



**South Carolina Department of Education**  
**Office of Transportation**  
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## **Requirements for South Carolina School Bus Drivers**

In South Carolina, drivers must obtain a South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) School Bus Driver's Certificate to be eligible to drive any bus owned or leased by the state, a school district, or a private company for the purpose of transporting public school students to or from school or school related activities. This includes fully-functional school buses (FFSB) and multi-functional school activity buses (MFSAB), even if the only bus an individual will drive does not require a commercial driver's license (CDL) to operate.

## **Requirements for Obtaining a SCDE School Bus Driver's Certificate**

The driver has 180 calendar days after successfully completing SCDE classroom instruction to fulfill all aspects of the SCDE School Bus Driver Training and Testing Program. Each driver candidate must:

1. Have no more than four points against current driving record, no more than four points against the driving record in the past twelve months, and no license suspensions for moving violations in the past twelve months.
2. Pass a South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) criminal background check
3. Complete SCDE School Bus Driver Classroom Instruction conducted by an SCDE-certified classroom instructor and pass the end-of-course test with a score of 80 or better.
4. As required by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), if the candidate will need to acquire or upgrade a CDL, he/she will also be required to complete Entry Level Driver Training (ELDT) theory instruction (an extension of the SCDE classroom instruction curriculum) and achieve a score of 80 or higher on the associated CDL Proficiency Exams.
5. Obtain current United States Department of Transportation (DOT) medical certification.
6. If applicable, obtain a Class B Commercial Learner's Permit (CLP) with endorsements for passenger transport (P) and school bus (S). This will include passing the following written tests taken at the South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)\*:
  - a. General Knowledge
  - b. Air Brakes
  - c. Passenger Transport
  - d. School Bus.
7. Pass a pre-employment drug screen as required by federal DOT regulations.
8. Complete behind the wheel training conducted by a certified behind-the-wheel trainer as required by the SCDE and the FMCSA, depending on the license and certificate type the candidate holds or seeks.
  - a) Most of training must be completed on the road, physically driving the bus while learning and developing proficiency in school bus operational procedures. These procedures include but are not limited to:
    - (1) Pre-trip inspections
    - (2) Properly securing the bus
    - (3) Loading students from the left and the right
    - (4) Unloading students to the left and the right

- (5) Railroad crossings
  - (6) Turnabouts
  - (7) During trip inspections
  - (8) Post-trip inspections.
- b) The level of non-behind-the-wheel training is left to the discretion of the behind-the-wheel trainer and may include additional procedural training or observing a SCDE-certified behind-the-wheel trainer on an actual bus route.
  - c) Some candidates may require more behind-the-wheel training than others.
- 9. Pass the SCDE Physical Performance Tests (PPTs).
  - 10. Pass the SCDE School Bus Road Test.

After completing the requirements for a SCDE School Bus Driver's Certificate, if an individual will only be operating a FFSB or a MFSAB which is not classified as a commercial motor vehicle by the DMV, the initial certification process is finished. Otherwise, the driver must obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL) with endorsements for passenger transport (P) and school bus (S) by passing state DMV tests for vehicle inspection, basic control skills, and on-the-road driving.

The SCDE will only issue a School Bus Driver's Certificate to individuals who have completed the prescribed training regimen and who hold a valid driver's license meeting the requirements for operating a school bus type vehicle.

### **Requirements for Continuing Certification**

For continued certification, a driver must have no more than four points against her/his current driving record; no more than four points against her/his driving record in the past twelve months; and no license suspensions for moving violations in the past twelve months.

For continued FFSB certification, the driver must complete ten (10) hours of SCDE mandated in-service annually; pass interim license and license renewal assessments at the appropriate intervals; and continue to maintain driver's license and medical qualifications. All drivers must participate in a drug and alcohol testing program as mandated by federal DOT regulations.

For continued MFSAB certification, the driver must complete a minimum of two (2) hours of mandated in-service annually; pass interim license and license renewal assessments at the appropriate intervals; and continue to maintain driver's license and medical qualifications. All drivers must participate in a drug and alcohol testing program as mandated by federal DOT regulations.

No person shall have the authority to suspend or exempt a driver from the initial certification or in-service training requirements.

*\* If an individual will only be operating a FFSB or a MFSAB which is not classified as a commercial motor vehicle by the DMV, the driver must possess a valid driver's license that meets the requirements in state and federal law to operate a non-commercial school bus type vehicle with no restrictions other than vision correction to qualify for issuance.*

#### Legal references:

South Carolina Code, 1976, as amended: Section 59-67-470. Bus drivers; selection; eligibility, training and certificates. South Carolina Department of Education Regulations: 43-80, Operation of Public Pupil Transportation Services, Section XIV