

# School Bus Safety

## AN UNRULY BUS IS AN UNSAFE BUS!



Good order among students on the bus is fundamental to safety.

Commonly known as the “bus discipline problem,” what’s really at stake is the effect that a lack of good order has on every student’s safety. “Discipline” isn’t the problem—the real problem is safety, because bad “discipline” results in an unsafe operation.

Safe student transportation is one of DoDDS-Europe’s highest concerns. We have high standards for mechanically sound vehicles and qualified, trained drivers, two of the three parts that make up the formula for safe school bus operations. The third and equally vital part that completes the formula is safe student behavior on the bus.

The most serious effect of student misbehavior is its impact on the bus driver. Driving in European traffic conditions demands the driver’s full attention and absolute concentration. Anything that diverts attention or breaks concentration, however momentary, can have dangerous, even fatal, consequences. Consider this: When the driver looks in the rearview mirror to identify and correct student misbehavior, who is driving the bus?

The direct cause and effect relationship between behavior and safety on the bus underlies DoDDS-Europe’s policy and program for managing student behavior. A joint working group of school principals, education and transportation officials, component command schools liaison officers, and ECAPTS representatives conducted an in-depth study of the topic and how to manage it. The working group overhauled the process, clearly defining roles and responsibilities; streamlining procedures and making them consistent; simplifying and standardizing the rules; and creating a universal table of consequences. DoDDS-Europe implemented the revisions during the fourth quarter of last school year.

Some key points about DoDDS-Europe’s policy and procedures are these:

- Because misbehavior by even one student creates an un-

safe environment for all, the rules will be strictly enforced.

- Parents (including sponsors or guardians) are responsible for their children’s behavior on the bus. DoD policy prohibits hiring adults for the primary purpose of supervising student behavior and enforcing discipline on school buses. Parents must teach their children proper behavior and ensure they follow the rules.

- School principals will take disciplinary action. Riding school buses is a privilege that may be suspended or revoked when a student does not behave in a safe and proper manner.

- Suspension or revocation of bus privileges does not relieve the student of attending school. Parents must make the necessary arrangements.

- The table of consequences has four categories of infractions in ascending order of severity, with disciplinary action also following an increasing penalty scale. The four categories are Minor Misconduct (e.g., standing while the bus is in motion); Serious Infractions (e.g., damage, theft or pilfering); Severe Offenses (e.g., fighting); and Criminal or Illegal Acts (e.g., making a bomb threat).

- Penalties begin with an oral/written warning for the first instance in the minor misconduct category, increasing to a 1-5 day suspension for the second and culminating in suspension for remainder of school year upon a fifth referral. Similarly, an increasing scale of suspensions is applied to serious infractions, severe offenses and criminal or illegal acts, with the last also referred to military installation commanders for other/additional action as appropriate.

Parents must ensure that their children understand and follow the rules for riding the school bus—see the accompanying box. Commanders at all levels should also be familiar with the rules and table of consequences—

copies are available from the school or through the schools liaison officer.

While school principals administer DoDDS-Europe’s policy and program for student school bus behavior management, success requires everyone’s backing, cooperation and support, including parents, sponsors and guardians, commanders, and other military community officials.

It’s all about a safe ride for students to and from school every day.

### The 10 School Bus Rules

- 1) Obey the driver or adult.
- 2) Enter and exit the bus safely and always show your bus pass.
- 3) Stay properly seated and use seatbelts when available.
- 4) Keep your hands, feet and other body parts to yourself.
- 5) Do not throw things.
- 6) Put nothing out of the window.
- 7) Remain quiet and do not disturb the driver or others.
- 8) No profanity, indecency, smoking, prohibited items, or vandalism.
- 9) Do not eat, drink, or chew gum.
- 10) Be responsible, be safe.