

## To All Adults who Ride School Buses on Non-Routine Trips

So you're going on a field trip, or maybe an athletic contest! Good for you; enjoy the trip!

We are distributing this memo to help you and your students gain the most from their experience and to assure you understand your role as an adult who rides the bus with them. Your driver is looking forward to your trip. We want to help you partner with him/her to ensure a safe, enjoyable journey.

Field trips, athletic travel, and other such "non-routine" trips on school buses present a special challenge to the bus drivers. A great deal of responsibility rests on the driver's shoulders. Students and adults who travel on non-routine trips are often not aware of the driver's responsibilities. This document should help you.

Chaperones are required except when the driver is a certified teacher. The chaperone's responsibility is to assist the school bus driver in maintaining passenger control and in enforcing procedures for the safety of all passengers. The driver, verbally and through this document, instructs the chaperones as to their responsibilities. The driver may instruct them where they should sit. The Ohio Administrative Code requires bus drivers to review specific points with passengers prior to the onset of every non-routine trip, not unlike a flight attendant on an airplane.

The following guidelines are for all adults who are in charge of and/or chaperone a group of students on non-routine trips on school buses. "Adults" includes advisors, coaches, teachers, and chaperones. The adult who requested the bus is called the "Adult in Charge."

Safety is the number one priority of school transportation and all guidelines revolve around the issue of safety. By law, the bus driver is the sole authority of the bus and all who ride on it. All passengers, including adults, are expected to follow the instructions of the driver.

Drivers base their instructions on their obligation to follow certain regulations. Knowing some of them can help you help your students enjoy an enjoyable, educational trip; please refer to the points below. A full text of the "Ohio Pupil Transportation Operation and Safety Rules" is available online at <http://www.ode.state.oh.us>.

- Ridership on school buses is restricted to "authorized passengers." "Authorized passengers" is defined as those who are enrolled in the school system and take part in the activity for which the trip has been planned. Adults in charge, coaches, and those appointed as chaperones are also authorized passengers. Family members, who are neither participants nor authorized adult passengers as stated above, (e.g., spouses or siblings) are not authorized passengers; they are not permitted to ride the bus.
- A trip permit is required for all non-routine trips. The bus cannot leave without one in the driver's possession. When we give the driver the trip permit, we attach route instructions; the driver may not deviate from the designated route. Adults in Charge who prefer a specific route of travel should have provided those directions in advance. Please do not plan to direct the driver enroute. Stops are named on the trip permit; buses are not permitted to stop in locations not printed on the permit. Anticipated stops must have been approved in advance so they could be printed on the permit.
- The bus driver expects to depart at the time originally scheduled. It is the adults' responsibility to see that the bus is loaded and ready to leave at the appointed time.
- Part of the adults' responsibility is to load the bus. The driver will direct where and how to store the cargo. "Extra or oversized equipment must be stowed." (OAC 3301-83-20 (J)) Most St. Henry buses have storage compartments. All equipment, uniforms, instruments, etc., must be

stored in the compartments if they are available. Those that absolutely cannot fit in the luggage bays may ride in the passenger compartment; however, they must be in the back seats and secured as much as possible. Passengers may be assigned seats to ensure maximum barrier protection is assured. The aisle and emergency door must be clear at all times. Drivers can be cited for a traffic violation. Please do not ask them to break the law.

- All riders should be aware that excessive noise could cause the driver to miss hearing or seeing a hazard which could result in a tragedy. The driver has the final responsibility for student behavior while on the bus.
- Buses must be returned clean and ready for its next use. Adults, chaperones, and students are expected to help keep the bus clean and to help the driver inspect for cleanliness – and clean, if necessary – at the end of the trip.
- Buses may only be used for non-routine trips providing those trips do not interfere with routine transportation services (i.e., transporting students to and from school). This is especially important on field trips during the school day; the bus and its passengers must get back to school in time. When, for example, weather conditions, traffic, or road construction, interfere with the normal travel time, drivers have the authority to direct the group to start back earlier than originally planned. Adults are obligated to see that all passengers report to the bus in time for departure.
- Advisors and chaperones are responsible to help ensure the rules of transportation are followed. The following points come from law. Passengers on school buses must:
  - Behave in such a manner that students do not threaten life, limb or property of any individual.
  - Go directly to an available or assigned seat, remain seated keeping aisles and exits clear. "Seat to the seat, back to the back, feet to the floor." Standing, kneeling on seats, or walking while the bus is moving is prohibited.
  - Observe classroom conduct and obey the driver promptly and respectfully.
  - Not use profane language.
  - Not eat or drink on the bus except as required for medical reasons. It's the law. It is also a choking hazard.
  - Not use tobacco nor have alcohol or drugs in their possession on the bus except for prescription medication required for a student.
  - Not take explosives, including aerosol sprays and helium balloons on a bus.
  - Not throw or pass objects on, from or into the bus.
  - Carry on the bus only objects that can be held in their laps.
  - Leave or board the bus at locations to which they have been assigned unless they have authorization to do otherwise. (This includes school boarding locations.)
  - Not put head or arms out of the bus windows.
  - Be silent at railroad crossings. All passengers must be silent from approximately 300 feet from the crossing until after the crossing is completed.
- Buses must not exceed posted speed limits. Plan your schedule accordingly. Allow enough time for the bus to get to its destination without exceeding the speed limit.
- Drivers may not use cell phones while driving the bus unless it is an extreme emergency. Perhaps you can make the call instead.

Thanks for your extra efforts for the students of St. Henry Schools!

Sherri Ranly  
Transportation Supervisor