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’ll 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 a variety of terms defined by the *Motor Vehicle 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 aren’t your associates or members of your family.

**For Hire** — includes money or other form of remuneration or reward

**Bus** — a large motor vehicle designed to carry passengers such as a 15 passenger van, school bus, motor coach, city transit bus, hotel shuttle bus.

**Emergency Vehicle** — ambulance

**Taxi (or limousine)** — a motor vehicle designed to carry passengers where the vehicle and driver are for hire.

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’s usually 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 smart driving. 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’re not moving around in the aisle when the bus is moving and that they’re 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.
Leaving the curb

Look in the side mirror and over your shoulder to check that traffic is clear before you leave the curb. Don’t rely on your side mirrors alone. As you prepare to leave the curb, ensure your passengers are not moving around. 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, it could hit pedestrians, cyclists, poles or sign posts that are near the 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.

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

This regulation doesn’t remove any responsibility from public transit bus drivers. As a bus driver, you’re still required to ensure it’s safe before you move from the side of the road into traffic. Don’t assume you have the right-of-way, as other drivers don’t have to yield if it’s unsafe.

Passing parked cars

You’ll often drive in urban areas on streets 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.
These clues can help you avoid a collision with people or parked vehicles:
- front wheels turned out
- a driver sitting behind the steering wheel
- exhaust from a tail pipe
- brake lights, back-up lights and turn signals
- people walking or children playing near the road.

**Operating a bus, taxi or limousine**

You must have a passenger transportation licence if you’re 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’re taking on or letting off passengers on the highway:
- signal to warn traffic that you’re stopping
- stop in a location that allows other drivers to see your vehicle from a distance of at least 85 metres (285 ft) 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 ft) so traffic can pass.

Whenever it's safe, pull your vehicle off the travel portion of the highway while your passengers are getting on or off.
Smoking

It’s illegal to smoke in any motor vehicle when there are any passengers under 16 years old.

Children travelling in vehicles are especially vulnerable to second-hand smoke. These harmful effects are heightened in small enclosed places like motor vehicles and can have immediate and serious, long-lasting health consequences.

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’ve stopped your vehicle.

Nothing or no one in your vehicle should get 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’s enough room for you to operate the vehicle safely.

Standing passengers

Passengers may not stand while a vehicle’s in motion, unless the passenger transportation licence for that vehicle allows 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. Don’t allow any passenger to stand in a place that could make it difficult for you to see or move.

Refusing to transport passengers

It’s your duty to provide transportation to all paying customers. But you may refuse to transport a passenger if:

• your vehicle’s 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.

Transporting people with disabilities

You need special skills, knowledge and sensitivity to transport people with disabilities. You can’t 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.

Tips for transporting persons with disabilities:
• speak directly to the person with the disability, not to their companion or assistant
• don’t assume the person needs help — always ask before giving help
• remember that every person’s unique and people’s needs and abilities will vary greatly
• be patient, flexible and creative in the way you communicate.

Properly secure wheelchairs, scooters and other mobility aids. Provide assisting animals with space that’ll keep them and everyone else in the vehicle safe if there’s a collision.

Vehicle for hire permit
Some municipalities require all limousine and taxi drivers to have a vehicle for hire permit. This permit is usually issued by the municipal office.

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’s opened.

Vehicle cleanliness
Your bus or taxi must be clean and sanitary at all times.
Vehicle inspection

It is your legal responsibility to ensure your passenger carrying vehicle meets the NSC standard. If your vehicle is over 4500 kg or has a seating capacity of more than 10 people it must be inspected by a certified PMVI shop every 6 months.

Emergency equipment and exits

Every commercial passenger vehicle that has a seating capacity of more than 10 occupants, including the driver, must have:

• one CSA approved first aid kit.
• 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 10, including the driver, must be equipped with an emergency exit door or emergency windows that conform to CCMTA standards.

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. Fix the problem or remove the danger 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.

Fuelling

Don’t 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 refuelling to ground the connection. If there’s a ground strap, also connect it to the filler pipe.

Baggage

You’re responsible for all baggage passengers bring into your vehicle. You must ensure it’s loaded safely. Don’t strain yourself by lifting or moving heavy baggage. Load all baggage so that it doesn’t interfere with passengers getting on or off the vehicle and can’t fall on or against any passenger. It’s important to protect all baggage from dust and moisture.

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.
driving commercial vehicles

- 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.

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

In addition, a bus shouldn’t 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

Don’t smoke if passengers are in your vehicle. This applies whether your vehicle’s moving or not.

Don’t 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.

Operating a school bus

Requirements for operating a bus also apply to school buses. Any passenger vehicle that operates as a school bus must also comply with all parts of the MVA that relate to school buses.
Unfit vehicles

If any mechanical inspector or peace officer finds that a school bus is unfit, you can’t 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.

Brake maintenance

Test the brakes on your school bus every day. Don’t operate any school bus unless the brakes are safe.

Mechanical defects

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

Refuelling

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 cm high and be black on a yellow background. These signs must be mounted at the front and rear of the school bus, with the rear sign either immediately above or below the rear window.
Exterior mirrors

Every new school bus must have:

• 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. Ensure that all passengers are sitting before you move the bus.

Cleanliness

The floor of your school bus must be 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

• 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.

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 you 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’re 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’s 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. 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’s on, or is expected to be on, the highway
- the seriousness of the emergency you’re responding to.
Review questions

1. What’s 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’re 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’s 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 refuelling public passenger vehicles?

16. What’s the minimum safety equipment you’re required to carry in a commercial passenger vehicle with a seating capacity of more than 12 occupants, including the driver?

17. Who’s 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, can you operate the vehicle before it has been fixed?

22. Can any school bus be fuelled 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’s 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, can you allow any passenger to stand while the vehicle’s 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, can you start the vehicle in motion before every passenger is seated?

28. Can a person be allowed to board or leave a school bus other than 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?
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