

5

Skills for Driving Buses, Taxis and Limousines



This chapter provides information about the skills and knowledge you need to be a bus, taxi or limousine operator. The information here relates particularly to Class 2 and Class 4 vehicles.

What You'll Learn

After studying this chapter you will be able to:

- define the various types of buses and taxis and describe their uses
- describe how to safely deal with common driving situations
- identify and describe key regulations that apply to buses, taxis and limousines
- list and describe the requirements for operating a school bus
- describe the special considerations and regulations for driving an emergency vehicle

Drivers of buses, taxis and limousines (Class 2 and Class 4 licences) must understand the meaning of a variety of terms defined by the *Motor Vehicle Act* and the *Passenger Transportation Act* and their regulations. A few of the more important ones you need to know before reading this chapter are:

Public transportation – transportation of groups of people who are not your associates or members of your family

Commercial passenger vehicle – a motor vehicle used to transport passengers for compensation

Compensation – includes money or other form of remuneration or reward

Bus – a motor vehicle that has a seating capacity of more than 10 persons, including the driver, which is operated for hire or for public transportation

Special activity bus – a bus that:

- a. conforms to the safety standards set out in *Motor Vehicle Safety Act* (Canada) that applied to this vehicle when it was manufactured
- b. is operated by, on behalf of, or at the request of the authority in charge of a school, *and*
- c. is used for non-scheduled transportation

Special vehicle – a motor vehicle that has a carrying capacity of not more than 10 persons, including the driver, which is designed or modified for public transportation of persons with disabilities

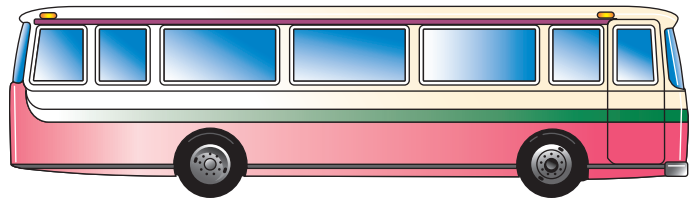
Taxi (or limousine) – a motor vehicle designed to carry not more than 10 persons, and that is available with its driver for hire

Large capacity limousine – a motor vehicle capable of carrying more than 10 and up to 24 persons, including the driver.

As of March 29, 2005, these vehicles are allowed to operate in B.C. if they have obtained the National Safety Mark, indicating compliance with the *Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS)*.

For such vehicles manufactured before January 1, 2005 that do not comply with CMVSS, contact Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement.

A bus and a taxi — examples of passenger-carrying vehicles.



Passenger Safety

Your most important concern must be the safety of your passengers. Ensuring your passengers' safety is always more important than meeting schedules.

You can best protect your passengers by making certain that the vehicle you use to transport them is safe and by operating it properly.

When bus passengers are injured, it is typically because the driver:

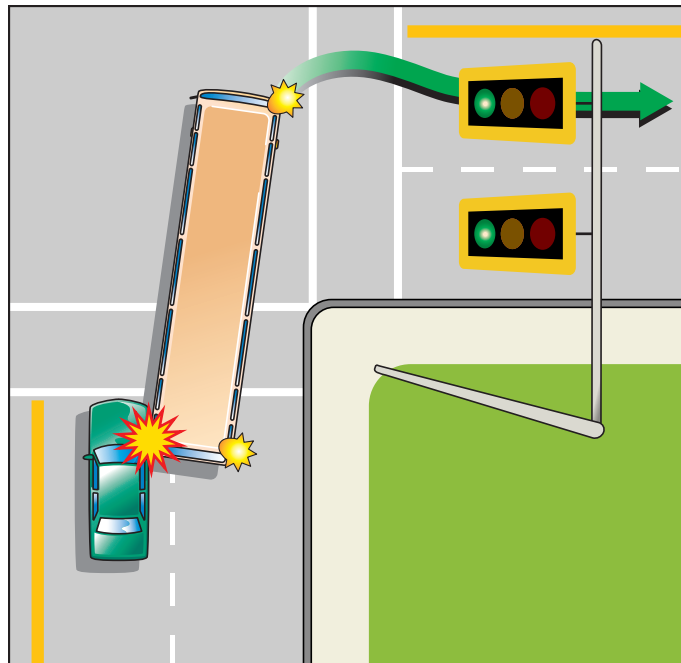
- stops too quickly or abruptly
- starts too quickly
- turns too quickly or abruptly
- opens or closes the doors too quickly
- fails to check on passengers frequently enough while driving

You can prevent many passenger injuries by driving defensively. Keep a safe distance behind other vehicles so you won't be forced to stop quickly if the vehicle in front of you stops suddenly. Passengers may be jolted and injured during a quick stop. Avoid getting blocked in by other vehicles so you have an escape route if trouble develops ahead of you.

Use the controls on your bus carefully. Make your starts and turns smoothly. Check on your passengers. Ensure that they are not moving about in the aisle when the bus is moving and that they are completely on or off the bus before you close the doors.

Manoeuvring

You need to understand the handling characteristics of your vehicle in order to transport your passengers safely and comfortably. Commercial passenger vehicles are usually taller, wider, larger and handle differently from most other passenger vehicles. Many of these differences are covered in **Chapter 3, Basic Driving Skills**. Other skills specific to driving buses, taxis and limousines are included in this chapter.



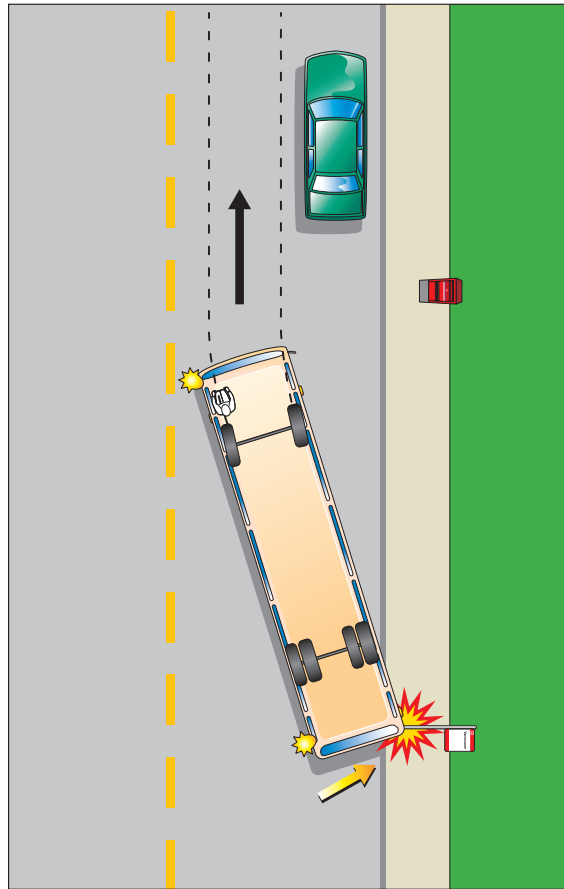
Large buses handle differently from most other vehicles, especially when turning. Leave enough room when you make a right turn to avoid risking a collision with the vehicle in the lane beside you.

Leaving the curb

Look in the side mirror and over your shoulder to check that traffic is clear before you leave the curb. Do not rely on your side mirrors alone. As you prepare to leave the curb, ensure your passengers are not moving about. Signal other drivers to let them know you plan to move into the traffic flow and check over your shoulder again.

Be careful that the rear of your bus does not swing over the sidewalk as you pull away from the curb. If it does, the back end of your vehicle could hit pedestrians, cyclists, poles or sign posts that are near the curb.

Ensure the back end of your bus doesn't hit pedestrians, cyclists, poles or sign posts as you are pulling away from a curb.



Watch for cars parked close to the front of your vehicle and for vehicles that may be approaching from the opposite direction as you leave the curb.

Bus right-of-way

The *Motor Vehicle Act* gives public transit buses the right-of-way when a bus driver signals to move from the curb lane or a bus stop into the traffic flow and the bus displays a sign telling motorists to yield. This rule applies to areas where the speed limit is less than 60 kilometres per hour.

This sign is displayed on the back of public transit buses to indicate to drivers that buses have the right-of-way when pulling away from the curb or a bus stop.



This regulation, however, does not remove any responsibility from public transit bus drivers. As a bus driver, you are still required to ensure it is safe before you move from the side of the road into traffic. Do not assume you have the right-of-way, as other drivers do not have to yield if it is unsafe to do so.

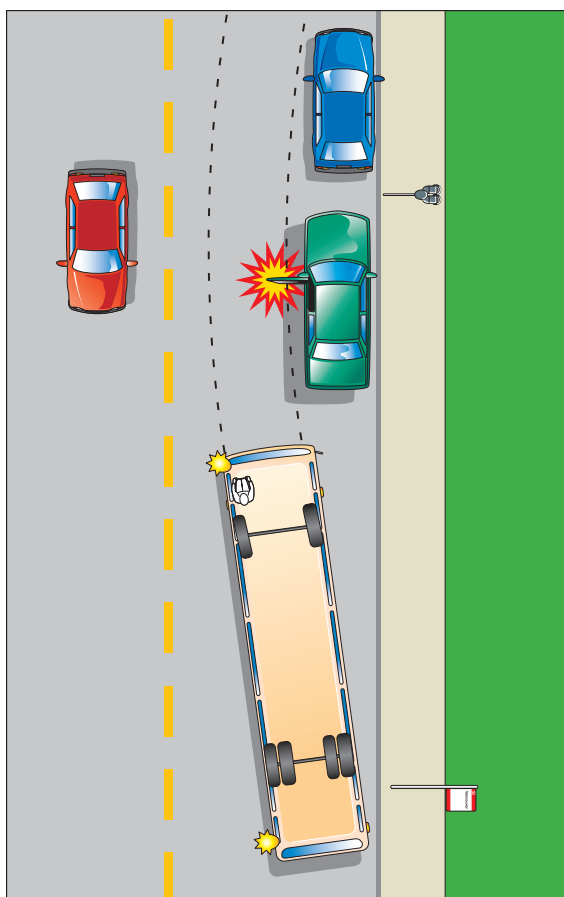
Passing parked cars

You will often drive in urban areas where streets are lined with parked cars. These vehicles can create a variety of hazards. When you drive past parked vehicles watch for:

- vehicles pulling into traffic
- doors opening suddenly on the traffic side
- pedestrians stepping out from between cars

Watch for the following clues that can help you avoid a collision with people or parked vehicles:

- front wheels turned out
- a driver sitting behind the steering wheel
- exhaust escaping from a tail pipe
- brake lights, back-up lights and turn signals
- people walking or children playing near the road



Watch for warning clues to ensure you don't collide with parked vehicles or the people near them.

Fast Fact

All illuminated taxi signs must meet *Motor Vehicle Act* specifications for type, colour and size.

Operating a Bus, Taxi or Limousine

You must have a passenger transportation licence if you are responsible for a vehicle which transports passengers on a for hire basis. You must also be familiar with all relevant acts and regulations.

Taking on and letting off passengers

When you are taking on or letting off passengers on the highway:

- signal to warn traffic that you are stopping
- stop in a location that allows other drivers to see your vehicle from a distance of at least 85 metres (285 feet) in front and behind
- leave space to the left of your vehicle so that traffic may pass by – you should leave at least three metres (10 feet) so traffic may pass

Whenever it is safe to do so, pull your vehicle off the travel portion of the highway while your passengers are getting on or off.

Focus on driving

The safety of your passengers is your first priority. This means that any time your vehicle is moving you must not collect fares, make change, take on or let off passengers. You should also save any unnecessary conversation with your passengers until you have stopped your vehicle.

You must ensure that nothing or no one in your vehicle gets in the way of allowing you to do a safe job. You must be able to clearly see ahead, to the right and to the left. You must be able to move your arms and legs at all times and be ready to reach for emergency equipment.

You may have up to two passengers sitting on your right side in a sedan-type vehicle, but only if there is enough room for you to operate the vehicle safely.

Standing passengers

Passengers may not stand while a vehicle is in motion, unless the passenger transportation licence for that vehicle permits standing passengers. This licence will limit the number of standing passengers you may carry.

Your vehicle's standing passenger capacity must be displayed in an easily seen location in the vehicle. You must not allow any passenger to stand in a place that could make it difficult for you to see or move.

Refusing to transport passengers

It is your duty to provide transportation to all paying customers. However, you may refuse to transport a passenger if:

- your vehicle is already carrying the maximum allowed number of passengers

- the passenger is:
 - smoking
 - using profane or offensive language
 - acting in a disorderly manner or being offensive to other passengers

If you order a person out of your vehicle, you must ensure that the person can disembark safely and in a location where they can reasonably be expected to find alternate transportation.

Let-down or jump seats

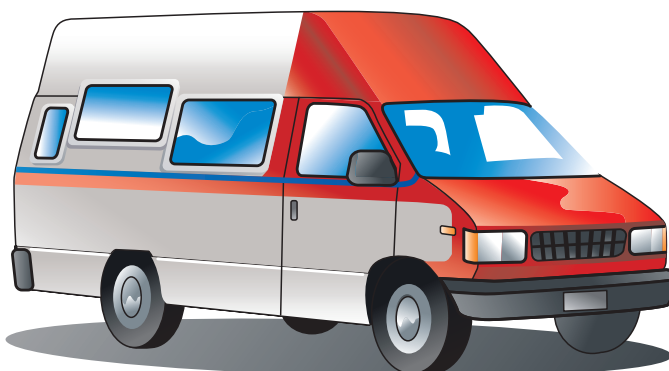
Under the *Passenger Transportation Act*, you must have a licence or permit before you use a let-down or jump seat in a passenger vehicle. These seats may be used only in the rear of sedans and only if the manufacturer has designed the vehicle to carry them.

Transporting people with disabilities

You need special skills, knowledge and sensitivity to transport people with disabilities. You cannot refuse to transport an individual just because that person has a disability. Some people with disabilities travel with an assisting animal, such as a guide dog. You must allow these animals in your vehicle with their owners.

Remember these tips when transporting persons with disabilities:

- speak directly to the person with the disability, not to their companion or assistant
- do not assume the person needs help – always ask before giving help
- remember that every person is unique and people's needs and abilities will vary greatly
- be patient, flexible and creative in the way you communicate



This type of vehicle is used to transport persons with disabilities.

Properly secure all mobility aids, such as wheelchairs and scooters. Provide assisting animals with space that will keep them and everyone else in the vehicle safe if there is a collision.

Refer to **Chapter 12, For More Information**, to find out where you can learn more about transporting people with disabilities.

Chauffeur's permit

Some municipalities require all limousine and taxi drivers to have a chauffeur's permit. This permit is usually issued by the municipal police. You may have to allow a police check and complete a hospitality course (such as the TaxiHost program) before you will be given a permit.

Inside lights

Public passenger vehicles with a seating capacity of more than 12 occupants, including the driver, must have a light or lights inside the vehicle that light up the passenger aisle behind the driver.

These lights must be kept on between the hours of sunset and sunrise so passengers can move safely in the vehicle.

Passenger vehicles must also have a light at each entrance that turns on when the door is opened.

Vehicle cleanliness

You must ensure that your bus or taxi is clean and sanitary at all times.

Vehicle inspection

If your vehicle is licensed in British Columbia and has a passenger transportation plate, you must ensure that it displays a valid commercial vehicle inspection decal and you must carry the certificate in the vehicle.

Emergency equipment and exits

Every commercial passenger vehicle (as defined in the *Passenger Transportation Act*) that has a seating capacity of more than 10 occupants, including the driver, must have:

- one first-aid kit (that meets the WorkSafe BC guidelines)
- one spare tire
- at least one fire extinguisher

The carrier is responsible for ensuring this emergency equipment is available and in working order.

Passenger vehicles that have a seating capacity of more than 12, including the driver, must be equipped with an emergency exit door or emergency windows. Large capacity limousines must meet *Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards* regarding emergency exits.

Vehicles that have a seating capacity of more than 10 passengers must carry warning devices such as flags and flares. For more information, see **Chapter 3, Basic Driving Skills**.

Defects and breakdowns

You must end the trip if your vehicle develops a problem that could endanger the safety or comfort of any of your passengers. You must ensure the problem is fixed or the danger removed before you continue the trip with your passengers.

You must make immediate arrangements to have your passengers transported to their destination with as little delay as possible if a crash or breakdown makes it impossible for you to continue.

Fueling

Do not refuel your vehicle while the engine is running, on-board radio is transmitting or when any open flame is present. Keep the nozzle of the fuel hose in contact with the filler pipe on your vehicle at all times when refueling to ground the connection. If there is a ground strap, also connect it to the filler pipe.

Fast Fact

Cargo Security — Book 2, contains information on loading various special cargoes. *Book 2* is available at provincial weigh scales and at www.th.gov.bc.ca/cvse.

Baggage

You are responsible for all baggage passengers bring into your vehicle. You must ensure it is loaded safely. Do not strain yourself by lifting or moving heavy baggage. Load all baggage so that it does not interfere with passengers getting on or off the vehicle. Ensure it cannot fall on or against any passenger. It is important to protect all baggage from dust and moisture.

Baggage or cargo must not block or partially block any aisle or exit.

The *Motor Vehicle Act Regulations* place strict limits on the transportation of cargo or baggage in the passenger compartment of buses. Cargo must be carried:

- in overhead racks adequately designed and constructed, and equipped with an elastic rope or cord, doors, or a rigid vertical edge equal to half the height of the remaining opening
- stowed under the seats and against a barrier which prevents forward movement
- in a separate compartment enclosed on all sides, or
- on a passenger's lap

Under no circumstances may baggage or other cargo block or intrude on any aisle or exit.

In addition, a bus must not be loaded in a way that:

- obscures the driver's view to the front, left or right
- obstructs access to emergency equipment
- interferes with the movement of the driver's arms or legs, or
- hinders the safe operation of the bus

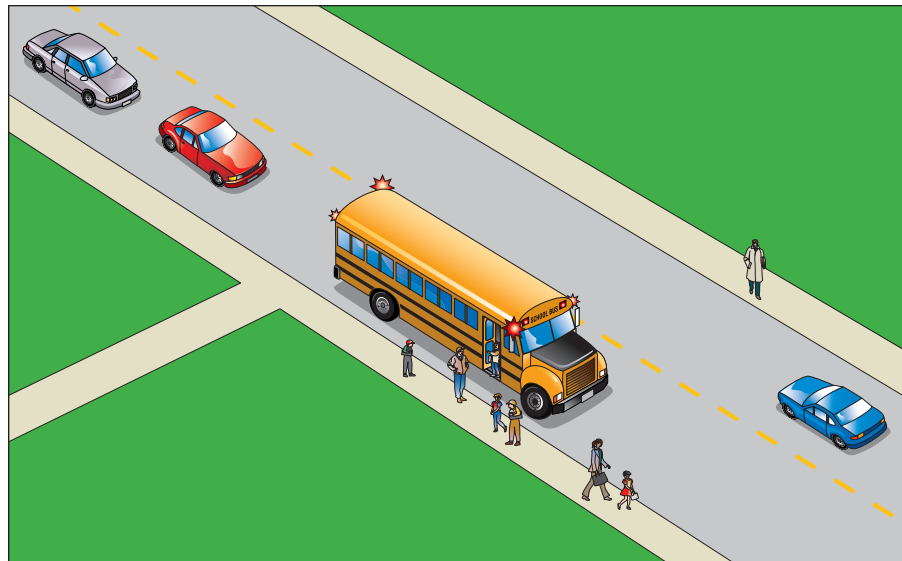
Smoking and using alcoholic beverages

You must not smoke if passengers are in your vehicle. This applies whether your vehicle is moving or not.

You must not be under the influence of alcohol while on duty.

Reporting a defect or deficiency

You must report any defect or deficiency that could make your vehicle unsafe. This report must be made in writing and it must be given to the carrier you work for at the time you find the defect or by the end of that day.



The other vehicles are stopped and waiting for passengers to unload from the school bus before proceeding.

Operating a School Bus

In addition to the requirements for operating a bus, when you operate any passenger vehicle as a school bus you must comply with all parts of the *Motor Vehicle Act Regulations* that pertain to school buses, including the following.

Unfit vehicles

If any mechanical inspector or peace officer finds that a school bus is unfit, you must not operate that vehicle as a school bus until the defect(s) has been fixed.

Rental buses

Any rental vehicle you rent to temporarily replace a school bus must comply with all parts of the *Motor Vehicle Act* and regulations that pertain to school buses. You must also notify Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement about the change in vehicles as soon as possible.

Brake maintenance

You must test the brakes on your school bus every day. Do not operate any school bus unless the brakes are safe.

Mechanical defects

Never transport passengers on a school bus that is defective in any way. Your first responsibility is to keep your passengers safe.

Refueling

You must ensure that all passengers are off the bus and the engine is turned off before you refuel.

Emergency equipment and exits

Every school bus must be equipped with emergency equipment, including:

- an approved fire extinguisher
- an approved first-aid kit
- flares or flags

Passenger vehicles with a seating capacity of more than 12, including the driver, must be equipped with an emergency exit door or emergency windows.

Vehicles with a seating capacity of more than 10 passengers must carry warning devices such as flags and flares.

Refer to **Chapter 3, Basic Driving Skills**, for more information about emergency equipment.

School bus signs

All school buses must display two signs that say “School Bus.” The letters on these signs must be at least 20 centimetres high and be black on a yellow background. These signs must be mounted at the front and rear of the school bus. The sign on the rear must be either immediately above or below the rear window.

Exterior mirrors

Every new school bus must be equipped with exterior mirrors as follows:

- Two sets of rear-view mirrors on each side of the bus to provide a good view of the highway to the rear and along the right and left sides of the school bus, and to observe passengers and road users immediately beside the school bus.
- A mirror to give a good view of the entrance door to the school bus so that you can observe passengers getting on and off the bus.
- A convex mirror at the front to give you a good view of the roadway immediately in front of the school bus to observe passengers who may be crossing in front of the school bus.

Make sure these mirrors are properly adjusted so that they provide the view they are intended to show.

Passengers must be seated

Passengers are not allowed to stand on a school bus. You must ensure that all passengers are sitting before you move the bus.

Cleanliness

You must ensure the floor of your school bus is washed with a disinfectant solution at least once a week.

Taking on and letting off passengers

Before you open the doors of your school bus to let passengers on or off, ensure that:

- your vehicle has come to a full stop
- there are at least three metres of road available on the left side of your vehicle
- other drivers will be able to see your bus from at least 60 metres in either direction
- that passengers enter or leave your school bus from the right side only

School buses are equipped with alternating flashing red lights, swing-out stop signs and may also have flashing amber lights which are displayed with the flashing red lights. Use the alternating flashing red lights to alert other drivers whenever your passengers are crossing the road before they enter or after they leave your bus.



A school bus with a swing-out stop sign and flashing red lights.

All drivers are required to stop their vehicles when a school bus displays flashing red lights.

New school buses may also be equipped with a crossing control arm that extends in front of the bus to help ensure that you can see passengers as they cross in front of the school bus.

Take extra care if passengers are crossing the road in front of your bus to see that they are clear of your path before you move off.

Turn off your flashing lights and draw in your stop sign after your passengers are safely in your vehicle or safely across the road. As a courtesy, allow any traffic that is waiting behind you to go ahead before you move back onto the road.

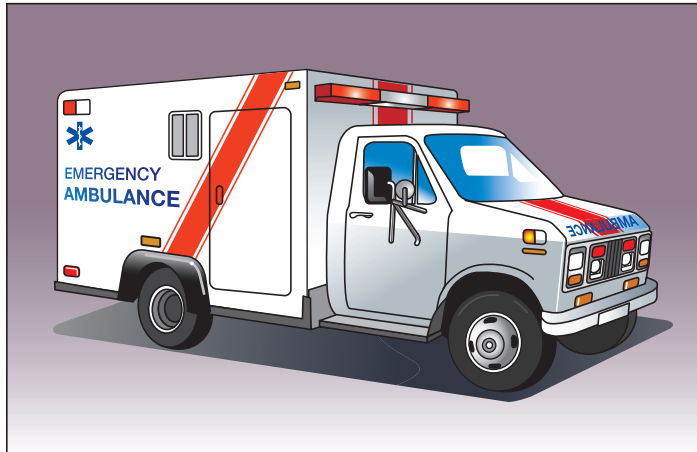
Operating Emergency Vehicles

Ambulance drivers use flashing red lights to warn other drivers when it is essential that they get the right-of-way. These lights are to be used only when the ambulance is responding to an emergency call or transporting a patient.

You may drive an emergency vehicle faster than posted speed limits and drive through red traffic lights or past stop signs if you give other drivers the appropriate warning. Ambulances are equipped with audible signal bells, sirens or exhaust whistles and flashing red lights. You must use both lights and the siren to warn other drivers. Use caution at all times because other drivers may not see or hear your warning.

Whenever you exceed the speed limits or drive through stop signals, you must think about:

- the condition and use of the highway
- the amount of traffic that is on, or is expected to be on the highway
- the seriousness of the emergency you are responding to



An ambulance is an emergency vehicle that uses flashing red lights to get the right-of-way.



Review Questions

1. What is your most important concern when operating a vehicle used for transporting the public?
2. In addition to checking the left side mirror, where should you look before leaving the curb?
3. As the driver of a bus, what precautions must you take when leaving a parked position where poles or sign posts are located near the vehicle?

4. Should you turn on the vehicle's signal lights before you are ready to leave the parking position?
5. What are some clues you can use to avoid a collision when passing parked vehicles?
6. Under what highway conditions may a taxi or bus take on or let off passengers on a highway outside the limits of a city or municipality?
7. What width of roadway must be left unoccupied by and beside the bus when stopping to take on or let off passengers?
8. Is it allowable for you to collect a fare or make change while the vehicle is in motion?
9. In a sedan-type vehicle, how many passengers may occupy the front seat in addition to the driver?
10. Are passengers permitted to stand on a bus and, if they are, where may they stand?
11. As the driver of a commercial passenger vehicle, under which conditions are you permitted to refuse to transport or carry any persons?
12. Is it necessary to have working lights that illuminate the passenger aisle of a bus?
13. At what times of the day are inside lights in public passenger vehicles to be illuminated?
14. What action would you take if the commercial passenger vehicle you are driving broke down and you could not continue the trip?
15. What precautions must be taken when refueling public passenger vehicles?
16. What is the minimum safety equipment you are required to carry in a commercial passenger vehicle with a seating capacity of more than 12 occupants, including the driver?
17. Who is responsible for ensuring that the safety equipment is available and in working order?
18. What are the baggage restrictions that apply when loading or carrying baggage on a bus?
19. What are the smoking restrictions for drivers of public or limited passenger vehicles?

20. How often is it necessary to test the brakes on a school bus?
21. When a school bus has a defect, may you operate the vehicle before it has been fixed?
22. May any school bus be fueled while its engine is running or with any passenger inside it?
23. How many signs that read school bus must be displayed on a vehicle that is being operated as a school bus?
24. In addition to the regular outside rear-view mirrors, what type of mirror must be installed on cab-over or forward-control type school buses?
25. As the operator of any school bus, may you allow any passenger to stand while the vehicle is in motion?
26. As the operator of a school bus, how often are you required to wash the floor of the vehicle with water containing a disinfectant solution?
27. As the driver of a school bus, may you start the vehicle in motion before every passenger is seated?
28. May a person be allowed to board or leave a school bus except from the right side?
29. When operating an ambulance, when are you permitted to use flashing red lights?
30. When operating an emergency vehicle, what conditions must you take into account before exceeding speed limits or driving through stop signals and traffic signal lights?

