

LESSONS LEARNED

Preventing Pupil Abandonment and School Bus Safety

To prevent similar incidents, ASCIP recommends the following:

1. After each run, the driver **must** check all seats and floor spaces for children left or sleeping on the bus. Drivers must walk the aisle from front to back and check every seat prior to exiting the bus.
2. Make certain there is sufficient redundancy in the post-trip inspection protocols. For example, a supervisor or other driver do spot checks on other buses.
3. During afternoon returns to the bus lot, have the transportation manager be visible when the buses are coming in.
4. Initial and periodic training must be provided to drivers on the proper method to check their bus. The training should also cover accountability and consequences of not following inspection protocols.
5. An extra precaution that drivers can take after walking up and down the aisle is to go outside the bus and open one of the emergency doors to get a good view of the floor.
6. Require drivers' routines to include two checks per run - one when the bus becomes empty and another when it returns to the parking site.
7. Part of a supervisor's role in preventing incidents of abandonment is making sure that drivers are constantly reminded of this element of their duties.
8. Use flags or signs that drivers can post in the rear window. One common version is a sign that reads "BUS EMPTY". Install and use a reminder device on your bus. Examples are Child Check Mate (see <http://www.childcheckmate.com/>). This is a device which sets off an alarm when the driver removes the key and which can be deactivated by a switch at the back of the bus.) and Double Check Child Safety System (see <http://soteriainnovationsllc.com/>).

For more information, see ASCIP's ***School Bus Route and School Bus Stop Location Planning and Operating Guidelines***. These are available online at <http://ascip.org/risk-services/guidelines-best-practices/>.

Contact your ASCIP Risk Services Consultant for more information at (562) 404-8029

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The Lawsuit:

An ASCIP member was sued by a special education student who was left on an unattended school bus for approximately five hours. The student had fallen asleep, and the District driver did not notice the sleeping student. Fortunately, the student did not sustain serious injuries.

The Allegations:

The lawsuit alleged that the District was negligent in its duty to keep the student safe and was negligent in its duty to provide safe transportation to the student.

The Award:

The case was settled for \$100,000.