

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

March 1, 2005

Happy Birthday! We're two!

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF MOTORCOACH EXPO 2005

Proposed ADA rules would have big impact on industry

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Justice has launched a massive overhaul of the compliance rules for the Americans with Disabilities Act, with many of the proposed changes likely to have a profound impact on bus and motorcoach companies, especially line-haul operators.

The Office of Advocacy in the

U.S. Small Business Administration says the proposed changes could impose billions of dollars of regulatory costs on small businesses across the U.S.

The new standards span about 300 pages and cover everything from the width of paths in restaurant kitchens, to the number of wheelchair-accessible bathroom

stalls in an office building.

Here are just two of dozens of ways the proposed rules could impact coach operators:

Under current ADA rules, half of the entrances to a bus terminal or station must be accessible. That is, if there two entrances from the same thoroughfare, usually only one must be accessible. Under the

proposed rule, 60 percent of public entrances must be wheelchair accessible. That means if there are two public entrances to a facility, both must now be accessible.

Coach companies, under existing ADA rules, must provide wheelchair access up to employee work areas, but access through the work area is not required. Under

the proposed rules, operators may be required to make employee-only areas wheelchair accessible. So-called "paths of access" through employee work areas would be required regardless of whether the public ever entered these areas or the firm had an employee with a disability. Such a change would

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A Fly-In will bring motorcoach and other private operators to Washington to lobby Congress.

Major lobbying push planned

WASHINGTON — With Congress gearing up to take another crack at adopting a federal highway and public transportation bill, a group of trade associations representing private-sector bus, limousine, shuttle and taxi operators are organizing what they hope will be a major lobbying drive this month.

Members of the Coalition of Private Transportation Associations, which includes the United Motorcoach Association, the American Bus Association and four other motorcoach industry associations, have announced plans for a Washington Fly-In on March 15-16.

The associations want as many members of their organizations as

possible to come to Washington during the two days to lobby their congressional representatives, both Senate and House, on key aspects of the highway and public transportation bill.

As *Bus & Motorcoach News* has reported (most recently Feb. 1), several aspects of the massive highway bill have the potential of severely undermining — and even harming — private-sector passenger providers if Congress adopts them.

One key goal is to convince Congress it should keep public transit agencies from expanding their ability to provide charter bus services, which they want to do,

and improve enforcement of federal rules that protect private operators from unfair transit competition.

Members of the coalition, which includes the National School Transportation Association, the International Motor Coach Group, the Trailways Transportation System, the California Bus Association and the Alabama Motorcoach Association, plus other national, regional and state ground transportation associations, are sending out calls for their members to come to Washington or to send letters and e-mails to members of two key Congressional committees.

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IRS begins crack down on use of red-dyed fuel

BRIGHTON, Mass. — The Internal Revenue Service apparently has begun passive enforcement of the new red-dyed fuel regulations for motorcoach operators and plans to launch a full-scale nationwide enforcement around the middle of this month.

At least one carrier — Crystal Transport of Brighton — already has had one of its coaches stopped on the highway by the IRS and checked for the marked fuel and a follow up visit by federal agents to its garage the following day.

The inspections occurred during the third week in February.

"It was a real surprise to us because we haven't seen anything posted to the Federal Register or

any enforcement rules," said Kevin Sheehan, general manager of Crystal Transport.

Although all 50 Crystal coaches had red-dyed fuel in their tanks, the IRS did not fine the company. Instead, the agents acknowledged that there might be a problem with notification regarding the new regulations and they likely would wait until the second or third week in March before beginning their enforcement program nationwide.

"I had heard there was going to be some kind of notification in March, but we haven't heard a thing," said Sheehan. "I would think that everyone who files 720 (tax) forms and fuel suppliers would

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Forecast: High diesel prices

WASHINGTON — The Energy Information Administration has revised upward — substantially upward — its projection for diesel fuel prices this year.

The agency, a unit of the U.S. Department of Energy, is predicting diesel fuel prices will average \$1.95 a gallon for 2005. That's 8 cents a gallon higher than it forecast just a month ago.

In its latest *Short-Term Energy Outlook*, the EIA said diesel would average 14 cents a gallon higher than 2004's average of \$1.81 per

gallon, which was 20 percent higher than 2003.

The highest price diesel fuel reached last year was \$2.21 a gallon on Oct. 25, which also was an all-time high, and the national average remained over \$2 for 11 straight weeks. Previously, the record high was \$1.77 in March 2003.

The most expensive region for diesel fuel last year was the West Coast where prices averaged \$2.03 a gallon for the year, although all regions saw large increases over 2003.

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Arrow Stage buys Phoenix operator

PHOENIX — Arrow Stages Lines of Norfolk, Neb., has purchased Corporate Transportation 'N Tours of Phoenix.

Although Corporate Transportation will be merged into Arrow's operation it will retain its name because Arizona's largest motorcoach company also is named Arrow Stage Lines.

Arrow Stage Lines of Phoenix, which is owned by CUSA of Dallas, is a long-separated sibling of Arrow Stage Lines of Nebraska, with both companies having been founded by the Busskohl family.

Arrow Stage Lines of Nebraska is owned by Busco Inc., with headquarters in Norfolk and operations

in 13 western locations, including Omaha, Neb.; Kansas City, Mo.; Denver; Las Vegas, and Tucson. Those locations all operate under the name Arrow Stage Lines.

Steve Busskohl, president of Arrow, said Corporate Transportation "is a perfect acquisition" for his company because both companies have similar approaches to the market, emphasizing on-time performance; well-maintained, up-to-date equipment; professional, well-trained, uniformed drivers, and a commitment to customer service designed to exceed expectations.

Arrow Stage Lines was founded by Busskohl's grandfather in 1928 and last year was named the winner

of the United Motorcoach Association Vision Award. The award honors an innovative operator with outstanding business practices and safety record.

Corporate Transportation has six MCI coaches and two midsize buses. The company has been in business since 1989 and was owned by Armoe Moschlin, who will remain with the operation for a period in a consulting capacity.

Busskohl said the Corporate Transportation staff and equipment is being retained so client service and relationships will remain unchanged.

For information about Arrow go to www.arrowstagelines.com.



Gotta Go Trailways grows across Texas

FORT WORTH, Texas — Gotta Go Trailways, a tour and charter operator, is expanding in opposite directions — east and west — from its base in Fort Worth.

Company President Don Dinger said he has opened a bus yard in Abilene, Texas, a city of 115,000 about 155 miles west of Fort Worth, and purchased the business of a former tour and charter operator in Daingerfield, Texas, a community of 2,500 that's roughly 165 miles east of Fort Worth in northeast Texas.

The business Dinger acquired in Daingerfield was called Tri-City Charter and operated a 14-bus fleet. Dinger said the company had a very strong tour operation and provided charter services not only for customers in Texas but also to groups in the nearby states of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Louisiana.

Dinger bought the business from David McFarland, who has

left the industry.

No equipment was included in the deal.

Dinger intends to continue operating the business under the Tri-City name and expects to name a manager of that operation shortly.

The move into Abilene is an expansion and did not involve the purchase of another company. Dinger has hired Dave Bates to manage the new Abilene branch.

Abilene is home to Dyess Air Force Base and Dinger is nearing completion of requirements to qualify his company to contract with the Department of Defense for military moves.

Dinger's expansion is a byproduct of nonstop growth since he founded the company just over 20 years ago. He began the business offering tours and charters but using buses supplied by others. Two years into the enterprise he decided

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THE DOCKET

Feds want to shield HOS rule from suits

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Transportation has proposed converting the current hours-of-service rules for truckers into statutory law, a move that would keep the regulations in effect despite federal court action to overturn them.

The department also is proposing to limit the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's jurisdiction over driver health to conditions that would cause death or serious injury, FMCSA Administrator Annette Sandberg announced.

In a ruling last July, a federal appeals court threw out new hours-of-service rules for truckers, saying the FMCSA had failed to consider driver health to the extent the court claimed it was obligated to do so.

Speaking last month at the American Trucking Associations' Winter Leadership Meeting in Washington, D.C., Sandberg said Congress failure to enact a highway and public transportation reauthorization bill last year presented an opportunity to end the litigation initiated by Public Citizen and its allies.

Under the Bush Administration's proposed new highway and public transportation bill, the hours-of-service rules issued for truckers in April 2003 and implemented in January 2004 would be "adopted and confirmed as fully legalized, as if it had, by prior act of Congress, been specifically adopted on the date that rule (including the subsequent technical amendment) was originally issued."

The proposed legislation would, however, give FMCSA authority to make changes to the rules in the future through the normal rulemaking process.

If enacted by Congress, the proposed legislation would trump the ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia because the court's opinion was based on its interpretation of congressional intent.

In an explanation that accompanied its proposal to Congress, the Bush Administration said many motor carriers have reported accident experience under the new regulations that is comparable to, if not better than, their experience under the old rules:

"Definitive statistics on acci-

dents and fatalities are not yet available, but the industry has already concluded that the rule is responsible — directly and indirectly — for producing more rest for drivers, better use of driver time, more efficient handling of freight by shippers and receivers, and increased productivity for motor carriers."

The explanation also noted that work on the hours' rules is time-consuming and involves a tremendous allocation of agency resources.

"Because the safety and operational results of the 2003 final rule appear to be favorable, and FMCSA may be required to undertake additional rulemaking activities without a significant increase in staff, the department believes that it would be beneficial to end the prolonged struggle over hours of service and to ratify permanently the 2003 rule. This will also enable the motor carrier industry and state and federal enforcement officials to plan their training and compliance activities without having to worry about the expense and effort of adapting to some as-yet-unknown hours-of-service regulation."

The proposed legislation on driver health would establish that FMCSA authority over driver health in all regulations is limited to ensuring that "the operations of commercial motor vehicles are free from recognized hazards that cause or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm to the operators."

Sandberg told reporters the court's broad reading of FMCSA's obligation to consider driver health made it very difficult for the agency to pinpoint whether health conditions were truly related to the hours rules or to numerous other factors, including drivers' own decisions regarding exercise, diet and so on.

The White House hopes a new highway bill will be enacted by May. If Congress does enact the bill and includes the codification of the hours rules into law, FMCSA will stop work on its current rulemaking to reconsider the regulations, Sandberg said. She emphasized, however, that in the meantime, the agency will proceed with the rulemaking and strongly encouraged interested parties to submit comments. Comments are due March 10.

Fuel taxes climb in 3 more states

New York, North Carolina and Illinois have raised their fuel taxes, but rates won't be going up in Nebraska.

In New York, where motor fuel is subject to a state sales tax, the rate of the fuel-use tax reportable through the International Fuel Tax Agreement is reset each quarter according to the price of fuel.

For the first quarter of this year, the rate on diesel fuel is rising from 19.9 to 22.5 cents, and the tax on gasoline is going from 20.3 cents a gallon to 21.1 cents.

The increases push the total diesel-fuel tax in New York to 35.35 cents per gallon and the gasoline tax to 35.7 cents. Both rates are the highest in the U.S.

Soaring fuel taxes may not be the only rising tax rates that New York operators will be facing. There are reports that higher registration fees are fairly certain to be enacted this year and a 25 percent increase, or possibly more, seems likely.

North Carolina indexes its tax rate, which is the same for both gasoline and diesel fuel, according to the average wholesale price of fuel. The new rate in North Carolina is 26.6 cents a gallon, versus the previous rate of 24.6 cents. The new rate will remain in effect through June.

An increase in the sales tax component of fuel taxes in Illinois has boosted the diesel tax in that state to 31.4 cents a gallon from 29.6 cents. The tax on gasoline has gone to 28.7 cents a gallon from 26.9.

In Nebraska, a 2-cent a gallon increase in fuel taxes had been considered by the state legislature, but was not acted on — apparently because fuel prices already are too high.

Rising fuel prices also may thwart a ballot proposal in Oklahoma to raise fuel taxes to pay for an ambitious road and bridge rebuilding program. With gasoline averaging 30 cents a gallon more than last year, the road initiative faces a steep uphill climb to win approval.

UMA challenges design of federal bus crash study

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association says that a soon-to-get-started federal study of bus crashes may be doomed to failure because of the way it is designed.

In comments filed with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, the trade association asserts that the narrow focus of the study will produce flawed conclusions that could lead the agency down the wrong path in developing policy.

"The lives of the traveling public are far too important to consider anything less than commissioning and conducting a complete and accurate picture of why buses crash," said UMA Senior Vice President of Government and Industry Relations Norm Littler.

The FMCSA published a notice last month seeking public comments on what is being called the *Bus Crash Causation Study*. The potentially far-reaching study is supposed to shed more light on what's behind most bus crashes. (See Dec. 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

However, UMA contends the study, as it's currently envisioned, has little chance of generating meaningful information and may, in fact, produce a highly skewed picture of bus crash causation factors.

In a nutshell, here are the basics of the study:

It will analyze "serious" bus crashes occurring in northern and central New Jersey. Traditionally, a "serious" bus crash has been defined as one involving fatalities, serious injuries or significant property damage.

The study's designers expect to collect data on 50-100 "serious" bus crashes occurring in the study area this year.

Buses are being defined as 9-15 passenger vans, plus midsize and larger buses seating 16 passengers or more.

UMA is highly skeptical that there will be 50 to 100 "serious" bus crashes in northern and central New Jersey this year for the FMCSA contractor and state officials to study. The association contends that because New Jersey has an aggressive bus safety enforce-

ment program it has fewer accidents.

"It has been UMA's experience that states employing strict bus-enforcement programs are the least likely jurisdictions to have high crashes rates. Over the past several years, the greatest number of serious bus crashes has occurred in states that either have weak enforcement practices or have no bus inspection programs," UMA said in its filing.

Even if by some fluke those conducting the study are able to find 50-100 "serious" bus crashes during the next year in Jersey, UMA contends the data still won't be meaningful because the study has been limited to one relative small region and that region could easily produce a distorted picture of what causes bus crashes.

UMA suggests the study be significantly modified. It proposes — among other things — that:

- The data-collection effort be widened to include all states. Because every state gets FMCSA Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program money, all states should be required to provide data to develop a clearer picture of what is, in reality, a rare occurrence — a serious bus crash.

- The FMCSA pay particular attention to the frequency or severity of crashes occurring in states that have strong bus inspection and enforcement programs versus states having weak or non-existent bus inspection and enforcement programs.

- The study pay particular attention to commercial vans that are exempt from regulation except for accident recording and vehicle marking.

- Include church-owned buses or state-operated school buses, which are either partially or completely exempt from FMCSA regulations.

- Determine if there were "indicators" of problems with carriers involved in serious crashes. The indicators might include elevated vehicle or driver out-of-service violations or accidents, lapses in insurance elevated numbers of moving violations, and information in federal or state databases.

Legislation aims to revive bonus depreciation

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association is supporting a bill that would reinstate and extend bonus depreciation for an additional two years for most business taxpayers.

U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson, a Republican from South Carolina's second district, has introduced a bill that would reinstate 50-percent bonus depreciation as of the first of this year.

H.R. 364 not only would reinstate bonus depreciation as of Jan. 1, 2005, but extend it to Jan. 1, 2007.

For an asset-intensive industry like the motorcoach industry, the replacement of coaches during the two-year period of the bill would provide an immediate tax benefit for profitable operators.

Bonus depreciation, first passed under the Jobs Creation and Worker's Assistance Act of 2002

and renewed under the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003, allowed coach operators to deduct 30 percent (under the 2002 law) and later 50-percent (under the 2003 law) of a qualified asset's value in the first year it was placed in service. This is in addition to taking Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System depre-

ciation over the life of the coach.

The laws were designed to provide businesses with incentives to make asset purchases during the post-9/11 economic slowdown and help stimulate the U.S. economy.

Coach manufacturers indicated last year that some operators were able to take advantage of the bonus depreciation to update their fleets.

Reinstatement of the provision would certainly be a welcome incentive for profitable operators looking to make new-coach purchases. Such depreciation cannot only reduce a profitable company's tax liability but it may also boost near-term cash flow.

The 2003 bonus depreciation law applied to equipment pur-

chased after May 5, 2003 and put into service before Jan. 1, 2005.

After its introduction, Wilson's bill was referred to the House Ways and Means Committee.

"Rest assured, this is a measure UMA approves of and supports," said Norm Littler, senior vice president of government and industry relations at the association.

Study

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Determine if carriers involved in crashes have ever undergone a compliance review that yielded a conditional safety rating and, if so, was there any follow-up action by either federal or state officials.

"UMA strongly encourages the FMCSA to undertake bus crash causation research, but only if the end-result is likely to yield meaningful data from which an accurate picture can be drawn," says Littler. To do less will only produce a distorted picture that could lead to bad policy, UMA contends.

The drafting of the study results are expected to be completed in 2006, at which time the information will be made public. The study was mandated by the federal Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999.

Anyone can submit comments on the proposed study. Mail or hand deliver comments to the U.S. Department of Transportation, Dockets Management Facility, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590.

Or, submit comments electronically to <http://dmses.dot.gov/submit>.

The docket number — FMCSA-204-19185 — should appear prominently on submitted comments, which are due by March 16.

To learn more about the study, see the Aug. 23, 2004 issue of the *Federal Register* (69 FR 51879).

A similar study of truck crashes is nearing completion.

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INDUSTRY NEWS

CUSA completes purchase of Roesch Lines, AirportBus

ANAHEIM, Calif. — CUSA of Dallas, the largest charter and tour operator in the U.S., has completed the purchase of AirportBus of Anaheim and Roesch Lines of San Bernardino, Calif. (See Feb. 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Included in the acquisition is the Gray Line of Southern California franchise that was held by Roesch. CUSA now holds the

Gray Line brand in both Southern and Northern California, including San Francisco.

"The Gray Line brand complements the sightseeing services now provided by our existing Anaheim operation," said David Carroll, senior vice president of operations for CUSA.

The purchase also will enable CUSA to expand its charter presence in the region, including the

eastern Los Angeles metro area, Palm Springs and the Inland Empire.

Roesch's charter services in Las Vegas and Los Angeles will be folded into CUSA's existing operations in those markets. "Roesch has a rich history dating back to 1923, and a good book of charter business. We have already begun putting some newer equipment into its fleet to upgrade the service," said

Carroll.

As part of the transaction, CUSA acquires a maintenance facility in San Bernardino. Roesch traditionally operated a fleet of about 25 coaches.

AirportBus offers scheduled services, including an airport shuttle and transportation between Disneyland resort hotels and Universal Studios. Carroll said AirportBus will fit well with CUSA's exist-

ing sightseeing services in Orange County and around the Disneyland resorts.

AirportBus service will be improved by increasing the service frequency from hourly to 30-minute departures. And, there are plans to upgrade the 50-coach AirportBus fleet.

Bryan O'Connell, general manager of CUSA Anaheim, will oversee both Roesch and AirportBus.

ADA rules

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represent a major shift in the applicability of the disabilities act.

Just how detailed is the Justice Department's 300-page proposal?

Consider the proposed rule for windows. Currently, there is no ADA requirement for windows. Under the proposed rules, one window in each room that has windows would have to be accessible to a person with a disability, including a wheelchair-accessible path of access to the window and clear floor space in front of the window. Additionally, whatever mechanism is used to open the window would have to be within easy reach of someone in a wheelchair and it must be operable with less than five pounds of pressure.

The Justice Department wants to revise the existing ADA rules in response to new standards that were adopted last summer by the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board.

The access board is an inde-

pendent federal agency set up by Congress to work on issues related to accessibility for people with disabilities. It has a staff of 30 people and is governed by a board composed of representatives from big federal agencies and public members appointed by the president.

As most anyone in business knows, the Americans with Disabilities Act forbids businesses from discriminating against people with disabilities. The Department of Justice makes — and often enforces — the rules on what a business must do to make sure it doesn't have barriers to equal access and enjoyment by the disabled.

The proposed rules would impose their requirements on owners of buildings, as well as landlords and tenants of leased properties, to remove architectural and other features that could hinder the full access and enjoyment of the premises by the disabled.

Organizations representing small and large businesses are starting to gear up for a battle over the proposed rules. The United Motor-

coach Association has aligned itself with one small business advocacy group and established contact with the office of the chief counsel of the U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy which is expected to serve as a clearing house for small business input into the proposed rule.

At this point, the Justice Department rulemaking is 300 pages of proposed changes. Nothing has gone into effect.

The Justice Department is giving businesses until May 31 to submit comments on the impact and potential costs of the proposed ADA requirements, as well as providing recommendations for reducing the proposed burdens.

The Department of Justice's advance notice of proposed rulemaking can be found at www.adaanprm.org. The new standards themselves can be found at www.access-board.gov/ada-aba.htm. Comments may be submitted electronically via the Justice Department via the www.adaanprm.org Web site.

Fly-In

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The committees with the most influence on the highway bill are the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee.

Operators who are interested in participating in the fly-in should contact the government or legislative affairs representatives at their association.

Association lobbyists can provide sample letters that can be written to request an appointment with a particular House or Senate member. Plus, they can provide additional details about the fly-in, including suggested hotels for staying in Washington.

Here's a schedule of events for those participating in the Fly-In:

Tuesday, March 15, 1:30 p.m. — Opening briefing & orientation, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room 534.

Attending: Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee; Sen. Wayne Allard, Senate Housing and Transportation Subcommittee; Sherry Little, staff member, Senate banking committee, and Tewana Wilkerson, staff member.

2:30 p.m. Fly-in staff briefing
3-5 p.m. Congressional appointments

6-7:30 p.m. Fundraising dinner for Rep. Jim Duncan, R-Tenn, House Subcommittee on Highways, Transit and Pipelines, Capi-

itol Hill Club. Attendance limited to contributors: \$500 individual, \$1,000 PAC. Individual contributions must be made by personal check and are not tax deductible.

Wednesday-March 16, 8-9 a.m. Fundraising breakfast for Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala. (Could become a lunch.) Attendance limited to contributors: \$500 individual, \$1,000 PAC. Individual contributions must be made by personal check and are not tax deductible.

9-9:30 a.m. Progress report and orientation

9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Congressional appointments

Noon. Capital Hill news conference on coalition goals

4:40-5 p.m. Fly-in debrief & wrap-up.

Here are the associations that are members of the coalition:

- Airport Ground Transportation Association
- Alabama Motorcoach Association
- American Bus Association
- American Transit Services Council
- California Bus Association
- International Motorcoach Group
- National School Transportation Association
- Ohio Taxicab Association
- Pennsylvania Taxicab and Paratransit Association
- Taxicab, Limousine & Paratransit Association
- Taxicab Paratransit Association of California
- Trailways Transportation System
- United Motorcoach Association
- Virginia Taxicab Association

Transits seek charter firms

The following public transit providers have informed the United Motorcoach Association of their intent to provide charter bus service unless willing and able private operators step forward to offer their services or to bid on contract opportunities. UMA urges appropriate operators to take the time to respond to these notices:

Topeka, Kan. Deadline: 4 p.m. Feb. 28, 2005. Write to: Janlyn Nesbett-Tucker, General Manager, Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority, 201 N. Kansas Ave., Topeka, KS 66603. Phone: (785) 233-2011.

Johnson City, Tenn. Deadline: March 4, 2005. Write to: Donna Bridwell, Johnson City Transit System, 137 W. Market St., Johnson City, TN 37604. Phone: (423) 929-7119.

Dayton, Ohio. Deadline: March 18, 2005. Write to: Minnie Fells Johnson, Ph.D., Executive Director, Miami Valley Regional Transit Authority, 600 Longworth St., Dayton, Ohio 45401. Phone: (937) 425-8400.

Indiana state senate approves hike in highway speed limits

INDIANAPOLIS — The Indiana Senate has approved legislation that would raise the speed limit for motorcoaches to 70 mph on some of the state's interstate highways.

The 34-15 vote was the first time the Senate has approved the change, which would increase the speed limit on rural interstates from 65 mph to 70 mph for buses and cars, and 60 miles per hour to

65 mph for trucks.

The Indiana House has passed similar legislation several times since Congress repealed the national limit of 65 mph in 1995, but similar proposals have died in the Senate.

If the bill passes both bodies, it would go to Gov. Mitch Daniels who has indicated he supports the higher speed limits.

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OPINION

Hiring smart to avoid problems

By Fred Spears
Leadership Systems

If you are a business owner or a manager with people reporting you, you probably spend a significant portion of your time addressing performance problems.

Solving performance issues will benefit your business, but the resolution process itself is a distraction from essential duties for both you and your employees.

When attempting to solve or avoid these problems, three opportunities to improve the performance of your organization and your people exist:

1. Selection Process and Job Fit (prevention)
2. Leadership and Management (coaching and training)
3. Separation (frequently overused, never used in a timely fashion)

The best and lowest-cost opportunity is to hire more effectively to prevent performance problems.

Organizations generally hire on skills and experience but fire because the individual does not fit with the organization. This is where hiring smart comes into play.

Hiring smart is more than simply interviewing.

All too often, managers rely on the interview alone when selecting a job candidate. Employers who rely solely on the interview have only a 14 percent probability of making a successful hiring decision. An effective hiring process must include several steps:

The interview — we suggest a series of interviews by involved

managers using behavioral-based questions.

The use of appropriate, job-related assessments that measure job fit, reliability, dependability and other critical factors.

Background and reference checking — generally the use of an outside service is more effective and efficient than having your human resources department perform this function.

Substance abuse testing for all positions.

The first step in an effective hiring process is to clearly define your hiring focus. This includes clearly defining the requirements of the position. Too often the focus is on credentials and experience rather than on what is to be achieved. Focus first on results — the key result areas of the position.

Next, identify your top performers in that or in essentially similar positions who are performing at or above the required level. Use objective measurements that quantify their performance to determine what makes them successful. Because these are your best people, it makes good business sense to try to hire candidates with similar characteristics, behaviors, abilities and interests.

Through the use of appropriate, job-related assessment instruments you can measure how applicants compare to your best employees and hire those that will provide similar results.

Have all candidates complete an employment application. It is important to understand that an employment application is a legal document, versus a resume which is a marketing tool for the

applicant. Make sure your employment application includes a release by the candidate for you to conduct reference and background checks.

Now you are ready to put all the steps together into an effective process which offers the highest probability of making effective hiring decisions. The employment application, background and reference checks and benchmarking/job matching all have been addressed.

For maximum effectiveness, add assessment instruments which cover the following areas: integrity, personality, ability and interests.

This comprehensive approach to the recruitment and selection process will enable you to increase the probability of an effective hiring decision from the low of 14 percent with an interview, alone, to 75 percent. (*Psychological Bulletin* Vol. 96, No. 1, August 1994, Prof. Mike Smith, University of New Hampshire.)

Making effective hiring decisions, utilizing the resources and steps outlined above will go a long way in reducing your people problems, increasing your company's productivity and profitability — and very probably allowing you to sleep better at night.

Next: The new-employee orientation process.

Fred Spears is a principal of Leadership Systems of Overland Park, Kan., a results improvement company that focuses on staff development, hiring and skills development and improvement. Contact him at (913) 681-0142 or by e-mail at fred@leadershipsystems.biz.

Setra technicians, operators to receive hands-on training

GREENSBORO, N.C. — For the third year, Setra of North America is offering training programs on its S 417 coach, providing field expertise to operators and technicians.

"We believe our customers benefit from the technical information and hands-on training they receive at our training sessions," said Joe Davis, assistant vice president of service and engineering at Setra of North America. "It's a great way for customers and service center employees to acquire the first-hand knowledge and experience necessary to become top-quality technicians."

Here are the Setra training sessions for the remainder of the year:

- March 14-18 at Setra CoachWorld in Winter Garden, Fla. Advanced HVAC and electrical systems.

- Aug. 8-12 at Setra headquarters in Greensboro, N.C. Advanced suspension and pneumatics, including brakes and ABS.

- Sept. 26-30 at a location to be determined in the Northeast. Basic introductory class.

- Nov. 14-18 at a location to be determined in the Midwest. Advanced HVAC and electrical systems.

Classes are free and include training, materials and lunch each day. Attendees must arrange their transportation and hotel. To attend the advanced classes, individuals must have completed a previous introductory class.

Contact Yvette Aramendiz at (800) 882-8054 Ext. 5412, to register for training and make hotel reservations, or go to www.setra-coaches.com for more details.

Red-dyed fuel

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

be on the list for notification."

IRS forms 720-CS and 720-TO are filed by carriers and terminal operators to report fuel usage.

The new law, which became effective Jan. 1, prohibits operators from using red-dyed fuel in coaches that qualify for tax exemptions. Instead, they are required to use fully taxed clear fuel in all of their buses, pay the full tax and then file for refunds of that portion of the tax from which they are exempt.

Violators can be fined a minimum of \$1,000 or \$10 for each gallon of fuel in their tanks, which ever is larger.

Sheehan said he told the IRS agents who visited his garage he would begin immediately cleaning out his tanks of the red-dyed fuel. "But that's going to take us at least a month to go through it all," he

said.

There has been concern throughout the industry that many coaches still would have some of the marked fuel left over in their tanks even though they stopped using it weeks and sometime months earlier.

Many carriers have complained about the rule change because in the past they could hold on to thousands of dollars of their own money before paying the tax each quarter. Under the new rules, they have to pay the full tax whenever they fill up their coaches or storage tanks and then file for a refund later.

"It really is sad to have them change the law this way and have bus companies pay up front because they can't enforce and control the correct use of red-dyed fuel," suggested Sheehan. "It seems they can't do their job with policing it so they have to penalize everybody."

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Focus on Seats: Clean means happy customers



By Bryan Couch
Motor Coach Industries

Drinks, ink, chewing gum, ice cream, even graffiti. Stains and spills of every sort can end up on the seats and fabric side-walls of a motorcoach. And, if not removed quickly and properly, virtually any stain can easily offend customers. Seat upholstery also serves as a magnet, collecting odors from a variety of sources.

Most seat fabrics today combine different materials, consisting of both synthetic and natural fabrics woven together. Cut pile wool-blend fabrics are favorites in the coach industry. Leather upholstery is starting to become more popular and requires special care. Recommendations from the specific manufacturer should be consulted before cleaning leather.

General dirt and grime should be eliminated quickly and safely — meaning without hurting the seat and side-wall fabric.

We've consulted a variety of fabric manufacturers to glean tips on how to keep coach fabric in top shape. Guidelines vary depending on the seat fabric, which means you should consult the manufacturer of your fabric for specific procedures. However, general cleaning is done by beating the pile with a brush and vacuuming off the dust.

Now, for the tougher problem — removing spots or stains. There are two general methods of cleaning.

Method No. 1 requires applying a nonflammable solvent (trichloroethylene) with a clean, white absorbent material. Treat small areas, working from the outer edge towards the center of the stain. Blot frequently to avoid rings.

Any cleaning fluid should be used sparingly. Keep in mind that it's best to go with repeat applications of the cleaner rather than one heavy application. Adequate ventilation is required during this type of cleaning procedure.

Method No. 2 suggests using a sponge on the stain with a solution of household detergent and lukewarm water. Do not soak. Follow this by blotting with a damp cloth, rinsing the cloth between each treatment.

Prompt and correct cleaning will remove most stains. Using the wrong treatment, however, could make the damage worse. Manufacturers caution not to use: soap, washing powder, ammonia, bleach (especially), soda or any product containing these items. Do not use rubber feet for vacuum cleaning. Do not add water for dry cleaning. Seek expert advice from the manufacturer.

Chewing gum is a common problem on seats. Specific treatment to remove gum depends on the fabric. Generally, to take off chewing gum use a freezer spray or ice cubes wrapped in a plastic bag to chill the gum followed by scraping it off gently.

Annually, we would suggest a cleaning of all seats in a coach using a spray extraction system. Warm water with a pH neutral (pH 7) detergent is sprayed on the seat, and is immediately extracted by vacuum.

Of course, you also will need to go beyond routine cleaning when seats begin looking tired. New fabric and or foam should

be considered if the fabric looks faded, loose or begins splitting. When replacing foam, high-density polyurethane foam is recommended for long-term

service. On average, operators replace seat fabric every four to six years, according to Kathy Cruse of Sardo Bus and Upholstery.

All in all, clean seats make for a good impression and happy customers.

Bryan Couch is director of product development at MCI.

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Gotta Go Trailways

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

he would rather have 100 percent of the revenue his tours and charters were generating, instead of the 10 percent he was getting by not having his own buses.

He bought two coaches and never looked back.

Today, the company has a fleet of 36 Van Hool coaches and one MCI F3500, which he describes as the most-popular bus in his fleet.

In recent weeks, Dinger has added three new C2045 Van Hools, including the very first

equipped with a Caterpillar C-13 engine and ZF transmission. The other two also have Cat engines and ZF AS-tronic 12-speed transmissions with intarders.

"We liked the first one so much we went back and got two more," said Dinger. He said his first Cat-powered Van Hool, which was named Kitty CAT, is getting 7 miles per gallon.

The coaches also have Amaya seating with Holdsworth fabric, Isringhausen driver seats, Carrier-Sutrak A/C units, Meritor-WABCO ABS, and Firestone tires mounted on Alcoa wheels.

NEW DELIVERIES

Coach USA will buy 23 new-look MCI D models

MAHWAH, N.J. — Coach USA has ordered 23 D4505 buses from Motor Coach Industries, making it among the first operators to get the restyled D-model.

The bus order is headed to Coach USA's Shortline subsidiary in Mahwah, where they will be used for express commuter service and line-run operations to New York City.

Roger Bowker, chief operating officer for Coach USA's Northeast region, said the D4505 was picked because of its customer appeal and low profile, which allows it to fit into the underground terminal at the New York Port Authority.

"We want to invest in new

coaches to look after our customers, and to give them as a good as ride as they would get in their car," said Bowker. "People are very discerning today. They want the very best."

The D4505s will be equipped with wheelchair lifts, Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines and ZF Astromatic transmissions.

The Coach USA buses will be "Phase I" models of the redesigned D4505. They will have flared headlights and new front-end restyling but retain the traditional D-model cap. The Phase I coaches are primarily intended for line-run and public-sector customers that want the updated D look but need to accommodate destination signs



and other transit-specific needs.

The "Phase II" new-style D4005 and D4505 coaches, which are aimed at tour-and-charter operators, have a completely restyled front end, roof cap and lights, plus a number of other exterior modifications. Production has started on the Phase II models.

Coach USA has been an active buyer of MCI coaches during the past year. Its Northeast and North Central divisions took a combined 61 wheelchair-equipped J4500s last spring, shortly after taking 17 D4500s.

Coinciding with the D4505 order, Coach Canada, an affiliate of

Coach USA, has ordered 15 J4500s for delivery this month.

Coach USA's Northeast region has nine subsidiaries: Shortline, Rockland Coaches, Community Coach, Red 'n Tan, Olympia, ONEBUS/Independent Bus, Suburban, Cape Transit and Perfect Body, a collision repair facility.

Holiday Tours Marietta, Ga.

Holiday Tours of Marietta, Ga., has purchased three Setra S 417 motorcoaches equipped with global positioning system navigation that allows passengers to monitor trip progress on coach monitors.

"In the past, passengers really enjoyed plotting their trips on the maps we provided," said Joyce Neal, owner of Holiday Tours. "Now, with the new technology of the GPS navigation system on the coaches, they can see on a display screen exactly where the coach is en route."

The navigation system not only informs and entertains passengers it also provides visual and verbal directions for drivers, and has the capability to save tour routes that reoccur throughout the year.

"The ability to program the navigation system once saves time and makes it easier for the driver," said Neal.

In addition to GPS, the new Holiday Tours' S 417s have Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, Allison B 500 transmissions, luxury Setra seat-



ing with leather headrests, airline-style tray tables, a refrigerator for cold refreshments, a 10-disk CD changer, DVD/VCR and safety deposit box.

Holiday Tours operates an all-Setra fleet with six S 417 and two S 217 coaches. Established 15 years ago, Holiday Tours is a family-oper-

ated business owned by Betty Joyce Neal. For more information about the tour-and-charter operator go to www.holiday-tours.biz.

Southern Coaches Dothan, Ala.

Career moves can be tricky and changing businesses risky.

Yet, armed with the knowledge gained from running a successful trucking company, Milton Adams turned a hobby of taking customers and friends on fishing trips into a successful charter company: Southern Coaches.

Now 91, and still involved in the business, Adams founded Southern Coaches 16 years ago, along with his sons John and George, following the sale of the family trucking company. The trucking outfit had grown from a bare half-dozen trucks and \$300,000 in business in 1956, to a 1988 peak of \$16 million with 300 trucks, 400 trailers and 13 terminals.

By the late 1980s, deregulation was affecting both the truck and bus industries. After seeing some success from taking groups on trips in an executive coach, Milton and

John Adams recognized an opportunity and purchased their first tour-and-charter coach, a used MC-9.

Within a year, the father-and-son team added eight more coaches to keep up with demand fueled by a strike at Greyhound. Today, Southern Coaches operates 20 coaches and serves high-end tour and travel agencies, schools and colleges.

The company recently added five new MCI J4500 coaches. Three are equipped with Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines and ZF AS-Tronic transmissions, and the other two feature Allison B500 transmissions.

The coaches also have REI entertainment systems with six monitors and DVD players; Alcoa wheels, Isringhausen air-controlled driver seats, Carrier A/C units and Firestone tires. Two of the coaches



have National passengers seats, while the other three have Amaya seating.

MCI marked the delivery of the coaches and Milton Adams' 91st birthday with a special tribute at MCI's customer appreciation event in Dallas in mid-November.

"The motorcoach business is friendlier and a lot more fun than the truck line," says South Coaches president, John Adams, who runs the day-to-day operations.

He and his brother George, company secretary-treasurer, abide

by what their father taught them — customers come first, be fair with everybody, and get a reasonable price for your services.

Expert in engines and transmissions, the elder Adams still participates in equipment decisions and maintenance issues. When he can tear himself away from the service shop (which he visits every day, including Saturdays and Sundays), Milton Adams can be found hunting quail at least three times a week or fishing on his private pond.

Capital Area Transit Baton Rouge, La.

CATS, the transit system for Baton Rouge, has taken delivery of 28 Blue Bird Ultra LF buses, with an option for 25 more over the next five years.

The addition of the low-floor units means approximately one-third of the buses operating in the CATS fleet are Blue Birds.

"The people of Baton Rouge deserve a first-class public transit system ... and thanks to our partnership with Blue Bird, now they have one," said Dwight Brashear, CATS' chief executive.

The Blue Bird Ultra LFs added to the CATS fleet are 35-feet long, 102-inches wide and equipped with Cummins ISB 230-horsepower engines, Allison B300R transmissions, Meritor independent front suspensions, all-wheel disc brakes, Twin-Vision LED signs and GFI fareboxes. They seat 31.

ABA picks executive committee, board

WASHINGTON — The American Bus Association has named its executive committee for the next year, headed by new ABA Chairman Ron Eyre of Eyre Bus Lines in Glenelg, Md.

Others named to the committee are Vice Chairman Doug Anderson of Anderson Coach and Travel; Past Chairman Charles Zelle of Jefferson Lines; Secretary-Treasurer Frank Henry (1-year term) of Frank Martz Coach Company/Martz Trailways; ABA President & CEO Peter J. Pantuso (1-year term); Jim Jalbert (3-year term) of C&J Trailways; Woody Blunt of Concord Trailways; Steve Gorman of Greyhound Lines; Craig Lentzsch of CUSA; Gordon Mackay of Indian Trails and Francis Tedesco of Academy Bus Lines.

Joining the ABA board of directors for three-year terms are:

Gaeton Bolduc of Prevost Car; Bob Chafey of Cendant Hotel Group; Bill Gentry of Gentry Trailways; Dave Eaton of Conway Tours/Gray Line Rhode Island; Peter Hunter of Hunter Motor Coach; Butch Spyridon of Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Jennifer Hopkins-George of Palladin Travel & Tour, who will serve a one-year term on the board as the chairperson for the 2006 Marketplace in Nashville.

Renominated to the ABA board were: Butch Beckwith of Turner Coaches; Ron Cornell of ABC Companies; Joe Cyr of John T. Cyr & Sons/Cyr Northstar Tours; Don Ferrone of American Sightseeing Tours-Chicago/Prairie Trailways/Chicago Gray Line; Sara Fuller of the Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau; Billy Hughes of Southeastern Stages; Dennis Mariola of Bridgestone/Firestone North American Tire; Tom Sorrells of Motor Coach Industries; Buddy Young of Capitol Bus Lines Inc.; Jot Bennett of Capitol Trailways; Eugene Berardi of Adirondack Trailways, and Gorman, Henry and Pantuso.

Leaving the board are: Charles Carns Jr. of Mears Transportation Group; Scott Carson of West Virginia Coach Co.; Bill Hanbury, of the Washington, D.C., Convention & Tourism Corp.; Ronald Lee of Group Sales Box Office; Wayne Phillips of Capital Trailways of Alabama, and Tom Ready of Ready Bus Line.

In taking over as ABA chairman, Eyre said he was looking forward to working to further enhance the image of the coach industry.

Eyre, who has been involved in the industry for more than 35 years began his industry career by driving a school bus for his family bus business. After graduating from the University of Baltimore, he worked in all facets of the company.

In 1990, he became president of

Eyre Bus & Travel. Since then, the company has expanded into a tour and travel and destination management company.

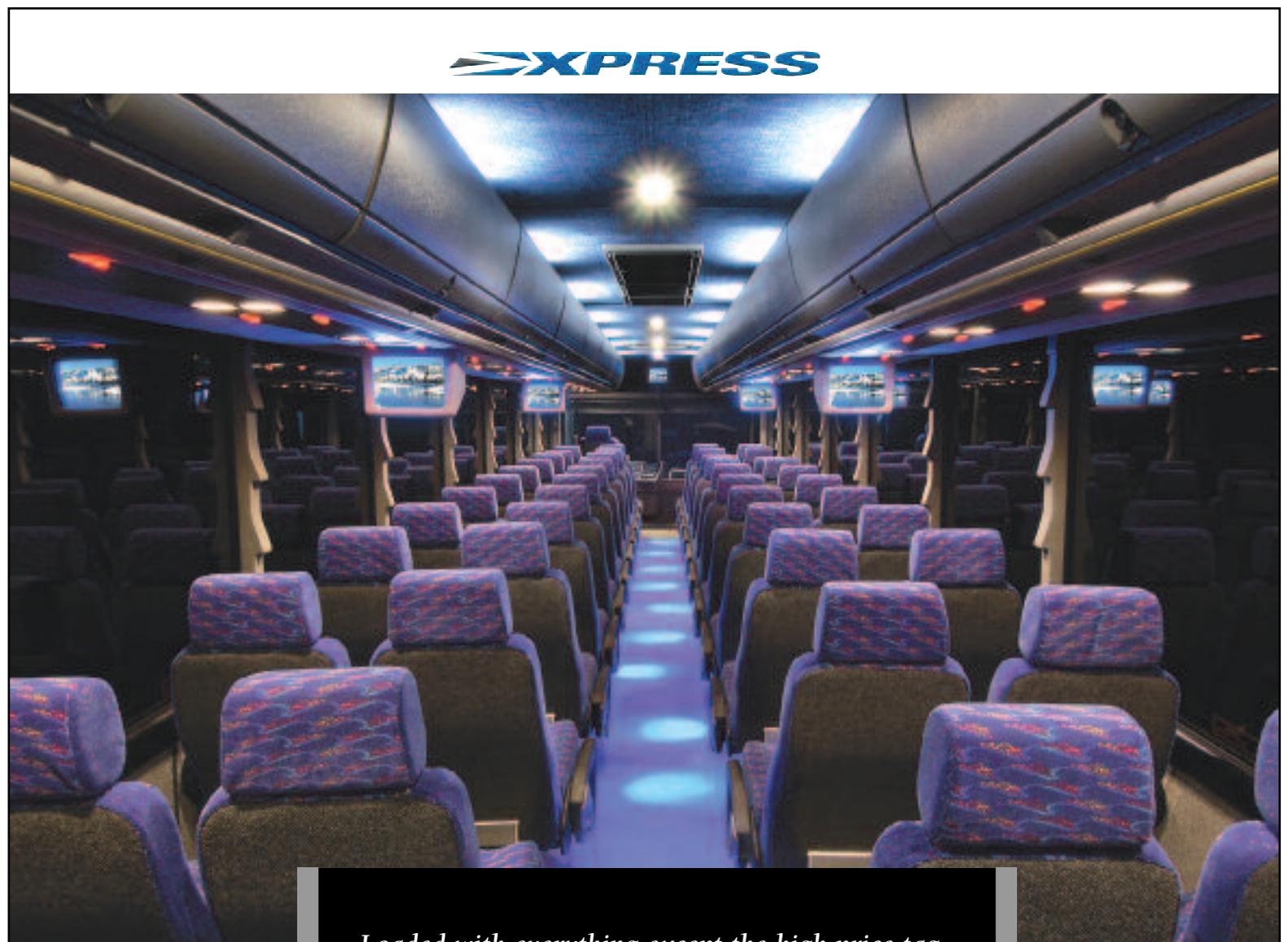
Eyre is a past president of the Maryland Bus Association and chaired the ABA Marketplace in 1987. He moves up to ABA chair-

man after serving three years as vice chairman.

Eyre and ABA President Peter Pantuso praised outgoing ABA Chairman Charles Zelle for his three years of committed leadership and service to the industry and association.



Ron Eyre



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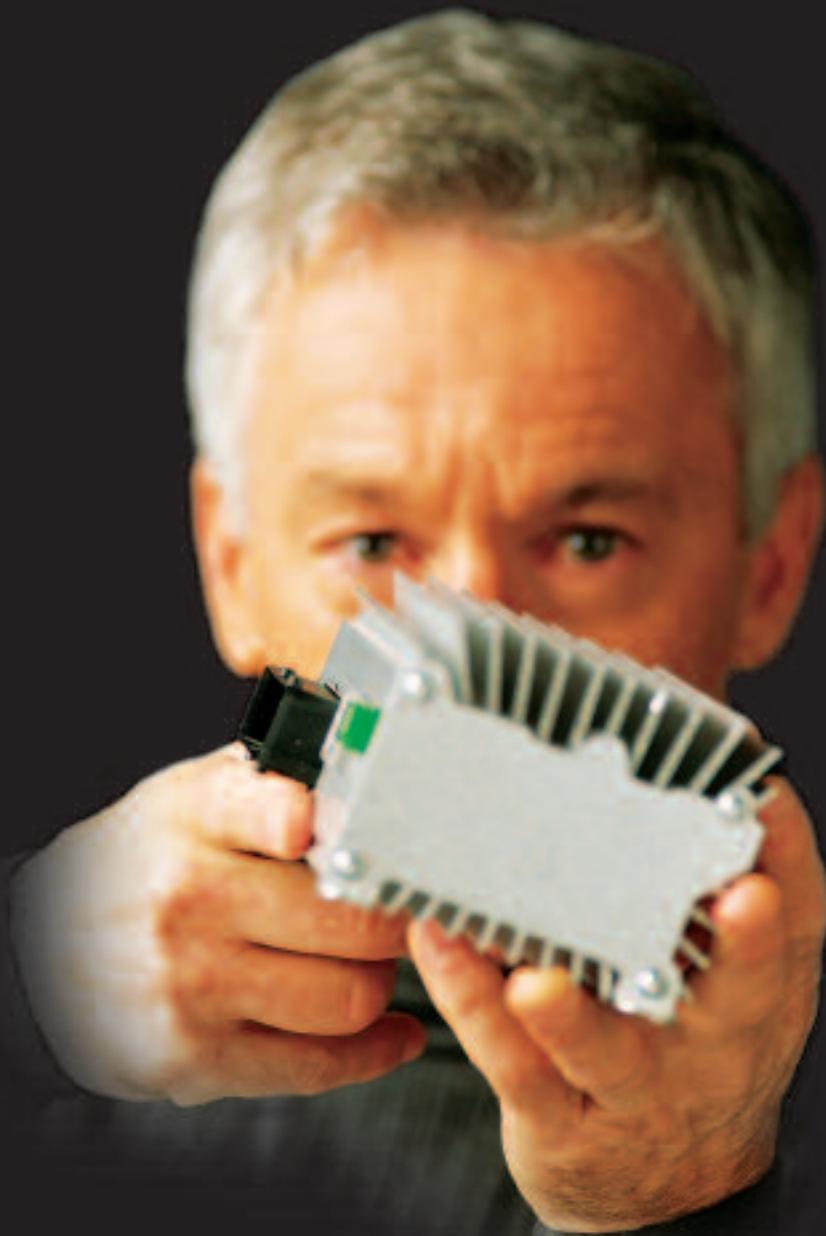
To learn more about the Express contact Blue Bird Coachworks at 1-800-486-7122.

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