Field Trips). This unit must address the importance of and requirements for planning routes and trips. This instruction must address the importance of planning the safest route, including planning for rest stops, heavy traffic areas, *etc.* Caravans should be avoided whenever possible.

Unit 5.5-Required Knowledge for School Bus Drivers. The purpose of this unit is to make drivers aware of the Medical Examination Report (DOT Physical Form) medical certificate/card, and general qualifications/disqualifications. M.G.L. c. 90, § 8A, 540 CMR 2.15.

Unit 5.6-Hours of Service Requirements. The purpose of this unit is to enable students to understand the basic concepts and requirements of the FMCSRs-Part 395, "Hours of Service of Drivers"-and to develop the ability to complete a Driver's Daily Log and logbook recap. The issues of driver fatigue and staying alert (driver wellness) will also be covered in this unit.

(2) Prior to the commencement of an in-service training program, every applicant for training shall be required to submit proof of previous qualified training to the Instructor.

(3) An applicant for the renewal of a school bus operators' license issued by the Registry of Motor Vehicles, or by the Department of Public Utilities, may only be certified by an Instructor after satisfactory completion of an in-service training program in accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. c. 90, § 8A and of not less than eight hours duration.

(4) The Instructor shall notify the appropriate licensing authority under M.G.L. c. 90, § 8A, on a form prescribed by said authority, of the successful completion of a pre-service or in-service school bus driver training program by any person.

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8.04: Records and Notices

- (1) For each bus driver training course conducted, the Instructor shall maintain:
 - (a) Two permanently bound books, one for in-service training and one for pre-service training with pages consecutively numbered, containing:
 1. an initial page headed by the beginning date of the training program, the Instructor's signature, and each trainee's name and address;
 2. a successive page for each lesson, showing the date, time, topic, length of time and location of each lesson. The Trainee must sign and print his or her name prior to the commencement of each lesson; and
 - (b) an individual card file or computer record for each trainee including the trainee's name, address, date of birth, and the date, topic, length of time and location of every lesson received, and the name or initials of the Instructor.
- (2) All records required to be maintained under M.G.L. c. 90, § 8A or 540 CMR 8.00, and sample copies of each examination and the grade received by each trainee (Records) shall be maintained on an up-to-date basis within the custody of the applicable main or branch office of the sponsor of the training program for at least three years following completion of the course to which the Records relate. Such Records must be available during normal business hours for examination by a police officer or other person authorized by the Registrar of Motor Vehicles.
- (3) The Instructor or the custodian of any Records must immediately report to the Registrar by an affidavit the circumstances involving the loss, mutilation or destruction of any Records.
- (4) Upon written request, the custodian of the Records required to be maintained by 540 CMR 8.00 shall provide any trainee with a copy of his or her individual training record.

REGULATORY AUTHORITY

540 CMR 8.00: M.G.L. c. 90, § 8A.