

# INDUSTRY NEWS

## NSTA, feds name best practices for school bus security

Alexandria, VA – The National School Transportation Association (NSTA) has collaborated with federal agencies including the Transportation Security Administration, the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to develop the “Top 25 Security Program Action Items, School Bus Operations.”

The following items identify the most important elements that school bus operations can incorporate into their security plans. NSTA encourages school districts and bus carriers to adopt these practices to the extent practical for their operations.

### **For management:**

1. Develop a written security program and emergency management plans in conjunction with school administrators, law enforcement, fire department, EMS and emergency preparedness agencies. The plan should address traditional crises such as fires, weather emergencies and school evacuations, as well as terrorist activities.
2. Review and modify emergency plans as necessary in light of increased threat levels from the Department of Homeland Security.
3. Develop a command structure for responding to a crisis. Know the roles and responsibilities of first responders, and determine the chain of command within your organization. Verify 24/7 contact information.
4. Identify multiple evacuation routes from schools and bus facilities; identify alternatives for regular routes that use key infrastructures, such as bridges or tunnels, in time of increased security alerts.
5. Coordinate and stage a practice drill of emergency plans with the local security partners mentioned above.
6. Develop a plan for getting information to schools, parents and law enforcement. Appoint one person to communicate with the media and the community.
7. Ensure that updated route sheets and passenger lists are readily available for all buses and schools.
8. Prohibit unauthorized persons from entering buses; establish authorization standards and procedures.

### **For facilities:**

9. Conduct a risk assessment of facilities, including bus yards, garages, dispatch locations and driver areas. Conduct a risk assessment of all routes and bus stops for security as well as safety, noting, for example, stops obscured by overgrowth of bushes where persons could hide.
10. Control access to bus parking areas, if possible. Restrict entry to one gate.

11. Install fencing, lights, locking gates, video surveillance or other security measures as needed.
12. Arrange with local police to include your facility in their regular patrols.
13. Reduce your tolerance for “security anomalies,” such as overdue or missing vehicles, intrusions into the bus yard and unverified visitors.

**For equipment:**

14. Maintain a security system for bus keys.
15. Equip all buses with two-way communication.
16. Establish an “external trouble indicator” that drivers can use to alert law enforcement, such as all lights flashing. Be sure to discuss with law enforcement.
17. Install video surveillance, GPS, door locks and other equipment as needed and permitted by state law. Train employees in proper use.

**For personnel:**

18. Provide Ids for all drivers (preferably photo ID).
19. Conduct background checks on employees if not provided by the state.
20. Advise employees to report suspicious incidents or persons at the bus facility or on route.
21. Provide security training for drivers and other employees.
22. Establish crisis codes for drivers to alert dispatch if they are in trouble.
23. Train drivers never to leave buses running, but to turn off the engine and take the keys when leaving the bus at any location.
24. Advise drivers to check buses for foreign objects inside and outside anytime a bus has been unattended, such as at an activity trip destination.
25. Establish a method of position reporting as needed during high alerts.