



SCHOOL BUS SPECIFICATIONS 2023

Standards effective with all new school buses purchased after July 1, 2023



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GENERAL PROVISIONS

The school bus specifications and minimum standards contained herein apply to all school transportation vehicles purchased by school districts of Mississippi. No school district has authority under state laws and Mississippi Board of Education regulations to purchase or use any equipment except the type approved by the Mississippi Board of Education.

Federal regulations require that all vehicles manufactured and sold for the purpose of transporting school children meet applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. It is the responsibility of the manufacturer and seller to ensure all school buses are certified according to the standards. Each vehicle shall be properly serviced prior to being delivered to the school district.

Any reference to "or equal" means that manufacturers of the chassis or body (or complete bus) for which a bid is submitted shall have the authority to determine equal quality of parts and components to be considered.

A representative of the Division of Pupil Transportation, Mississippi Department of Education, Jackson, Mississippi, shall have the privilege of visiting school bus manufacturing plants of successful bidders for the purpose of inspecting school bus chassis, school bus bodies, or combinations thereof, both during construction and after completion for delivery to Mississippi school districts.

References to Standards in the School Bus Manufacturers Technical Committee (SBMTC) and Standards in the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) will be throughout the document.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Mississippi School Bus Regulations and Specifications consists of the following distinct sections: *School Bus Body and Chassis Specifications, Specially Equipped School Bus Specifications, Pupil Transportation Service Vehicles, Multifunctional School Activity Bus, Alternative Power Specifications and Equipment for the Transportation of Pre-School Children.*

This document is designed to provide timely, clear instructions to school districts, school bus owner/operators, private contractors, manufacturers and vendors, and service personnel regarding Mississippi's school bus adopted specifications for school buses and related equipment and for standards and procedures to be incorporated in vehicle and related equipment inspections, replacements, and repairs.

With respect to specifications for school buses and related equipment, after each National Congress on School Transportation publishes its adopted changes in the National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures (available at <https://www.nasdpts.org/NSTSP-Documents>) or distributes interim addenda to that document, the Mississippi Department of Education may review the recommendations and revise the Mississippi School Bus Specifications accordingly.

Revisions in Mississippi statutes and/or the Mississippi Department of Education regulations will be published as amendments to this document. Compliance shall become effective as stated at the time of publication, or as otherwise specified by statute or other official document.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- A. Information published in this document is intended to keep interested parties apprised of statutory requirements and other regulations that apply to various conditions of purchase, ownership, maintenance, inspection and disposal of school buses and related equipment.
- B. The overriding principle for Mississippi's adoption of the National Congress on School Transportation's revised National School Transportation Specifications and Procedures is to provide the safest modes of transportation to and from school and school-related activities for the school children of Mississippi.
- C. Specifications for school buses and related equipment are adopted so as to promote competition among manufacturers to design and construct equipment that is both reliable and affordable to school districts and independent transportation contractors.
- D. Mississippi's specifications for school buses and related equipment are designed to allow for approval of the use of new inventions and improvements that are consistent with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS), Mississippi statutes and goals of safety, security, and efficiency and that have been approved by the Mississippi Department of Education, Office of Safe and Orderly Schools, Division of Pupil Transportation.

INTENDED USE

Mississippi Code Ann. § 37-41-57 gives the State Board of Education the authority to adopt and enforce regulations of the design and operation of all school buses used for the transportation of school children when owned and operated by any school board or privately owned and operated under contract with any school board in this state. The specifications, regulations, and procedures described in this document, therefore, are intended for use by school district and other entities that have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Mississippi Department of Education, including private companies that contract with local education agencies (LEA) to provide school transportation services, and for use for manufacturers, vendors, and technicians that have specific interests in school transportation services. The document is made available, also, as a guide for charter schools and non-public schools to consider when establishing their respective regulations, specifications, and inspections.

The following terms are used throughout this document to define the applicability of Mississippi's specifications and inspection procedures for public school districts and private contractors:

- A. **SHALL**: a mandatory condition. Where certain school bus designs, equipment or operations are described with the "*shall*" stipulation, it is *mandatory* that all school buses and all school bus operations meet those requirements, as written.

Note: The word "*shall*" is also used when referring to items that are already adopted into federal laws, standards or regulations.

- B. **SHOULD**: an advisory condition. Where certain school bus designs, equipment or operations are described with the word "*should*," such items are considered to be advisable usage. In other words, the item is *recommended*, but not mandatory, for all school buses or all school bus operations.
- C. **MAY**: a permissive condition. Where certain school bus designs, equipment or operations are described with the word "*may*," such items are considered for *possible* usage. However, there is no intent that the item be required for all school buses or all school bus operations.

The vehicle specifications contained herein are intended to apply primarily to **new** vehicles, including all types of school buses, as defined under the various types of "school buses." It should be noted that vehicles with a capacity of ten (10) or fewer persons, including the driver, cannot be certified as *school buses* under federal regulations.