



STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: February 5, 2025
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: School Districts, School Bus Contractors, and County Transportation Service Agencies
From: Ambrose F. Duckett III, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Field Support and Services

Reminder: Failure to Inspect School Bus at the End of School Bus Route

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) is alerting school districts, school bus contractors, and student transportation employees of their responsibilities to ensure the safety of students.

Pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:39-28, "***A school bus driver*** shall visually inspect the school bus to which he/she is assigned at the end of the transportation route to determine that no pupil has been left on the bus." The "end of a transportation route" is when all pupils are dropped off at their assigned destinations, or the last stop. See, *Yolette Severe v. New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Student Protection*, Commissioner Decision No. 302-22, decided October 31, 2022.

The statute mandates that the visual inspection must take place immediately after the last student has exited the school bus, whether at an educational facility or the final bus stop. The inspection is a crucial step in ensuring no students are inadvertently left behind, thereby safeguarding the well-being of students and preventing potential hazards. The responsibility of inspecting the school bus rests solely with the school bus driver and cannot be transferred to a school bus aide or any other personnel. In addition to verifying that no students remain on board, the driver must also remain vigilant about any personal belongings left behind and any contraband that could pose a safety risk to future passengers. The penalties for failing to conduct a visual inspection of the school bus at the end of the transportation route include the following:

- First Offense: Six-month suspension of the School Bus Driver Endorsement.
- Second Offense or First Offense and the student sustained harm: Permanent Revocation of School Bus Driver Endorsement.

School districts and school bus contractors are instructed to provide regular training to their employees on this subject. The NJDOE recommends school districts and contractors whose school buses are equipped with cameras and recording devices perform random examination of the video recordings to ensure school bus drivers comply with N.J.S.A. 18A:39-28.

In addition to the reminder, the NJDOE through the Office of School Bus Safety. is continuing to conduct investigations into school bus drivers failing to perform a visual inspection of the bus at the end of their bus route to ensure further compliance.

Contact Information

Any questions regarding this subject should be directed to the Office of School Bus Safety at officeofschoolbussafety@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJLEE Group