

# What bus drivers should do when involved in an accident.



Following a collision, a bus should not be moved until directed by police or a bus company supervisor.

Even with the best driver training program, school bus accidents can happen. In addition to teaching operators how to drive defensively, it's important to instruct them on what to do if and when an accident occurs. As your insurer, Nationwide® encourages you to create a plan, in conjunction with your school district's policies, containing steps such as those listed below that your driver might take after an accident. Also, you and school district management should agree on who will call 911 in the event of an emergency.

1. **Stop.** Do not leave the scene of an accident, no matter how minor, until directed by your supervisor. Use your hazard lights to indicate the bus has stopped.
2. **Do not move the bus.** Documenting the positions of vehicles involved in a collision is extremely important. Unless there is imminent danger of another collision, potential fire or situation that could cause more damage, do not move your bus until directed by police or your supervisor. If you must move your bus prior to that, note exactly where it stopped after the collision.
3. **Assess the situation.** Before reacting, take a moment to survey your surroundings. Decide what immediate actions need to be taken, and consider what you'll need to do. Injuries may need your assistance or you may need to evacuate children from the bus. Taking the time to evaluate the scene will give you the chance to plan accordingly.
4. **Reassure the students.** Your ability to remain calm can have an enormous effect on your students, especially young children or those with special needs. Keeping the children calm will help you handle the situation more easily.
5. **Notify dispatch.** Use designated emergency or accident codes. If there are no prearranged codes in your operation, make it clear that your message is urgent by stating "This is Bus Number 72, and I have an emergency." Stating your bus number allows dispatch to pin down where your vehicle should be even if no other information is available.
6. **Apply first aid, but only within the limits of your training.** Never move an injured student unless he or she is in imminent danger (e.g., in the path of a spreading fire). Tend to life-threatening injuries first, such as severe bleeding, loss of consciousness and shock, and do not exceed the limits of your first aid training.
7. **Protect the scene.** After any injuries have been addressed, use reflectors, cones and/or flares to warn oncoming traffic. Place them far enough back to truly protect the bus from another collision. If children are evacuated, make sure they are located in a safe place.

## School Bus Safety: Post-Accident Procedures for Drivers

8. **Account for all passengers.** As soon as possible, make an accurate passenger list. If possible, document exactly where each passenger was located at the time of the accident. Be prepared to provide emergency responders with this list and advise them of children with specific/special needs. Ask older children to help, if necessary.
9. **Document what happened.** Ask people who witnessed the accident to wait for police to arrive. Using a form such as the Nationwide® business auto collision worksheet pictured at right, describe the accident and capture key information about other vehicles and drivers that were involved, as well as the name, address and phone number of the witnesses. Ask the latter to record what they saw on statement or courtesy cards, if available.
10. **Do not release students.** Even in minor accidents, do not release students to good Samaritans, neighbors or anyone else, or allow any students to walk home on their own. Keep students at the scene until authorities arrive. Unless evacuation is necessary, children will usually be safer waiting on the bus than outside. If parents arrive at the scene, ask them to remain with their child until authorities arrive. If a parent insists on taking a child from the scene, ask the parent to leave a signed note.
11. **Cooperate with authorities.** Police officers will need to gather information or may need assistance. In severe accidents, a command post may be established to coordinate rescue efforts. As emergency personnel arrive, you can stand back and allow them to take over.
12. **Make no statements at the scene.** Be polite and helpful, but refrain from placing or taking blame for the accident. What you say at the scene may be admissible in court. Do not discuss the accident with anyone other than law enforcement, your supervisors or your school district or company lawyer. If approached by media, politely explain that you're not permitted to comment at the scene. Ask reporters to talk to your supervisor. Avoid using the phrase "no comment," as it often leads reporters to make negative assumptions.

### AN EASY WAY TO CAPTURE IMPORTANT ACCIDENT DETAILS.

The Nationwide® business auto collision worksheet gives bus drivers a convenient tool for describing an accident and recording contact information from other drivers and witnesses. Every vehicle in your fleet should have a copy, and you can obtain a supply from your Loss Control Services representative. Ask for form number **CMO-0412AO**.



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For your risk management and safety needs, contact Nationwide Loss Control Services: 1-866-808-2101 or [LCS@nationwide.com](mailto:LCS@nationwide.com).