

Scope of the Professional Bus Operator

PROFESSIONAL BUS OPERATORS

The title "Professional Bus Operator" defines a person, who, because of his or her knowledge, training and abilities, is capable of operating a motor vehicle for hire, designed to carry passengers. Professional Bus Operators typically work in one of five major transportation areas: urban, intercity, school, tour/charter, and accessible services.

Professional Bus Operators are responsible for the safe operation of their vehicles under diverse weather and traffic conditions, and must follow schedule guidelines sometimes under difficult circumstances. Bus Operators usually work alone, without direct supervision, which necessitates a great deal of individual autonomy and responsibility.

Customer relations are a large part of the Professional Bus Operator's daily duties. Today's bus passengers expect a high level of quality customer service from the Professional Bus Operator. To ensure the continued growth of the industry, Professional Bus Operators must be able to communicate effectively with all passengers and respond to their needs.

Professional Bus Operators must constantly monitor their passengers and other drivers. They must exercise a great deal of tact and diplomacy when dealing with difficult passengers and disrespect from other drivers. Professional Bus Operators must be alert and manage their personal well being as they can drive long hours with minimum breaks, operate during peak periods with split shifts and must cope with adverse weather, construction and traffic conditions.

Professional Bus Operators must be aware of the driver-related mechanical systems associated with different types of buses, which, with the advent of modern technology, are becoming more complex. Technology also plays an increasing role in the communications and scheduling of buses. Most Professional Bus Operators now maintain radio communications with their dispatcher, and some buses are equipped with passenger monitoring video systems, automatic vehicle-location systems, global positioning, and computerized information systems. This increasingly sophisticated face of public transportation means that a wide variety of skills are required, including business, technical, and social skills. Professional Bus Operators must participate in an on-going process of acquiring new skills and knowledge.

Although not an Occupational Standard, it is important that the Professional Bus Operator maintain a healthy lifestyle and constantly self-monitor stress levels. There will be times when job-related or personal trauma can adversely affect performance. Knowledge of company and community support systems is essential to ensure public and personal safety is not compromised during job performance

URBAN BUS OPERATORS

Urban Bus Operators travel prescribed routes in towns, cities and the suburbs picking up passengers at designated stops according to defined schedules. Often they must deal with heavy traffic and congested streets while collecting fares, issuing transfers and validating passes. Many urban buses now have wheelchair accessible features, which require the Bus Operator to assist the passenger on and off the bus by operating ramps or lifts and securing the wheelchair. Urban Bus Operators meet a wide variety of urban passengers which many report makes the job interesting. Operating during peak periods can also result in lengthy split shifts and heavy passenger loads.

INTERCITY BUS OPERATORS

Intercity Bus Operators typically pick up passengers at inner-city bus terminals and drive them directly to bus terminals in other cities. However, some Intercity Bus Operators make frequent stops to pick up and drop off passengers and parcels at local agencies. Parcel pick-up and delivery is an important component of the Intercity Bus Operator's work, which may entail some heavy lifting and maintaining careful records. They drive in remote areas of the country without reliable radio or telephone communications to request assistance in an emergency. They face long hours of highway driving, often at night, and must be sensitive to the comfort and needs of long-distance passengers.

SCHOOL BUS OPERATORS

School Bus Operators drive students to and from school, and to and from intramural activities, stopping and starting in both rural and urban areas. These operators have the additional safety and security responsibility associated with carrying students, i.e. maintaining order, and ensuring safe stopping and starting, often on busy highways and country roads. In most areas they are also responsible for controlling traffic through the use of flashing lights. Many School Buses now

have wheelchair accessible features, which require the Bus Operator to assist the passenger on and off the bus and secure wheelchairs/scooters.

TOUR AND CHARTER BUS OPERATORS

Tour and Charter Bus Operators convey passengers from point to point for specific purposes, such as sightseeing tours, transporting passengers from their hotel to the airport or rail station, or transporting groups, i.e. sports teams or the elderly. Tour and Charter Bus Operators often have the additional responsibility of acting as Tour Guides, and, as such, they must be knowledgeable of the sights and places of interest. Some tours may last up to 30 days, which means the Tour Bus Operator must be mindful of the needs of their passengers over extended long periods of time. Although Tour Bus Operators spend a great deal of time away from home, most report that this is compensated for by seeing new sights and meeting new people.

ACCESSIBLE SERVICES BUS OPERATORS

Accessible Services Bus Operators transport passengers using vehicles specially equipped to accommodate wheelchairs, scooters, and people with special needs. They provide a door-to-door service assisting passengers from and to their doors and on to and off the bus. Accessible Services Bus Operators must have a high level of sensitivity to the needs of their passengers, and many are required to have a First Aid certification.