Schoolbus Driver Safety – Fueling Safety Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Fueling a school bus might seem like a routine task, but it's crucial to treat it with the same level of care and attention as any other aspect of your job. Proper fueling procedures are essential for preventing spills, fires, and other hazards that could endanger yourself, your vehicle, and most importantly, ensuring that fueling is never conducted while students are on board.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Fuel, whether gasoline, diesel, or propane, is a flammable substance. Improper handling can lead to serious risks. Let's consider some potential dangers:

- **Fuel Spills:** Overfilling the tank, improper nozzle handling, or damaged equipment can cause fuel spills. These spills create slip hazards, environmental contamination, and fire risks.
- **Fires and Explosions:** Fuel vapors are highly flammable. Sparks from static electricity, open flames, or faulty electrical equipment can ignite these vapors, leading to fires or even explosions.
- **Health Hazards:** Fuel can irritate the skin, eyes, and respiratory system. Prolonged exposure can lead to more serious health problems.
- **Environmental Damage:** Fuel spills can contaminate soil and water, causing significant environmental damage.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

So, how do we ensure safe fueling practices and minimize the risks? It comes down to following established procedures, using common sense, and being prepared for potential issues. Let’s break it down:

Before Fueling – Getting Ready to Fuel Safely:

This is non-negotiable. Never, ever fuel a bus while the engine is running. This eliminates a major source of ignition. Keep all sources of ignition away from the fueling area. That means no smoking, lighters, matches, or any open flames. Fuel vapours are highly flammable, and even a small spark can cause a fire.

If you’re fueling with gasoline, proper grounding is essential to prevent static electricity buildup. Static electricity can create sparks that can ignite fuel vapors. Usually, this involves ensuring the nozzle is in contact with the vehicle’s grounding point. (Note: grounding may be different or not required for diesel or propane fueling systems. Always follow the specific instructions for your fueling system.)

Protect yourself by wearing appropriate PPE, such as gloves specifically designed for handling fuel. This will prevent skin irritation and absorption of harmful chemicals. Eye protection is also recommended, especially when handling propane.

During Fueling – Maintaining Control and Preventing Spills:

- **Use the Correct Fuel Type:** Double, and triple-check that you are using the correct fuel type for your bus (gasoline, diesel, or propane). Using the wrong fuel can cause serious damage to the engine.
- **Insert the Nozzle Properly:** Make sure the nozzle is fully inserted into the fuel tank and that it’s securely in place. This helps prevent spills and ensures a proper seal.
- **Avoid Overfilling:** This is a big one. Pay close attention to the fuel level and never try to “top off” the tank after the pump automatically shuts off. Overfilling can lead to spills

and fuel entering the evaporative emissions system, which can cause damage.

- **Stay Attentive:** Don’t get distracted. Don’t leave the fueling area unattended while fueling is in progress. Keep your eyes on the pump and the fuel level.

After Fueling – Finishing Up Safely:

- **Remove the Nozzle Carefully:** Remove the nozzle slowly and carefully to avoid drips and spills. Any drips should be wiped up immediately with appropriate absorbent materials.
- **Replace the Fuel Cap Securely:** Make sure the fuel cap is properly tightened. This prevents fuel vapours from escaping, which is both a fire hazard and an environmental concern.
- **Clean Up Any Spills Immediately:** If a spill does occur, even a small one, clean it up immediately using appropriate absorbent materials like spill pads or granules. Never use water to clean up a fuel spill. Report any significant spills to the appropriate personnel according to your company’s procedures.

What to Do in Case of a Fuel Spill or Other Emergency:

For small spills, use absorbent materials to soak up the fuel and dispose of the materials properly. For larger spills, immediately stop the fueling process and activate the emergency shut-off if available. Contain the spill using absorbent materials or by creating a barrier. Don’t try to clean up a large spill yourself unless you’re properly trained and equipped.

In the event of a fire, immediately activate the emergency shut-off if available and evacuate the area. Use a fire extinguisher only if you’re trained to do so and it’s safe. Call emergency services immediately.

Specific Considerations for Alternative Fuels (e.g., Propane):

If your bus uses alternative fuels like propane, there are additional safety procedures you must follow. These may include specific training and certifications. Always follow the

manufacturer’s instructions and the established safety protocols for handling these fuels. Propane leaks, in particular, can be extremely dangerous, so proper training is essential.

FINAL WORD

Fueling safely is a key part of your responsibility as a school bus driver. By taking the necessary precautions, you’re actively preventing potential hazards. And finally, the most important thing to remember is to never fuel the bus with students on board. This is a non-negotiable safety rule that must be always followed.