

**i** Transport Canada is closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation. In response, we have issued some transportation-related measures and guidance. Please check if any of these measures apply to you.

You may experience longer than usual wait times or partial service interruptions. If you cannot get through, please contact us by email.

For information on COVID-19 updates, please visit [Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus).

## Federal Guidance for School Bus Operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

---

### Purpose

The purpose of this document is to offer recommended measures to help minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the context of school bus operations and protect both students and drivers.

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is the lead federal agency responsible for coordinating efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Transport Canada has consulted with PHAC and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) to develop these recommendations, building on current guidance from local and national public health officials.

The recommendations and guidance in this document are subject to change, based on the evolution of transmission of COVID-19 and the discovery of new evidence.

### Ensuring Measures Taken Reflect Risk of Exposure

The optimal way to prevent transmission of COVID-19 is to apply a combination of controls from across the hierarchy of controls, not only PPE, in order to mitigate and/or eliminate hazards drivers and passengers may be exposed to. School bus drivers and operators are encouraged to continue monitoring and abiding to public health authorities' recommendations such as those published on the Government of Canada [Coronavirus website](#).

As outlined in the [Federal safety guidance to protect commercial vehicle drivers](#), proven interventions to limit the spread of COVID-19 include: hand washing, regular cleaning of commonly touched surfaces, and respecting physical distancing by maintaining a 2 metre distance from other people. It is critical that these measures continue.

The federal Labour Program has posted general information to assist stakeholders in these responsibilities. Additional resources that may be of assistance include: the Government of Canada's [risk-informed decision making guidelines](#) for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Before a Trip**

### **Monitoring for Symptoms**

- All children and drivers who experience symptoms, including mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 C or more), need to self-isolate and stay home. If another member of a child's or driver's household develops symptoms of COVID-19, it is recommended that the child or driver stay home and self-isolate.
- A child who develops symptoms while at school should not be permitted to return home on a school bus and should be picked up by

a parent or guardian.

## Hand Hygiene

- Thorough hand washing with plain soap and water is still the single most effective way to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Bus drivers should wash their hands often, including before and after completing trips.
- Children should be reminded by parents or teachers to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before they leave home to take the bus, when they arrive at school, when they are leaving school prior to taking the bus, and when they get home.

## Cleaning High-Touch Surfaces in the School Bus

- Make sure school bus interior surfaces are cleaned with disinfectant.
- The following equipment should be available for cleaning:
  - Personal protective equipment (as required by the operator's health and safety protocol);
  - Disposable cloths;
  - Paper towels and absorbent materials;
  - Waste disposal bags and tape; and
  - Cleaning agents/disinfectants.
- Cleaning is a critical first step for disinfecting affected surfaces. In general, when cleaning school bus interiors:
  - Put on disposable, water-proof gloves. Avoid hand contact with the face, especially the nose and eyes. Direct contact with contaminated areas should be avoided.

- For routine cleaning and disinfection, and for areas potentially contaminated with COVID-19, a hard-surface disinfectant authorized by Health Canada is recommended. For a list of hard-surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus (COVID-19), please see [Health Canada's website](#).
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for the recommended dilution rates, contact times and conditions specific to the surface.
- Avoid bleach except on simple plastics.
- Don't use solvents.
- High touch surfaces in school buses that should be regularly cleaned include but are not limited to:
  - Seats;
  - Inside hand railing;
  - Floors;
  - Interior windows and wall section below passenger windows;
  - Inside and outside door handles (including manual control for service door); Inside door grab handles, pads and armrests;
  - Keys;
  - Steering wheel;
  - Shift lever and console;
  - Dashboard;
  - Turn signal and wiper stalks;
  - Seat and Seat adjuster;

- Any other parts that are commonly used and that may have been touched.
- Dispose of soiled disinfection cloths, disposable gloves and any other items in contact with contaminated surfaces in a waste disposal bag. Seal the waste disposal bag and discard in lined trash bin. Clothing worn during cleaning as well as any reusable cloths used should be stored in a sealed disposable bag until they can be laundered.
- Wash hands when finished using proper hand washing techniques.
- In addition to regular cleaning of school bus interiors, to the extent possible, it is recommended that operators reduce the number of drivers per vehicle and ensure that the same drivers use the same vehicle and keep the same work schedules in order to limit contacts as much as possible.

### **During a Trip**

- Bus drivers are encouraged to carry alcohol-based hand sanitizer (ABHS) with at least 60% alcohol and use it after assisting a child to their seat, touching wheelchairs or other assistive devices, or having other direct contact with children, as needed throughout a trip. ABHS should be properly labeled and stored in accordance with its material safety data sheet. ABHS should be stored outside the reach of children.

### **Physical Distancing**

- To the extent possible, physical distancing measures should be implemented in school buses.
- Where possible, school districts should be encouraged to develop alternate bus routes and may consider reduced services with larger

vehicles to allow children required to ride school buses to sit further apart.

- Children from the same household can be permitted to sit together and are not required to physically distance.

### Shields and Enclosure Systems

- In some cases, school bus operators may consider adding shields or enclosure systems to limit direct contact and exposure to viral particles between the driver and children during boarding and off-loading the school bus. In certain scenarios, these types of protective barriers, made of transparent materials, have been installed in an attempt to offer protection where a two metre physical distance is not possible. As decision makers consider these measures in the context of a school bus, it will be important to weigh their benefits against additional risks they may create (such as during a collision or emergency situation),
- The shield/enclosure system should not have exposed sharp edges and should remain fixed in place either when in use or if stored away, while the vehicle is in motion.
- Due consideration should also be given to ensure the shield or enclosure system does not create undesired reflections that could limit the driver's visibility. Reflections could also be limited by including a mechanism like a sun visor that the driver can engage/disengage as needed throughout a trip.
- As shields or enclosures are installed, it will also be important to ensure that that school buses remain compliant with all applicable *Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standards* under the *Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations* and to applicable CSA D250 Standards, including those for glazing, flammability and compartmentalization. For aftermarket

installations of shields or enclosure systems, the provincial and territorial authorities maintain jurisdiction and are responsible for setting and enforcing any requirements.

- For additional information with respect to safety considerations when deciding to install a shield or an enclosure system with the intent to protect a school bus driver from exposure to COVID-19, please refer to the joint Transport Canada and Canada Standard Association D250 Technical Committee at: <https://www.tc.gc.ca/en/services/road/joint-guidance-document-transport-canada-csa-d250-school-bus-technical-committee.html>

### Personal Protective Equipment

- The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) should be considered in relation to other measures implemented to prevent transmission of COVID-19.
- School bus drivers may consider wearing a non-medical mask or face covering and other personal protective equipment including gloves or safety glasses as recommended in Transport Canada's guidance *Personal Protective Equipment and their uses by Commercial Vehicle Drivers* available at this link: <https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/motorvehiclesafety/personal-protective-equipment-uses-commercial-vehicle-drivers.html>.
- The choice of PPE should not interfere with the driver's ability to access vehicle controls, or hinder or distort the driver's view – directly or through mirrors - of the road, students around the bus or of passengers.
- Masks are not recommended for use by unsupervised children unless advised to do so by a health care provider. In young

children in particular, masks can be irritating and may lead to increased touching of the face and eyes.

### **At the End of the Trip**

- Repeat a thorough cleaning of high-touch surfaces with appropriate disinfectants as described above.
- Bus drivers who start to experience symptoms after completing a trip should stay home, self-isolate, and advise their school board so that additional steps can be taken to protect other drivers using the school bus.

**Date modified:** 2020-05-29