



NYAPT

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

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Our future is riding with us!

School Bus Drivers Make All the Difference

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National School Bus Safety Week is October 17-21, 2011

The New York Association for Pupil Transportation is using the 2011 National School Bus Safety Week to highlight the factors that contribute to the overall safety of the school buses and school transportation systems that transport over 2.3 million New York children every day, and some 25 million nationwide.

The yellow school bus is an icon in our society. It speaks of safety and security and a solid and wholesome education for our children. That safety and security do not come easily but require the dedication and hard work of many professionals in the school transportation community.

This edition relates to the 50,000 or more school bus drivers who operate those 26,000 pound yellow vehicle in and out of traffic and weather each day, picking up and dropping off our children at school and at home.

Did you ever wonder what it takes to become a school bus driver and to keep doing your job for years and years? What does it take to do this job that delivers our children to school and back home again on time every day?

In New York State, a person must be at least 21 years of age and be of sound character and hold a federally mandated Commercial Drivers' License. Moreover, these CDL holders must attain a Passenger endorsement and still further must attain a Student endorsement that allows them to drive students on school buses. This is all before they ever set foot on a school bus. So it is important to know that not just anyone can drive our students on school buses.

Once those basic requirements are satisfied, in New York State an individual must also attain and ensure compliance with the following:

- Completion of the Pre-Service Course for school bus drivers as approved by the State Education Department
- Completion of the 30-hour Basic Course for school bus drivers as approved by the State Education Department
- Conduct of a Criminal Background check, including fingerprinting, to determine if the individual has been convicted of any crimes that would disqualify them from driving students in our state (that list of disqualifying crimes was recently updated by the Governor and the Legislature)
- Undergo pre-employment and random Drug & Alcohol Tests required by Federal Law

- Completion of Annual physical examination
- Complete a biennial Physical Performance Test to determine their capacity to perform the tasks that school bus drivers perform on a regular basis
- Completion of Annual Driver History Review
- Attend and complete two-Hour refresher sessions twice each year, including training related to the needs of students with disabilities
- Complete biennial behind-the-wheel driving test and oral/written examinations as approved by the State Department of Motor Vehicles
- Annual Defensive Driving Performance Review as approved by the State Department of Motor Vehicles

School bus drivers are important partners in the safety of our children and we hold them to high standards. Now and again a school bus driver will make a mistake and that mistake is often followed in the media and pursued by local boards of education. School bus drivers are not allowed much room for making mistakes. We have all read about drivers leaving children on school buses after their route is finished and we have recently read stories about drivers allowing children to get off the bus and buy snacks in a store. Those stories are of concern to all of us and we do all we can to prevent them from happening but address them directly when they do. Why? Simple: those women and men are transporting OUR CHILDREN and we demand excellence.

But we are also here to bear witness to the fact that school bus drivers are among the kindest and most dedicated people in our communities. Children will tell you that they love their school bus drivers and talk about them at home and in school. School bus drivers care for and are alert for our children and deserve our praise and gratitude. They drive as many as 70 children on a school bus through traffic and weather each day and they drive alone and with their backs turned toward their riders. This is a real challenge and those 50,000 men and women do it with excellence and distinction day in and day out.

During School Bus Safety Week 2011, we ask parents to encourage their children to take a moment to thank their school bus driver for the great work they do each day. *Imagine the smile on their faces when they hear those words from our children!*



The New York Association for Pupil Transportation is a professional organization comprised of over 600 members, representing school transportation officials in school districts, BOCES and public educational institutions across New York State. NYAPT is committed first and always to the safety of the 2.3 million school children we transport to and from school each and every day. We are committed to actively support legislation, regulations and policies that are in the interests of those school children and call upon State leaders to keep those children in mind during legislative negotiations.