

Tornado Warning Guidelines

Transportation Department

This document applies to Carroll County Public Schools Buses. When a tornado **warning is** issued within Carroll County, Maryland, CCPS drivers traveling in Carroll County are expected to follow the procedures outlined in this document. Bus drivers and/or bus assistants travelling outside the county must be aware of adverse weather conditions where they are currently traveling and take reasonable and appropriate steps to protect themselves and all passengers from tornadoes and other adverse weather conditions using this document as a guideline. While administrators and bus personnel may use their professional judgement in times of severe thunderstorms or tornado watches, a tornado **warning** issued to an area within Carroll County requires specific actions as outlined in this document.

Definitions

Tornado Watch - is issued by the National Weather Service when they believe weather conditions are favorable for the development of severe thunderstorms that are capable of producing tornadoes.

Tornado Warning – is issued by the National Weather Service when either a tornado/funnel cloud has been spotted or radar indicates a tornado has formed.

Protective Position - All students in seats should remain in their seating area and keep all body parts below the window level. Bus Attendants should assist students who are using a wheelchair by using blankets on the bus as a protective shield around the upper part of the students. This is the position students should be in when on the bus and it is parked during a Tornado Warning

What happens when a tornado warning is issued?

- It may be necessary to temporarily cease some or all transportation operations.
- While student pick up or drop off is in progress, whenever possible, schools shall receive and shelter students, staff and bus personnel.
- When it is announced that transportation services may resume, it will be on a delayed basis, without changes to pick-up or discharge sequence.
- During the school day, no student shall be dismissed from school during the time that a tornado warning is in effect.

What should bus drivers do early in the school year to prepare?

- Prior to severe weather, preferably in the first two weeks of school, bus drivers and bus assistants should identify locations along the bus routes that could provide more shelter than a school bus. These locations could include a different school building, a fire house,

a church, a business, a substantial structure, or a low-lying area. These locations should be written on the detailed route description that must be kept on the bus at all times.

NOTE: It is no longer advised to seek shelter below bridges or overpasses.

- CCPS approved communication devices such as radios, or other communication equipment currently in use by CCPS vehicles should be in operation and functioning at all times,
- Become familiar with CCPS Tornado procedures and understand how communication is accomplished during an emergency.
- Drivers should prepare and maintain accurate seating charts, so they are easy to take when evacuating the bus. This is especially important when evacuating students into any school or building which the students do not attend.

What should bus drivers and bus assistants do when a tornado warning is issued?

- If a bus driver or bus assistant sees a tornado while transporting students:
 - The bus driver is to stop student drop off/pick up and seek appropriate shelter for all vehicle occupants. This could include a different school building, a fire house, a church, or a business.
 - It is possible that the bus driver and bus assistant may have to evacuate the bus and seek shelter far away from the bus in a low-lying area. In that case the bus driver and bus assistant must also be aware of the possibility of flash flooding and may have to relocate.
 - If there is not time to evacuate the bus or shelter at a school or other building, the bus should be parked off the roadway away from large trees, in a low-lying area if possible, and students and staff should assume the Protective Position.
 - **NOTE:** It is NOT recommended to park or seek shelter under an overpass or bridge.
- If there is a tornado warning while transporting students but an adult on the bus does not see a tornado:
 - The bus driver will continue to pick up or drop off all students for the trip and then proceed to a school destination unless otherwise directed by TSD, law enforcement, or school administration.
 - Upon arrival at the destination school the bus driver and bus assistant are to stop all operations until the expiration of the tornado warning. The bus driver, bus assistant, and passengers are to seek shelter at the school.

- If a tornado warning is issued in your area of service or countywide, prior to starting the first route in the morning or afternoon, or while at a school site:
 - The bus driver is to discontinue operations immediately and seek shelter. This could happen in between first, second, and third tier bus runs, midday runs or Career & Technology runs.

- When the tornado warning expires:
 - The bus driver will resume operations, although late, without change to the pick-up or drop-off sequence of schools.

Authority over students with regard to when they are on a bus and seeking shelter:

- When students are transported to their enrolled school during a tornado warning, responsibility for the students belongs to the school administration.
- When students and bus staff seek shelter at a school other than their enrolled school, the bus driver must remain with the students; however, the school administration has authority and provides direction to the students and bus staff.
- When students and bus staff seek shelter at a non CCPS facility (such as a church, firehouse, etc), the bus driver retains responsibility for the students.

When a Tornado Warning is issued, how will bus drivers, bus assistants, departments, and schools be notified?

- Transportation will be responsible for making an announcement to all buses explaining the:
 1. Projected area of the tornado warning and which schools are affected, and
 2. Projected end time of the tornado warning.
 - Principals will be notified by Central Office Administration when there is a tornado warning affecting the attendance area of the school. Principals will take the appropriate measures as outlined in the school's Emergency Preparedness Plan.
 - Principals/designees will send a (School Messenger) message to affected staff regarding the tornado warning, including the end time of the warning. The message will include the:
 1. Projected area of the tornado warning and which schools are affected, and
 2. Projected end time of the tornado warning.
- In addition, the message will include information about the resumption of bus services.
- Principals/designees will alert staff to ensure that any persons outside the building, including bus drivers, bus assistants, maintenance workers, parents, etc. are notified of the tornado warning and are sheltered.
 - When the warning expires, the superintendent/designee will contact schools to direct them to return to normal arrival/dismissal processes without any change to the normal sequence in the three-tiered system of schools. Another announcement will be made over the two-way radios to bus drivers.