

EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE

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TARGET
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SAFETY

Maintenance Cart Use at School

Introduction

Maintenance carts are extremely useful for transporting goods, and sometimes people, around school grounds. **However, they can also be dangerous, so it is important you understand the risks involved and take the necessary precautions to avoid accidents and injury.** Remember that even though they are small, maintenance carts are moving vehicles and you should drive and conduct yourself as if you were driving a car. In fact, because maintenance carts are not equipped with all the safety features as cars, you should be even more careful while navigating through school grounds. Follow these tips to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone at the school.

Authorization

It is 's policy that **only those authorized to drive maintenance carts do so, and only if it is for a valid business reason.** Business reasons include transporting personnel, equipment and/or supplies for the school's purposes, or transporting employees or students who have temporary or permanent disability-related needs. Unauthorized drivers or passengers may not be aware of the rules or how to operate the cart correctly, so they present a serious hazard to both pedestrians and other passengers. Therefore, you should not let anyone else use or borrow the equipment without authorization - even if it may seem like he or she has a valid business reason for asking.

Areas of Operation

Only operate the maintenance cart in approved areas of the school's grounds. These vehicles are not designed to handle excessive amounts of wear and tear so drive only on hard, covered surfaces such as asphalt, concrete and brick (except in the event of an emergency). Not only are bumpy, uneven surfaces bad for the cart, but they also increase the risk of the driver losing control of the vehicle or someone falling out the open sides. In addition, driving on soft surface such as landscaping, gravel and bark-covered areas may cause damage to those surfaces themselves. The only time driving on soft surfaces on a regular basis is acceptable is if you are operating a lawn or grounds maintenance cart. Also, unless you have a valid business reason and express written consent, do not drive the maintenance cart off school grounds. In most states, this is illegal.

Maintenance

Proper maintenance is an important factor in cart safety. **Prior to use, you should always examine the cart to make sure everything is in working order.** Inspect the lights (including headlights, taillights, brake lights, turn signals and flashing strobe light), brakes, parking brake, reflectors, necessary signage, steering wheel, horn and tire inflation. If one of these components is missing or inadequate, notify your supervisor immediately and mark the cart with an "out of order" sign to be sure nobody else attempts to use it.

Load Specifications

To avoid hazardous situations, always follow the weight requirements of the cart. If you are carrying passengers, enforce the policy that everyone must be sitting in a seat with limbs inside the cart when moving. If you are carrying equipment, properly secure all equipment and supplies so they do not accidentally fall out and impede your driving or harm a pedestrian. In some situations, it might be appropriate to have the cart decorated for a school event – this is only safe if it



does not obstruct your vision or prevent you from driving carefully.

Driving

Though some carts go as fast as 18 miles per hour, this is much too high a speed for a student setting. Not only are children smaller and thus harder to see, but they can also be unpredictable and likely are not looking out for a cart coming their way. The faster you drive, the longer it takes you to stop when something unexpected happens. **A good rule of thumb for driving in crowded areas is not to go any faster than the pedestrians walking in the area.** Another danger zone is parking lots – avoid driving the maintenance cart at busy times, such as when school lets out or during lunch. When driving, remember that traffic laws and signals apply to carts as well.

Also, you should avoid sudden stops or changes of direction, as students or other staff in the area have no way to anticipate your moves. You should never operate the cart while using a cell phone, two-way radio or wearing headphones – these things reduce your ability pay attention and to listen to what is going on around you. **Finally, remember that you should be fully aware of your surroundings and actively looking for pedestrians at all times – pedestrians, especially students, always have the right of way.**

Parking

Parking is much more hazardous than you may expect because an empty cart is a tempting toy for both unauthorized staff and for students. When you are finished with the cart or are parking temporarily, always remove the key and any valuable personal items or equipment, and apply the parking brake, making sure the parking brake does not have the possibility of accidentally releasing.

Charging

Like driving, charging the maintenance cart is something that may be done only by authorized staff. **Students should never, under any circumstance, be permitted near charging equipment.** Note that cart batteries may never be used to power or jump other devices, and they should never be removed for any reason. It is not safe for you to perform maintenance on the cart battery itself unless you are trained or authorized to do so – this includes adding fluid or electrolyte to a battery. Like the cart itself, charging stations should be locked and off-limits when not in use.

It's Your Responsibility

Always remember the dangers associated with operating a maintenance cart, especially in the presence of students and other staff. It is your responsibility to follow all safety rules, be aware of your surroundings and operate the machinery with caution. With your help, we can ensure that our school remains the safest possible environment for students and staff alike.