

Iowa's Beautiful Scenic Roads of Fall and Winter



When you drive a school bus for a few years you come to cautiously enjoy the challenges that Iowa's rural roads provide. School bus drivers are faced many times with difficult driving situations between the fall and winter seasons. Even with the most modern equipment and improved roads, fall and winter weather can cause the most experienced driver much concern.



If you are a very experienced school bus driver, or if it's your first year driving, it is a good time to review some proven fall and winter driving safety tips that might help drivers avoid problems. The safety of children on a school bus depends not only on the bus driver, but other drivers and other factors as well. Advanced planning is a good safety strategy by being prepared:

- Give yourself extra time when weather conditions are deteriorating.
- Slow down to a safe and appropriate speed for road conditions.
- Make sure the exhaust system has no leaks, wiper blades, tires, battery, and defrosters are in good working condition before inclement weather hits.
- Keep the vehicle's gas tank full and check window washer fluid levels.
- Never alter routes without authorization from transportation school officials.
- Always anticipate that bridges and overpasses may be icy; and minimize acceleration and hard-braking.



The pre-trip inspection is a very important part of the drivers' normal routine. Always arrive early enough to perform it thoroughly, before leaving the school bus parking lot. One of the most common mistakes made by drivers during poor weather conditions is the failure to reduce their speed. It is important to remember that the bigger the vehicle, with its greater weight, requires a longer stopping distance. It is also a good practice to brake smoothly on **wet** or **icy roads**. Avoid skidding if at all possible and increase your following distance. Basically, exercise extreme caution at bus stops and intersections, never assume that the other motorists will, or can stop.



If you do have a breakdown or get stalled on or off the roadway, keep the emergency flashing lights going for as long as possible. If the bus is stuck and the engine is running, check to make sure the rear exhaust pipe is clear of any debris. While waiting to be rescued while the bus is idling, it may be necessary to open windows slightly for fresh air, due to exhaust fumes. And it is very important to remember that **NO ONE** should be allowed to leave the bus at any time, including the driver, except at regular school bus stops.



With winter coats, hoods and hats restricting normal visibility, it may be hard for students to see and recognize surrounding dangers at bus stops. Drivers also need to watch closely for children who may be hidden or standing in or near the street at the bus stop or at normal corner crosswalks along bus routes.

Mistakes (Accidents) usually occur when we change our normal routine and do something out of the ordinary. Driver mistakes, even the minor ones, can turn into serious life threatening situations. To avoid mistakes that lead to accidents, it is an effective strategy for all drivers to follow the route description, pay attention to potential dangerous obstacles and focus on safe driving at all times. It is a good idea for every driver to reflect and refocus on comprehensively accomplishing all of the seemingly insignificant required routine tasks on a daily basis. Anticipate problems early, avoid panicking, and respond appropriately. Always keep one thought in mind; Make student safety your top priority!



Have an accident free, safe, friendly and enjoyable fall and winter driving season.