

GaDOE SCHOOL BUS DRIVER SEVERE WEATHER/TORNADO RECOMMENDATIONS

If there is a **tornado watch** the district should monitor for the changing status of the weather. Drivers should continue their route under extreme caution and monitor their 2-way radio for changing conditions.

If there is a **tornado warning** at dismissal time, the school should hold the children until the warning is lifted. Drivers should wait inside the school with the children.

If drivers are already on their route and become aware that a tornado warning has been issued they should proceed to the nearest educational facility or other shelter and take the students inside. Drivers need to be aware of schools, and alternate sites such as fire stations, public buildings or other emergency shelters located on their route. If feasible notify dispatch of your shelter location. Drivers and students should remain in the shelter until the warning is lifted. Drivers should stay with the students and monitor weather broadcasts to know when the warning has expired.

If unexpected weather conditions present a hazardous situation or if unable to reach a safe location as indicated above, the driver:

1. Should pull the bus well off of the roadway to a safe location and stop the vehicle. Keep the engine running.
2. Should turn on 4-way emergency flashers and strobe light in order that other motorists can see that the bus is stopped.
3. Should consider the 14th National Congress on Pupil Transportation guidelines for en route emergency evacuation procedures:

Assessing the Need to Evacuate:

Student safety and control are best maintained by keeping students in the bus during an emergency and/or impending crisis situation if doing so does not expose them to unnecessary risk of injury. A decision to evacuate should include consideration of the following conditions:

- A. *Is there a fire involved?*
- B. *Is fuel leaking?*
- C. *Might the bus roll or tip, thereby causing further threat to safety?*
- D. *Is the bus likely to be hit by other vehicles?*
- E. *Is the bus in the **direct path of a sighted tornado** or other natural disaster, such as rising water?*
- F. *Would evacuating students **expose them to speeding traffic, severe weather or other dangerous environment?***
- G. *Considering the medical, physical and emotional condition of the students, does staying in the bus or evacuating the bus pose the greater danger to the student's safety?*

4. Should assess the need to evacuate, and under most severe weather conditions keep the students on the bus. Have the students protect their head by lowering their face against their upper legs so that they are below the window level. Students should cover their faces with a jacket, book, etc. to protect themselves from flying debris. Notify the transportation office of your location.
5. Should not allow students off of the bus to move trees, limbs, cables, or power lines. The transportation office should be notified for further direction and assistance. Be extremely cautious for the students' safety.
6. Should not allow students to disembark from your bus if the driver arrives at a stop and is aware or suspects that there are power lines down in the area. The transportation office should be notified for further direction and assistance.
7. Should radio the Transportation Office for further assistance if the bus can not be moved due to blockage of the roadway.

Note – If unable to reach the transportation office in the event of an emergency, drivers should contact 911.

The 14th National Congress on Pupil Transportation further recommends:

Local District Policy

Bus staff should be familiar with local district policy regarding.....evacuation procedures to follow when students are en route; or, what to do if a tornado or flash flood, etc. is sighted and no shelter is near.