

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Evacuation procedures revamped

Americans living along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts who don't have their own means of transportation when storm evacuations are ordered will be moved out of harm's way through revamped systems developed for the 2006 hurricane season.

Federal and state emergency planning officials tell *Bus & Motorcoach News* they expect the new procedures to improve on last year's troubled hurricane evacuations.

States plan to rely primarily on school buses this year as the main method of transporting people to shelters and other safe areas if an approaching hurricane requires an evacuation. Motorcoaches will be hired when there are not enough school buses.

At the same time, federal officials say they will play more of a backup role by staging motorcoaches and drivers near communities where storms are predicted to hit and wait for calls for assistance from state or local government officials.

"This is a new course of action for us," said Jarrod Agen, a spokesman for the federal Department of Homeland Security in Washington D.C. "If needed, we will be there to add support to the state or local governments."

The new system got its first test early in June when Hurricane Alberto threatened Florida's western coast.

Fifty coaches and 100 drivers were pre-positioned in Louisiana, but federal officials didn't get any calls from Florida state or county officials requesting buses.

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The FC Series coach is one of five new buses unveiled by IC Corp.

IC to launch commercial buses, 5 models planned

CONWAY, Ark. — IC Corporation, the largest school bus manufacturer in North America, is taking a major plunge into the commercial bus market, including introducing two models aimed in large measure at the tour-bus sector.

IC's move is a bold step for a company whose corporate parent, International Truck and Engine Corp., has been supplying bus chassis to more than a dozen small and midsize bus builders for the past 10 years. Now, the company

will be going head to head with its former customers.

IC's commercial bus line, which will be produced at plants in Ohio and in Arkansas, will consist of five models, including one that is already familiar to many motorcoach operators. The line consists of a:

- Low-floor bus (LC Series) built specifically for accessibility
- Large, medium-duty cutaway (HC Series)
- Front-engine transit/shuttle/

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

Glaval plans coach model

ELKHART, Ind. — Glaval Bus, one of the nation's largest makers of cutaway and body-on-chassis buses, plans to introduce a 38-foot, rear-engine model aimed at the tour-and-charter bus market, one of Glaval's top dealers has confirmed.

The Glaval Synergy will be built on a Freightliner XB-75, stacked-rail chassis, featuring front-and-rear air-ride suspension, Cummins ISB engine, restroom, and seating for 36 passengers. It will be 102 inches wide.

"We are currently taking orders for the Synergy, with delivery in the fall of 2006," said Eugene Hotard, general manager of the New Orleans branch of Bus Group Inc., a commercial bus sales organization with locations in Georgia, Mississippi and Louisiana. Bus Group has been a strong advocate of development of the bus by Glaval.

"We will market this coach to the tour-and-charter market," said Hotard.

"This unit is being developed

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Massachusetts attacks rogue coach operators

BOSTON — The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is beginning a crackdown this month on motorcoach operators filing bogus claims they are headquartered in the Bay State.

The regulatory initiative is in response to allegations that a significant number of motorcoach companies — whose operations are centered in New York and New Jersey — are falsely claiming to be based in Massachusetts. (See May 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The rogue operators claim phony Massachusetts addresses because license plates and registration fees are cheaper in Massachusetts, as is auto liability insurance.

The crackdown is a joint effort by the Transportation Division of the Massachusetts Department of

Telecommunications and Energy (DTE), which regulates bus and coach safety in the state, and the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles, which handles vehicle registrations.

The two agencies have agreed on a new process designed specifically to ferret out gypsy bus operators.

Brian Cristy, director of the transportation division of the Massachusetts DTE, said in a telephone interview that under the new set-up coach operators applying for Massachusetts plates at a Registry of Motor Vehicles branch office will have to complete a newly adopted application form. Completing the form will trigger a visit to the coach operator by an inspector from the

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California state patrol targets motorcoaches

SUISUN, Calif. — California, with its cutting-edge and trend-setting ways, is sticking with a decades-old regulatory practice that has largely disappeared from the rest of the U.S. — surprise roadside bus inspections.

And apparently for good reason.

One Saturday last month, California Highway Patrol officers inspected 35 motorcoaches on Interstate 80 east of San Francisco, and 15 of the buses, or 40 percent, were ordered out of service.

By any standard, it was a dismissal safety performance, and made worse by the fact the patrol invited area news organizations to observe the inspections.

"Despite the fact bus operators and their equipment are inspected

annually, the numbers from our efforts this weekend show that there are deficiencies that need to be addressed," said California Highway Patrol Cordelia Inspection Facility Commander Lt. Mike Ferrell.

"It's the responsibility of these operators to keep their buses well maintained and ensure that their driver's are properly licensed and in compliance with the law," said Ferrell.

"Bus companies and their customers can rest assured that we will continue to conduct this type of operation throughout the Bay Area as part of our commitment to roadway safety," he added.

The California Highway Patrol

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Association seeks thousands from Charleston transit

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The Motorcoach Association of South Carolina has filed a \$23,000 claim against the Charleston public transit agency for violating federal charter service rules.

The money demand was made after the Federal Transit Authority found that there was merit to a complaint filed by the association

against the Charleston Area Regional Transit Authority for charter service rules infractions. (See May 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The finding by the FTA triggered a process designed to settle the issue. However, if a settlement cannot be reached, the FTA said a formal investigation would be launched of the association com-

plaint against the agency, known locally as CARTA.

A meeting between the two sides was conducted and CARTA was given a month to respond to the settlement demands made by the association.

If the two sides are unable to settle the issue on their own, the FTA will open an investigation that

could lead to sanctions against CARTA, including reimbursement of the money it made performing charter services the association says were illegal.

South Carolina association Executive Director Linda Morris said that in addition to the \$23,000, her members also want an agreement from CARTA that it will follow the

spirit of the charter rules and not interfere with the business opportunities of private carriers.

Additionally, she said the association included an unrelated request that has troubled local private tour operators for years — CARTA buses continually using major stops designated for tour buses, and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►

LimoLiner expands schedule in bid for growth, profitability

STOUGHTON, Mass. — LimoLiner, the luxury coach service operating between New York and Boston, is phasing in a major expansion of its daily schedule between the cities.

LimoLiner is adding two more coaches to its fleet of three, enabling it to ramp up its daily schedule beginning this month from three daily roundtrips to five.

The *Boston Business Journal* reports LimoLiner grew by 32 percent last year, with revenue approaching \$3 million. Double-digit growth for this year also is expected and operations are anticipated to finally breakeven.

LimoLiner began providing luxury express service on a daily basis between New York and Boston in October 2003. Despite providing high-end service, an investment estimated at \$4 million, and

generally favorable publicity, the service has struggled to attract enough riders to outrun the red ink.

The Boston business newspaper quoted LimoLiner CEO Peter Pescatore as saying the expanded schedule is key to the company reaching breakeven.

Pescatore, who was hired two years ago by LimoLiner founder Fergus McCann to operate and grow the company, formerly owned and operated a van shuttle service that served Boston's Logan International Airport.

The additional coaches will allow LimoLiner to offer daily Boston departure times from 6 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and New York departure times from 7:30 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. Previously, the last coach from Boston left at noon each day and the earliest you could catch a

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State & Provincial Fuel Tax Rates

A number of states boosted fuel-tax rates during the first quarter of 2006. Here are the updated rates for all states and provinces, plus the federal tax rate in the U.S.

State	Gasoline	Diesel	State	Gasoline	Diesel
Alabama	16	19	North Carolina	29.9	29.9
Alaska	8	8	North Dakota	23	23
Arizona	18	26	Ohio	28	28
Arkansas	21.8	22.8	Oklahoma	16	13
California	38.57	33	Oregon	24	0
Colorado	22	20.5	Pennsylvania	31.2	38.1
Connecticut	35.01	36.44	Rhode Island	30	30
Delaware	23	22	South Carolina	16.75	16.75
Dist. of Columbia	20	20	South Dakota	24	24
Florida	27.07	29.97	Tennessee	21.4	18.4
Georgia	13.4	14.2	Texas	20	20
Hawaii	16	16	Utah	24.5	24.5
Idaho	25	25	Vermont	20	26
Illinois	30.9	35	Virginia	19.9	19.9
Indiana	29.8	27.8	Washington	31	31
Iowa	21.7	23.5	West Virginia	27	27
Kansas	24	26	Wisconsin	32.9	32.9
Kentucky	21.2	21.8	Wyoming	14	14
Louisiana	20	20	U. S.	18.4	24.4
Maine	26.88	27.52			
Maryland	23.5	24.25			
Massachusetts	21	21			
Michigan	35.13	30.2			
Minnesota	20	20			
Mississippi	18.4	18.4			
Missouri	17	17			
Montana	27.75	28.5			
Nebraska	26.1	26.1			
Nevada	23.81	27.81			
New Hampshire	20.625	20.625			
New Jersey	14.5	17.5			
New Mexico	18.875	22.875			
New York	39.3	38.75			

Tax Rate in U.S. is cents per gallon

Province	Gasoline	Diesel
Alberta	9	9
British Columbia	14.5	15
Manitoba	11.5	11.5
New Brunswick	14.5	16.9
Newfoundland	16.5	16.5
Nova Scotia	15.5	15.4
Ontario	14.7	14.3
Prince Edward Is.	21.5	20.7
Quebec	15.2	16.2
Saskatchewan	15	15

Tax Rate in Canada = cents per liter

Fuel tax increases slow

State fuel tax increases have largely stalled in the wake of near record-high diesel fuel and gasoline prices.

Fuel taxes increased in only three states during the first quarter of this year: Arkansas, California and Michigan.

Fuel taxes declined in high-tax leader New York.

The state tax on gasoline and diesel went up roughly a penny

and a half per gallon in Michigan during the first three months of this year, while the gas tax went up nearly four cents a gallon in California (the tax on diesel didn't change), and fuel taxes went up one-tenth of a cent in Arkansas.

Fuel taxes also went up more than a cent per liter on Prince Edward Island in Canada.

In New York, fuel taxes dipped roughly three cents a gallon.

Mineta: U.S., Mexico close to deal on safety audits; nixes bigger trucks

WASHINGTON — U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta says an agreement is very close that would allow Mexican trucks and buses to freely cross the U.S.-Mexico border.

But no deal is likely from Congress that would allow U.S. truckers to make changes that would measurably increase their capacity, according to Mineta.

In an interview with a trucking publication last month, the transportation secretary said the United States and Mexico are nearing completion of an arrangement that would permit U.S. inspectors to examine Mexican fleet operations in Mexico, the final major hurdle before opening the border to Mexican carriers.

However, Mineta notes that other sticking points remain and an agreement is not expected before Mexico's national elections this month. The main concerns, he said, are Mexican carriers' fear of U.S.

competition and resistance to U.S. emissions rules.

"We are now about to come to an agreement on our safety auditors going into Mexico and to start auditing and inspecting Mexican truck (and bus) safety. We haven't closed the deal yet; it's this close," said Mineta as he pinched a thumb and finger together.

Meanwhile, Mineta doesn't think Congress will lift the federal 80,000-pound weight limit for trucks, or change existing regulations covering the use of triple trailers on the federal highway system.

In recent months, trucking industry leaders have stepped up calls for expanded use of triple trailers, increased truck weights, longer trailers and other alternatives to improve industry productivity.

Truckers fear their industry will run into huge problems during the next 20 years — when freight volume is projected to double —

unless they can increase capacity.

How the issue is resolved will impact the motorcoach industry and other highway users because if the truckers can't increase individual vehicle capacity, more trucks will flood onto U.S. highways to move more goods, worsening traffic congestion.

"I don't think Congress is willing to break (the truck length) agreement in terms of triples," Mineta said. "On the other hand, I think they would allow it on truck-tolled lanes where there are only trucks involved."

In recent weeks, Mineta has become the Bush Administration's leading advocate for expanding the use of toll roads to alleviate roadway congestion.

Fifteen years ago, Congress restricted the use of triple trailers on over-the-road trucks to 16 states, and even in those states, there are specific standards truckers have to meet.

House panel: Improve safety audits

WASHINGTON — The appropriations committee of the U.S. House of Representatives has directed the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to report by next March how it will revise its compliance review process to improve detection of motor carriers with lousy safety practices and shut them down.

The request was included in the committee report accompanying U.S. Department of Transportation funding bill for the fiscal year beginning Oct. 1.

In its report, the committee said it remains concerned that only "a very small percentage" of registered truck and bus companies undergo a safety compliance review each year.

Based on FMCSA's budget

submission, the agency plans 10,000 compliance reviews of the 685,000 registered interstate motor carriers — less than 1.5 percent.

"In addition, the National Transportation Safety Board has included motor carrier safety on its current list of 'Most Wanted Transportation Safety Improvements' because FMCSA's entire safety fitness regime operates too leniently, with criteria that do not result frequently enough in dangerous, unsafe motor carriers being shut down, or drivers having their licenses revoked. And, that FMCSA's compliance review standards actually allow unsafe motor carriers to continue to operate," said the report.

The House panel also urged FMCSA to expedite its revisions to

the entry-level driver training rule that a federal appeals court ruled to be inadequate earlier this year.

The agency should "carefully consider the obvious benefits of a comprehensive training requirement that includes on-street, behind-the-wheel skills training for entry-level truck drivers," the committee said.

The funding measure adopted by the House appropriations committee would provide \$223 million for FMCSA during fiscal 2007. That's the same amount requested by the Bush administration and \$10 million more than was appropriated for fiscal 2006.

The full House also passed the measure and sent it on to the Senate.

Texas likes early results of truck-lane restrictions

DALLAS — Motorcoach and car traffic is moving faster on two north Texas highways where lane restrictions have been adopted for over-the-road trucks.

Engineers have found traffic speeds are 1 to 3 mph faster and accidents have not increased since the restrictions took effect in November, the *Dallas Morning News*

reported.

Authorities restricted truck traffic from the fast lanes on parts of Interstate 20 near Interstate 45, and on Interstate 30 in eastern Tarrant County.

Texas transportation officials could set formal guidelines for truck-lane restrictions next year and suggest additional locations.

Toll road surprise in Indiana

GRANGER, Ind. — New toll rates took effect last month on the Indiana Toll Road, and the revamped fee structure for buses and motorcoaches is remarkably good.

The previous rate for two-axle buses and trucks, traveling the full length of the tollway, was \$7.55. Under the new rate schedule, the toll dropped to \$4.65.

That means two-axle coaches, school buses, medium-size delivery vans, and smaller RV's saw a

nearly 40 percent drop in tolls.

For three-axle coaches and RV's, as well as larger delivery trucks, the rate for traveling from Illinois to Ohio on the tollway went from \$8.85 to \$9.25, an increase of less than 5 percent.

To travel the entire 157-mile length of the road, a five-axle over-the-road truck now pays \$18. The old rate was \$14.55.

Rates for passenger cars and motorcycles were not changed.

The changes were the first adjustments in Indiana Toll road rates in more than 20 years. Mike McPhillips, Indiana Toll Road director, said that even with the increases for larger vehicles, the roadway's rates remain among the lowest per mile of any toll highway in the U.S.

The additional money raised through the toll changes will be used to add lanes, repair bridges and install electronic tolling.

Industry battles to be fought in states, says Parra

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — The president and CEO of the United Motorcoach Association says the states — not just Washington — will be important battlegrounds for key issues that will impact coach operators in the years ahead.

Victor Parra said operators and their state associations need to closely watch their legislatures and take action when critical issues begun to surface.

In remarks delivered at the annual meeting of the Motorcoach Association of South Carolina, Parra indicated he was particularly concerned about efforts to revamp the way highways are financed.

“There’s talk about throwing the entire funding requirement over to the states. Or, increasing tolls. Or, just creating more toll roads. Or, adopting steep increases in fuel taxes. Or, increasing vehicle registration fees. Or, any number of new funding initiatives,” said Parra.

“It will fall on the states to implement these proposals, and for you to fight,” he said.

“That’s why state associations are so important, and why UMA is putting so much of its effort and resources into supporting your efforts,” Parra told members of the South Carolina association meeting here last month.

“This is just a heads up. Get ready, and watch what your state legislature does over the next few years,” he warned.

Another state-related issue that Parra urged operators to monitor is the introduction and mandating of biodiesel fuel.

“We don’t know how biodiesel is going to work with our 2007 engines.”

But beyond that, he said biodiesel proposals were “particularly frustrating because they will do very little or nothing to impact our dependence on foreign oil — their alleged goal.”

Parra also said operators should be mindful of a large number of rulemakings that will be issued by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration during the next few months.

“There’s a bunch...coming down the pike,” he said. They include:

- Diabetic drivers. The FMCSA is seeking comments on whether or not insulin-treated diabetic drivers should be given a passenger endorsement on a CDL.
- Merging CDL records with the medical-certification database
- Electronic on-board recorders
- Rules for new-entrant drivers
- Better tracking of truck and bus companies that avoid bad safety records by shutting down and re-opening under a different name

“I think it’s safe to say that much of what we’ll be focusing on in the next six months will be generated more by federal agencies, and probably less so by Congress,” Parra said.

But while a bus load of rules will be coming from the FMCSA and other agencies, Parra says the regulatory news is not all bad.

He’s pleased by President Bush’s selection of John Hill to head the FMCSA. Hill has been nominated to move from the No. 3 position at the agency to the top job.

“This is an unprecedented step for the president to nominate someone who has real hands-on experience and knowledge about the job,

instead of some politico whom the president thinks will fit well within his agenda,” said Parra.

“John is a real smart guy with whom we have a great relationship.”



Victor Parra

Lane closure near D.C. memorial

WASHINGTON — Travel on a roadway near the Jefferson Memorial will be restricted on and off for the next 17 months because of work to the Outlet Bridge on the Tidal Basin near the memorial.

While the work will primarily

be limited to the underside of the bridge, one lane of East Basin Drive will be closed periodically over the course of the project, which is expected to be completed in November 2007. Traffic will be impacted during those periods.

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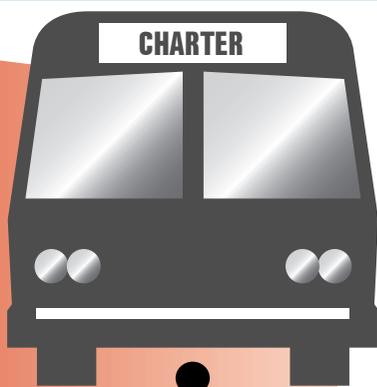
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Charleston

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violating regulations limiting idling to the time it takes to pickup or discharge passengers.

"There are parking spots for motorcoaches and what they have been doing is parking a transit bus right in the middle of them so our coaches can't get in," said Morris.

The association's fundamental complaint against CARTA stems from the transit agency providing bus service for the annual Southeastern Wildlife Exposition, which brought thousands of visitors to Charleston for three days in February.

Sponsors of the exposition paid CARTA \$23,000 to provide shuttle service for the event, which had been handled for the previous 15 years by private carriers.

CARTA has maintained it did nothing wrong, claiming all it did was add buses to its three downtown trolley routes and they were open to all passengers, not just those with tickets to the exposition.

The association, however, said its members tried to board the buses along the route but were told they were only for expo attendees and they would have to wait for a regular route bus or trolley.

Alabama installing cameras to monitor I-65 evacuations

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — The Alabama Department of Transportation has installed video cameras along Interstate 65 to better monitor traffic during emergency evacuations from the Gulf Coast.

Initially, the cameras have been placed at six heavily congested locations between the Tensaw River and Montgomery. More cameras are planned along the I-65 corridor.

The installations were called for after complaints that state officials did not reverse the interstate's lanes early enough to expedite evacuations during Hurricane Dennis a year ago.

Meanwhile, Alabama is joining several other states with laws requiring drivers to move over for

E85-use warning is issued

DETROIT — Motorcoach companies that have small and midsize buses, limousines and service vehicles in their fleets that have gasoline-powered engines should not use E85 ethanol.

Detroit automakers say they are trying to get ethanol-capable vehicles on the road quickly, but in the meantime warn that E85 ethanol-blend fuel should not be used in conventional vehicles.

Representatives from GM, Ford Motor Co. and other automakers

Talks on charter-service rules begin again

WASHINGTON — The Charter Bus Negotiated Rulemaking Advisory Committee was scheduled to resume negotiations in late June after agreeing on key issues and ground rules at its first session in May.

During the past month, problems have surfaced over the makeup of the committee, including who can serve as alternates.

Getting that issue resolved, plus starting negotiations on the laundry list of issues the committee agreed to tackle, guarantees a long-hot summer for committee members.

The rulemaking process was called for in the giant five-year highway and public transportation reauthorization bill that was passed by Congress last August.

The principal task of the committee is to look at potential changes and improvements to the federal rules that govern public

The complaint against CARTA was developed and written by Ken Presley, a member of the association board, who last month was named vice president of industry affairs at the United Motorcoach Association.

emergency vehicles stopped on the side of the road.

The Alabama "Move Over Law" takes effect July 1, and is meant to protect law enforcement officers and traffic violators from passing vehicles.

The law requires all vehicles to move over one lane — when possible — if an emergency vehicle's lights are flashing or in any situation where emergency personnel are on the shoulder of the highway.

If traffic is too heavy to move over — the law requires drivers to slow down.

The Alabama Department of Public Safety says law enforcement agencies will strictly enforce the new law.

say anything more than a 10 percent ethanol blend can corrode engine parts on vehicles that are not intended to use high-percent-age ethanol fuel.

E85, which is available at some service stations, is 85 percent alcohol distilled from corn and 15 percent gasoline.

Automakers also say it's not legal for consumers to try to convert conventional vehicles to ethanol-capable vehicles because of emissions rules.

transit agencies providing charter bus service.

The process being used by the committee is called a "negotiated rulemaking" and it differs from traditional rulemaking procedures in that the principal protagonists get together and try to resolve their disagreements by negotiations.

The Federal Transit Administration is supposed to serve as a sort of referee.

As a last resort, if the two sides can't agree on rules revisions, the FTA will draft proposed rules and let everyone weigh in on them.

At its first meetings, the committee agreed to operate by consensus, meaning agreement will be considered reached when there is no dissent by any member of the committee.

The committee members also agreed to something of a self-imposed gag order, prohibiting them from characterizing the com-

mittee deliberations in any negative way. That means you won't be reading on-the-record comments from committee members criticizing the process in this newspaper or anywhere else.

Here are the questions and issues the committee will be wrestling with over the next several months:

1. Are there potential limited conditions under which public transit agencies can provide community-based charter services directly to local governments and private non-profit agencies that would not otherwise be served in a cost-effective manner by private operators?

2. How can the administration and enforcement of charter bus provisions be better communicated to the public, including use of internet technology?

3. How can the enforcement of violations of the charter bus regu-

lations be improved?

4. How can the charter compliant and administrative appeals process be improved?

5. A new process for determining if there are private charter bus companies willing and able to provide service that would utilize electronic notification and response within 72 hours.

6. A new exception for transportation of government employees, elected officials, and members of the transit industry to examine local transit operations, facilities, and public works.

7. Review and clarify as necessary the definitions of regulatory terms.

8. FTA policies relative to the enforcement of charter rules and the boundary between charter and mass transit services in specific circumstances, such as university transportation and transportation to/from special events.

Florida school gave CDLs with no training

ORLANDO — Two top executives of an Orange County trucking school were arrested after an investigation revealed they possibly put thousands of commercial truck and bus drivers on the road with little or no training.

C&L Solutions President Victor M. Cosme-Burgos, 59, of Orlando, and manager Robson L. Coco, 43, of Winter Park, were charged with defrauding students who sought licenses required to drive trucks, buses and other commercial vehicles.

The arrests came after an investigation by state officials who became suspicious when an auditor noticed the school hadn't failed a single student in the last year and a half of driving tests.

Most Florida driving schools fail about 20 percent of their applicants, according to the Florida Highway Patrol.

The patrol sent undercover agents to pose as students at the school. One agent received a certification for any kind of truck or bus after taking a 90-minute road test that consisted of driving to a gas station, pumping \$100 worth of gas and driving back to the school.

"They were basically rubber-stamping everyone," said state patrol spokesman Jorge Delahoz.

The highway patrol didn't know where any of the more than 2,000 license-holders certified by the school were employed because they are not required to report such information.

Trucking company cleared in firing of fainting driver

MILWAUKEE — A federal judge has ruled that one of the nation's largest trucking companies did not violate the Americans with Disabilities Act when it fired a driver who had fainted in a non-driving incident.

Federal District Judge William Griesbach dismissed the case brought by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission against Schneider National, saying Schneider could adopt safety standards that disqualify people for medical reasons.

At issue was the firing of a veteran Schneider driver who had

safely driven more than 1 million miles in company trucks.

After fainting while off duty in October 2002, he was diagnosed with neurocardiogenic syncope, a medical condition that causes fainting.

"The EEOC claims that Schneider's excessive, even irrational, concern for safety led it to ignore its obligations under the ADA," the judge wrote.

"Employers, such as Schneider, however, are allowed to adopt safety standards even when those standards disqualify people for medical reasons."

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 service. UMA urges operators to respond to these notices:

Daviess County/Owensboro, Ky. Deadline: June 28, 2006. Write to: Louis Lindsay, Transit Manager, City of Owensboro, P.O. Box 10003, Owensboro, KY 42302-9003. Phone: (270) 687-8570.

Indiana County, Pa. Deadline: July 1, 2006. Write to: Gerald L. Blair, Executive Director, IndiGO, P.O. Box 869, 1657 Saltsburg Ave., Indiana, PA 15701. Phone: (724) 465-2140.

Benton, Carroll, Madison and Washington counties, Ark. Deadline: July 3, 2006. Write to: Michael J. Seither, Razorback Transit, 155 Razorback Rd. ADSB

131, Fayetteville, AR 72701. Phone: (479) 575-6292.

Placer and El Dorado counties, Calif. and Washoe County, Nev. Deadline: July 5, 2006. Write to: Will Garner, Senior Transportation Systems Supervisor, Placer County Department of Public Works, 11444 B Avenue, Auburn, CA 95603. Phone: (530) 889-7500.

Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Emmet, Kalkaska, Grand Traverse, Leelanau and Otsego counties, Mich. Deadline: July 7, 2006. Write to: Sheridan Rhoads, Director, Antrim County Transportation, P.O. Box 120, Bellaire, MI 49615. Phone: (231) 533-8644.

Metro Midland-Odessa, Texas. Deadline: July 13, 2006. Write to: Ken Smithson, General Manager, Midland-Odessa Urban Transit District, 8007 E. Highway 80, Odessa, TX 79765. Phone: (432) 561-9990.

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Hotel, jazz park, housing proposed in New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS — One of the nation's largest labor unions plans to build a major new downtown hotel and 10,000 affordable homes here.

At the same time, a Chicago-based hotel and resort company has proposed a sweeping redevelopment of a large section of downtown to create a 20-acre National Jazz Center and park.

The AFL-CIO plans to invest \$1 billion for a high-rise hotel along the Mississippi River, plus thousands of homes in Tremé, a working class neighborhood that received minor damage from Hurricane Katrina last year.

The \$715 million jazz center project, which is being spearheaded by Strategic Hotels & Resorts, owner of the Hyatt Regency New Orleans Hotel and 17 upscale and luxury hotel properties around the U.S., would be branded as the international home for jazz.

The jazz center and AFL-CIO proposals are the first major redevelopment projects announced since Katrina devastated parts of New Orleans.

Other housing projects are in the works and the pace of New Orleans' redevelopment, which has been relatively slow, could pick up in the months ahead because billions in federal dollars to buy people out of their flood-destroyed homes is set to begin flowing this summer.

Under the complex plan for the jazz center, one million square feet of public buildings, including New Orleans City Hall, Orleans Parish Civil District Court, an old Supreme Court building and an old

state office building would be demolished, along with the city hall parking garage, the New Orleans Centre and parts of the Hyatt to make way for the park anchored by the proposed 25,000-square-foot National Jazz Center.

City Hall would move to the 26-story Dominion Tower office building, which has been vacant since Hurricane Katrina, and where dozens of storm-broken windows still are sealed with plywood. State offices would be rebuilt at the Civil District Court site, and the entrance of the Hyatt would move to Loyola Avenue.

The multilevel six-block park would include a 20,000-square-foot jazz performance center with seating for 1,000 people, a black-box theater with seating for 300 people, a 70,000-square-foot amphitheater with lawn seating, a 60,000-square-foot education center for children, rehearsal studios and an archive for jazz research.

A bridge would connect the Superdome to the park, which would feature statues, fountains and interactive displays.

The Canal Street streetcar line would be extended down Loyola Avenue, connecting the park, sports facilities and public office complexes with the French Quarter and Convention Center. A bus transportation center would be part of the plan.

Backers say the project would generate tourism, construction jobs, taxes and change the face of the city the way Millennium Park has transformed Chicago, and the Inner Harbor has revitalized Baltimore.

Dealing with vendors: A few tips

Taking the treachery out of negotiations

As the economy continues to chug along, the favorable terms bus operators were able to wring out of vendors during the first half of this decade have either disappeared or are vanishing.

To get the best deals today — that is, to save money, save time and secure favorable terms — operators need to sharpen their pencils and negotiating skills, plus grab their reading glasses.

Negotiating with suppliers and vendors can be especially treacherous for small operators who may not have a great deal of deal-making experience, or access to the same legal expertise that is fairly common among larger competitors.

Vendors that came begging for business a few years ago now may be more brazen. They may change terms or use contract loopholes to walk away from small sales when bigger deals come along, leaving small-potatoes customers twisting in the wind.

Not uncommon is the scenario of the vendor signing a deal, landing a bigger fish, but the vendor doesn't have the staff or capacity or both to supply both the small and big client.

If the limitation-of-liability terms in the contract are structured poorly, the vendor can repudiate the contract without significant hardship.

One area that warrants a watchful eye is drafting and negotiating a contract for software. And one of the most important things in a software contract, where specificity is critical, is the warranty. Make sure you under-

stand what is being promised.

Another hot-button issue is scalability. Software vendors often will say their product is scalable. X years down the line, the buyer acquires a company or expands and discovers the product isn't scalable. Checking the contract, the customer finds it says nothing about scalability — despite the verbal assurances by the salesman. Get a commitment in writing that it is scalable, if for no other reason than you can sue when it turns out not to be.

"Distrust all vendors equally, but never more than lawyers."

More on warranties

What kinds of warranties should be in a contract? Besides those that are product specific, a warranty also should be sought that says the vendor will comply with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. And it should be stipulated that vendors will cooperate with other vendors used by the buyer.

Limitation of liability, another common contract term, spells out the maximum amount of damages a company can collect in the event of a default. If the lawyers have done a good job, there should be no limitation of liability on issues that include indemnification, breach of confidentiality, bodily injury, and repudiation of contract.

Another contract term vendors

employ to their advantage is the force majeure clause. A force majeure event — or circumstance beyond a party's reasonable control — can be used to excuse a supplier's failure to perform.

Look at the force majeure clause with a careful eye. Is a shortage of labor a force majeure? It may not be. Nor is a shortage of goods.

Ironically, or sometimes shockingly, vendors have been known to use force majeure — the very disaster — to avoid delivering disaster recovery services. Make sure contracts spell out that force majeure does not negate disaster recovery services.

Precision, precision

Well-written contracts should make sense and use precise language. If they don't, find a new lawyer.

Vendor contracts will often use the term "promptly" rather than a date of delivery. Vendors love it, but what does it mean? Give the vague term a pass. Here's one solution: Follow the vague language with "but in no event later than" and fill in a date.

Negotiate with more than one vendor at the same time and make them compete with each other. Vendors may knock down their price and the results are frequently dramatic. Vendors like to compete.

Some experts advise waiting until the end of the quarter to negotiate any deal.

And for the skeptical and cynical: Distrust all vendors equally, but never more than lawyers.

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Port of Baltimore cruises for passengers

BALTIMORE — The Port of Baltimore has opened a \$13 million, full-time passenger terminal as part of an effort to become a more popular departure point for Mid-Atlantic vacationers wanting to take cruises.

The 60,000-square-foot, temperature-controlled terminal building sits on 14 acres of port land adjacent to Interstate 95 at South Locust Point.

On-site parking is available for 500 vehicles, and passenger drop-off and pick-up areas are right at the terminal's front door.

During the 2006 season, 30 cruises are scheduled to depart from the new terminal destined for Bermuda and the Caribbean. The schedule includes 28 direct-departure cruises and two port calls. Additional cruises may be added during the season.

Next year, Royal Caribbean will offer new cruises from Baltimore to Canada, New England and the eastern Caribbean.

The dedicated passenger terminal is considered a major step forward for the cruise ship operation at the port. In the past, temporary cruise buildings on the Dundalk Marine Terminal were also used, at times, for cargo operations.

The new facility is separated from the industrial activity at both the Dundalk and Seagirt Marine terminals and it has its own direct access from I-95. It is two and one-half miles from downtown Baltimore, 10



Cruise ships using the Port of Baltimore have a new passenger-only terminal to improve service.

miles from BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport, 20 miles from Annapolis, and 40 miles from Washington, D.C.

“Royal Caribbean is extremely pleased with the beautiful new terminal at Maryland’s Port of Baltimore,” said John Fox, a Royal Caribbean vice president. “Grandeur of the Seas will enjoy her new home and undoubtedly attract more cruise

vacationers from the Mid-Atlantic region.”

Last month, the Baltimore port was renamed the Helen Delich Bentley Port of Baltimore. Bentley is a former congresswoman, chairman of the United States Federal Maritime Commission, and long-time advocate for the port.

New signs and logos reflecting the name change will begin to be used next year.

Tenn. association plans 4th rodeo for drivers, mechanics

CLARKSDALE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Motor Coach Association will conduct its fourth driver and mechanic rodeo at a popular state park near here next month.

The competition offers prizes of as much as \$500 to winning mechanics and drivers.

The event will be Aug. 8-10 at Paris Landing State Park, which is on the western shore of Kentucky Lake in an area called the “Land between the Lakes.”

Accommodations will be at the Parks Inn. Activities also include a golf tournament and barbecue.

Motorcoach drivers and mechanics from the 46 operator members of the Tennessee Motor Coach Association will compete. Each company can enter three drivers and three mechanics.

Drivers will be tested on their knowledge of operating a coach, federal safety rules, as well as their ability to maneuver a 45-foot coach through a skills course.

Mechanics will be tested on their mechanical and parts knowledge, as well as their ability to handle a coach.

Prizes will be awarded to the top five in each category with first place winners receiving \$500, second \$250, third \$100, fourth \$50 and fifth \$25.

For more information, phone: (866) 721-8622, or go to www.tmca.travel.

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IC launch

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

day tour model (FC Series)

- Rear-engine tour/transit/shuttle model (RC Series)
- Small/midsize cutaway (BE Series)

Since the mid-1990s, International Truck and Engine has been selling its "tour bus" 3200 Series cutaway chassis, and its predecessor, the 3400 model, to midsize bus manufacturers.

A half-dozen body builders have produced upscale cutaway models on the chassis and many of those 20-35 passenger buses have found their way into the fleets of motorcoach operators needing smaller buses.

The new HC Series to be assembled by IC will largely be identical to the models that have been produced by cutaway manufacturers on the 3200 chassis.

Some of the primary markets for the new IC lines are expected to be hotels, rental car companies, airports, medical facilities, universities and tour bus companies.

The buses will have the latest options, including GPS vehicle tracking technology. IC says dealers are accepting orders now, with

the first units expected to be delivered late this summer.

In marketing its new line, IC will emphasize that it is simplifying bus buying and servicing by integrating its chassis with its own bodies and offering service for both at one location.

Servicing and repairing cutaway buses can oftentimes be a challenge because the chassis is made by one company and the body another. IC will tout its integrated, one-builder, one-stop approach.

"With 360-degree support through bus sales, financing, parts, warranty and service, we believe we have significantly increased the ease of doing business for all commercial bus customers," said Michael Cancelliere, vice president and general manager of IC Corp.

The two IC models expected to generate the most interest among motorcoach operators are the RC and FC series.

The FC model is being positioned as a plush, roomy bus that's ideal for day tours, corporate events and shuttle service. It will be up to 38-feet long, 102-inches wide, and accommodate from 29 to 44 passengers in coach-style seats.

The body for the front-engine

FC model will be supplied by San Marino Neobus, the Brazilian bus bodybuilder that specializes in small and midsize buses. It will be available in either a 198- or 216-inch wheelbase, and have an Allison B300 transmission and International DT 466, 225-horsepower engine.

A Thermo King roof-mounted air conditioner will blow air to individual passenger vents mounted in overhead luggage racks with reading lights. Passenger side curtains also will be available. The brakes will be air with ABS.

The other coach-like model, to be available this fall, will be the RC Series, for which IC has not yet released details. The RC will be roughly the same size as the FC model, also seating up to 44. However, the RC will have a rear-mounted engine.

IC says it is building on its expertise in the school bus market to expand into the commercial bus market. IC builds more than 60 percent of the nation's school buses.

"We are bringing our bus expertise and the strength of our dedicated bus dealer network — the largest in North America — to commercial customers," said Cancelliere.

The Freightliner chassis on which the Synergy will be built has a GVWR of 26,000 to 36,000 pounds, and utilizes an Allison transmission, Meritor ABS air-brake system and axles, and offers an optional ZF independent front suspension.

Several cutaway and trolley bus manufacturers offer models built on the Freightliner XB chassis, including StarTrans, Champion, Trolley Enterprises, Molly Corp. and Cable Car Classics.

The Synergy is expected to compete with a 35-foot bus, the Spectrum LX, that was introduced earlier this year at Motorcoach Expo 2006 in Tampa (see April 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*), and new IC Corp. models that will be introduced later this year (see story that begins on page 1).

The Spectrum is produced by

Trident Industries of Cumming, Ga. "The Trident bus will compete with the Synergy," said Hotard. The Spectrum utilizes a Brazilian-built body on an International chassis and carries a \$195,000 price tag.

The Synergy will be built by Glaval at its 300,000-square-foot plant in Elkhart, which produces half-a-dozen midsize cutaway and body-on-chassis buses. Glaval builds one model on a Freightliner chassis, the Apollo, a 10-year shuttle and transit bus.

Hotard said Glaval will sell and service the Synergy through a select group of its dealers (including Bus Group).

Fritz Engelmann, Bus Group vice president of sales, said of the Synergy: "It will perform like a coach. It won't look like a truck or drive like a truck."

amenities.

Late this spring, LimoLiner upgraded its free wireless Internet service and extended mobile high-speed access throughout each of its coaches.

Passengers now have access to wireless Internet connectivity at the super-fast speed of 700 kbps, and LimoLiner says the wireless signal is consistent and the connection constant throughout its runs because there are two onboard routers serving the 28 passengers.

"We've taken advantage of newly-available technology to deliver the highest possible mobile high-speed connectivity to our passengers," said Pescatore.

"From our inception, LimoLiner's goal has been to create a luxury travel environment that enables passengers to remain productive while on the road. With this enhancement, passengers will be able to access the Internet... more efficiently than ever before," he said.

California

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

operates a Bay-area Tour Bus Strike Force that focuses on charter-and-tour operators, plus coaches making regular runs to casinos as well as those in Reno, Nev.

California is different

California may be the only state in the U.S. that still regularly conducts unannounced roadside bus and motorcoach inspections. Other states have fallen in line with Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration guidelines of only conducting bus inspections at terminals and destinations.

The FMCSA will not reimburse states for inspections that violate its terminal- and destination-only policy. So, California ends up paying for its own roadside safety inspection program.

And California bus inspectors do not appear to be overly concerned that hundreds of passengers may be inconvenienced by the program. On the Saturday the 14 coaches were put out of service, more than 500 people were forced to leave the buses they were riding and wait in the patrol's inspection facility for an hour or two or longer while operators sent or arranged coaches to take them to their destinations.

"The CHP will continue to conduct safety inspections on various roadways throughout the Bay Area, with a heavy emphasis on the summer-time tourist season," said CHP Sgt. Les Bishop.

"With an average of 40 passengers per bus, these (out-of-service orders) equate to over 600 lives possibly saved by removing unsafe buses from the road," he added.

The periodic roadside inspections run by the California Highway Patrol at its Cordelia Inspection Station, as well as elsewhere in the state, typically involve teams composed of an officer and three inspectors.

The coaches pull into the inspection facility and an officer boards the bus and informs the passengers that a safety inspection is going to be conducted for their protection. With the passengers still on board, the coach pulls onto a ramp and the team goes to work.

The inspection officers check the drivers for possible alcohol/drug usage, proper permitting and credentials, log-book violations, and other operator issues. At the same time, the inspectors eyeball the coach from the underside up.

Quick in and out

The goal is to conduct a complete inspection in 20-25 minutes, minimizing the inconvenience for passengers, said Chris Korntveb, a California Highway Patrol motor carrier field supervisor.

"We try to stay under 30 minutes," Korntveb told *Bus & Motorcoach News* in a phone interview. "But if there is a problem, we park them. The passengers get off — if the bus is put out of service." The Cordelia inspection facility is set up to handle bus loads of people; it has a waiting area equipped with pay phones, restrooms and vending machines.

On the Saturday that 40 percent of the buses were put out of service, inspectors found a wide variety of violations, including brake lines rubbing and other brake-related issues, dangerous tires, leaking fuel, worn suspension and steering parts, and other mechanical problems.

A total of 17 citations were issued for 60 violations.

The next day, another 19 coaches were inspected but only one was put out of service, leading to speculation operators quickly got the message from the Saturday fiasco.

"The California Highway Patrol holds these companies and the professional drivers to a high standard," said Sgt. Bishop. "Most of them live up to that, but we need to get the attention of those drivers and companies that don't follow the laws set by state and federal lawmakers."

The CAB view

The California Bus Association sees the California Highway Patrol roadside inspection program as something of a double-edge sword.

"The guys who get put out of service need to get put out of service," said long-time CBA board member and immediate-past president Mike Waters, who is general manager of Coach America/Franciscan Lines in San Francisco.

He said the inspections typically are not an issue with operators who have a rigorous maintenance program and whose coaches have a California inspection sticker. "The guys with stickers get waved through," he said.

The California Highway Patrol reports there were 461 bus crashes in the CHP's San Francisco region from January 2004 through December of last year. Of that total, 321 were non-injury collisions that tied up traffic; 138 resulted in injuries, and 2 crashes had fatalities.

Annually, the California Highway Patrol performs more than 1,900 inspections of bus companies in the San Francisco Bay region.

The guys who get put out of service need to get put out of service.'

Glaval

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

for a market that we think has a need for a midsize coach with many of the large-coach features, ride quality and luggage capacity," said Hotard.

"Many of our customers are telling us that their end-user customers want a smaller bus as the tour and charter group size has changed."

Sales efforts also will focus on limousine operators, churches, colleges, universities and other passenger carrier operators.

Hotard says the Glaval Synergy will sell for \$185,000 to \$200,000.

It will have a full, pass-through luggage bay under the floor, with the same cubic feet per passenger as an MCI D-model, according to Hotard.

LimoLiner

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Boston-bound bus from New York was 12:15 p.m.

The new schedule, which is expected to be fully phased in next month, can be found on the carrier's Web site, www.limoliner.com.

LimoLiner coaches accommodate 28 passengers in two-by-one leather seats, with on-board snacks and refreshments, a cabin attendant, WiFi connections and other

MCI lines up suppliers, notes coach sales gains

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries says it is building closer ties with its supplier companies to make itself more competitive and to bring better coaches to the marketplace.

“As new technologies become available, we want suppliers to deliver quality products, exceptional performance and standardized solutions. That’s why we believe it’s critical to have collaborative relationships with our suppliers,” said Todd Pankey, MCI vice president, supply chain.

During the past four years, MCI has reduced its number of suppliers by 30 percent. The reduction, says Pankey, has generated stronger, broader relationships with greater returns for MCI’s best suppliers, while reducing the complexity of operations for the coach builder.

Early this spring, MCI held a supplier development conference with 150 suppliers. MCI reviewed its market and financial position with the vendors and outlined its long-term strategy.

“In our business, there’s much more to supplier relationships than just procurement,” said Pankey. “Consideration has to be given to value-added services, technology gains, and product innovations that can be turned into big advantages for MCI and its customers.”

At the supplier conference, each vendor was asked to submit an innovative idea that tied into MCI’s supply chain initiatives. MCI said Red Dot Corp. of Seattle; Arvin Meritor of Troy, Mich.; Marmon Keystone of Bulter, Pa., and Vansco of Winnipeg, Manitoba, delivered the most innovative and promising ideas.

MCI told the suppliers it has increased its share of coach sales to the independent-operator market by 20 percent during the past five years, bringing its share of the independent market to more than 50 percent.

“Our financial position is very healthy as we continue to experience strong sales gains,” said MCI Chief Financial Officer Mike McIlwain.



Dan Heath, general manager of new MCI service facility (center, standing), welcomes attendees during opening event.

MCI facility opens in Atlantic City

ATLANTIC CITY — Motor Coach Industries officially opened its Atlantic City service center last month with a special “Driver’s Day.”

More than 200 motorcoach drivers and operators came to the opening of the service facility at the Atlantic City Transportation Center.

The event was sponsored by Detroit Diesel Corp., which was

represented by Doug Weatherly, who was joined by Wayne Hulek, managing director of the Atlantic City Transportation Center, and Dan Heath, general manager of the MCI service center in Blackwood, N.J., and the new Atlantic City location.

Attendees were served lunch and some took home prizes.

The new 8,000-square-foot service shop is currently open weekdays, but will soon move to a seven-day schedule. It has a drivers’ lounge, coach parking, a parts window, and offers a range of maintenance and repair services.

The facility is at 1501 Albany Blvd. Phone: (800) 263-1041, or (609) 348-1787.

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Evacuation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

2005 revisited

Last August and September, when two major hurricanes struck the Gulf Coast within days of each other, several of the states counted on the federal government to provide the transportation needed to evacuate people.

Belatedly, federal authorities turned the responsibility over to a trucking logistics company and three subcontractors – a move that proved disastrous.

While dozens of private carriers from all parts of the country answered the call for coaches, many of the carriers soured on the work, first during the evacuations because of a lack of organization and later when they had difficulty getting paid.

Much of the criticism was directed at Landstar Systems, the Florida-based logistics company hired by the federal government; Carey Limousine; Bus Bank, and Transportation Management Services.

Numerous coach operators said afterwards they would not take part in another federally run evacuation if it were managed in the same manner as last year's operation. Instead, they said, they would work directly with individual states or industry groups such as the United Motorcoach and the American Bus associations.

Lessons learned

Concerned about the fallout

from last year's troubles, most of the states say either they or local governments in their states will manage evacuations this year, relying mostly on school buses that already are in their areas.

Private motorcoaches, however, remain part of their plans, as well as those of the federal government, in the event not enough school buses or drivers are available.

In Alabama, about 1,000 school buses from two counties in the southern part of the state will be available, according to Yasamie Richardson, a spokeswoman for the state Emergency Management Agency. She said most of the buses would be driven by regular school bus drivers, although additional drivers probably would be recruited.

"They would drive the regular school routes, but instead of picking up children for school, they would pick up people who do not have transportation and who needed to be evacuated," she said.

Richardson said the state also is working with Capital Trailways, a private operator based in Montgomery, and Bus Bank in the event additional buses or drivers are needed.

Individual counties also will handle evacuations in Mississippi, using a combination of school buses and public transit buses, according to Ashley Roth of the state's Emergency Management Agency.

"If a county is overwhelmed and doesn't have enough buses then our agency will step in and bring in as many buses as possible

from other parts of the state," she said.

And in Florida ...

Florida follows the same plan, with individual counties taking the lead in emergency evacuations and the state serving as their backup.

"The state will assist by helping the counties coordinate their evacuations or providing additional equipment if it is needed," said Sherilyn Burris, spokeswoman for the state Division of Emergency Management.

She said most of the counties plan to use school buses and recruit regular school bus drivers and other government employees to drive them.

Monroe County, which includes the Florida Keys, will again call on firefighters from the area to drive most of the evacuation buses. "It worked well last year, and they'll be doing it again this year," said Burris.

Louisiana, which had serious evacuation problems last year, is working with Landstar, which has lined up about 700 motorcoaches, school buses and public transit buses.

Last year, state and local officials took heavy heat for failing to make use of school buses for evacuation efforts. The issue was highlighted nationally in several much publicized photographs showing hundreds of school buses lined up in a badly flooded parking lot in New Orleans.

Agan of U.S. Department of Homeland Security said last

month's experience in Florida with Hurricane Alberto was a successful first test of the federal government's new backup role.

When Alberto began forming there was concern that evacuations might become necessary. Agan said the Department of Homeland Security quickly staged 50 buses and 100 drivers in Louisiana and had them ready to move into Florida at a moment's notice. "We stood by and waited for a call for assistance, but fortunately, we weren't needed and everything turned out OK," he said.

UMA, ABA in the loop

While the federal government has a contractual obligation to again assign the task of managing its bus evacuation work to Landstar, it has been in touch with UMA and the ABA.

Victor Para, president and chief executive of UMA, said he was pleased that the government is at least talking with officials of the motorcoach industry, but disappointed it is still working with Landstar.

"I think John (John Hill, administrator-designate of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) understands how badly things were handled last year and recognizes that we — not some trucking logistics company — know how to move large amounts of people quickly," he said.

Parra added that he has urged the federal government to not only work closely with the two national trade groups, but also with the

motorcoach associations in each of the states.

In another change this year, most states are planning to call for earlier evacuations as storms threaten. In Texas, for example, Gov. Rick Perry intends to start evacuation planning sequences — including assessing fuel supplies and transportation needs — 120 hours before tropical storm-force winds make landfall.

The "pets" problem

In addition to evacuating people, saving pets became a serious issue last year when many pet owners refused to leave their homes because rescuers would not allow them to bring their animals.

Joanne Gonzalez of Homeland Security said the agency is encouraging pet owners without transportation to plan ahead for their pets by working with friends and neighbors who might be able to help and with animal-care organizations such as local humane societies.

In addition, states and local governments are being urged to include pets in their evacuation plans.

While statewide plans have yet to be developed, officials in Alabama and Mississippi said they are studying the problem.

"We have not made a decision yet on pets, but we know it is something we need to look into," said Richardson, adding that the state agricultural office and individual humane societies in Alabama would be likely sources to tackle the problem.

Roth said Mississippi will not allow pets on any evacuation buses this year, but plans are being developed for pets that should be in place next year.

"Last year was the first year we realized how important pets are to people," she said. "We hope to have a plan in place next year that would involve a vehicle of some type following along behind the buses that could carry pets."

In Florida, several county emergency management officials are looking for facilities — possibly schools — where pet owners and their animals could be sheltered together. Paul Milelli, director of public safety in Palm Beach, said he located a county-owned gymnasium in Boynton Beach that will be used this year as a pet and pet-owner shelter if needed.

A number of coach operators have objected to any plans that would require them to allow pets onto their buses.



Fall in love with New Orleans all over again

A Taste of New Orleans

Greetings from New Orleans! We can't wait for the opportunity to host you for Motorcoach Expo 2007. The overall view of the city is wonderful – they can't wait to have us! UMA has been working closely with the New Orleans Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau to make this Expo the most memorable one yet. The host hotel, the New Orleans Marriott, is great and the city itself is in impeccable shape. The legendary New Orleans spirit is evident everywhere you go! Watch for more information on www.motorcoachexpo.com.

Motorcoach Expo 2007 January 16 - 20

Massachusetts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

transportation division.

Only after the inspector has verified the coach company is legitimately operating in Massachusetts, meaning its buses are based in the state; its principal bus-operations facility is in Massachusetts; it has a functional maintenance operation with preventative maintenance program; it has local drivers; it has proper business credentials, and it passes other tests, will Massachusetts plates be issued to the operator.

The new system only will apply, however, to coach companies that are "not known" to the state transportation division, or are on its bus list. Coach operators having a track record of previously being inspected by the division are on the list and will not be put through the new process.

Cristy likened the procedure to the federal "new-entrant program" for start-up coach companies.

Currently, the transportation division has safety oversight responsibilities for upwards of 250 motorcoach operations in Massachusetts. Those companies, which

Boston issues guide for tour bus parking

BOSTON — The Boston Transportation Department has released comprehensive tour bus parking guidelines, including a detailed map and useful Web site, for use during this year's tourist season.

Boston's waterfront and historic areas are among the most popular summertime motorcoach destinations in the northeastern U.S. Consequently, the city has developed extensive regulations; stopping guidelines, including designated drop-off and pick-up points; idling rules, and parking locations.

The city's 2006 Tour Bus Parking Guidelines Map and Web site are designed not only to help operators travel quickly and efficiently between destinations but also to

find drop-off/pick-up points and locations for long-term (layover) parking.

The map and Web site also contain detailed information about tour bus regulations, plus identify important tourist attractions and hotels.

A key regulation is the city's anti-idling rule. Boston limits coach idling to five minutes and fines of up to \$1,000 can result from the city anti-idling enforcement activities.

Go to http://www.cityofboston.gov/transportation/tour_bus.asp to access the map and Web site. The Boston Transportation Department can be reached at (617) 635-3076.

Here's a list of key drop-off and pick-up locations for this summer:

North End / Waterfront – 15 minute stopping limit

- Commercial St., north side adjacent to skating rink

- Commercial St., east side near Lewis Wharf

- Surface Artery southbound, between Hanover and North streets

- Surface Artery southbound, between North and Clinton streets (9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. only)

Waterfront – 15 minute limit

- Atlantic Ave., east side just north of Rowes Wharf

- North side of Congress St. at Fort Point Channel

Broad Street – 15 minute limit

- Broad St., east side at Milk St.

Back Bay – 15 minute limit

- Dalton St., east side between Belvidere and Scotia streets in

front of Sheraton

Huntington – 3 hour limit

- Huntington Ave., north side adjacent to Christian Science Center

- Chelsea St./USS Constitution – 15 minute limit

- Chelsea St., south side near USS Constitution

Autoport Parking

Follow Chelsea St. east into Moran Terminal. Hours: 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

Phone: (617) 242-2300. Fueling and driver lounge available.

Signage on many streets designate tour bus stopping locations and those areas where stopping and parking is prohibited. For example, tour buses are forbidden from stopping, loading or unloading in commercial zones and at city transit bus stops.

are regularly inspected by the division, are the ones that will not have to jump through the new registration hoops.

However, operators that show up one day at a Registry of Motor Vehicles branch office and attempt to register a handful of coaches, using a tow yard as the address for their company, are the ones that will get a visit from a transportation division inspector.

"We want to send a message to some of these folks," said Cristy.

By engaging in such shenanigans, carpetbagger operators are avoiding regulatory oversight, says Cristy. And, as often as not, these operators are in and out of insurance.

"It's difficult to chase them down with limited resources," he noted. However, the revamped application/inspection process should

combat the problem more effectively.

"We can't just be handing-off bus plates," said Cristy. The goal is to verify that only legitimate Massachusetts businesses are getting Massachusetts plates.

For legal Massachusetts companies, Cristy does not expect the new process to be either burdensome or time consuming. When an operator applies for plates, a fax

will be sent from the Registry of Motor Vehicles to the DTE transportation division which will call the operator and schedule a visit.

The entire process should take no more than 7-10 days, "maybe quicker," said Cristy. "We're not trying to make it difficult for the legitimate operator."

But for the businesses "that show up from nowhere," that's another story.

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.travel Web domain grows; backers urge greater usage

NEW YORK — Six months after the launch of the .travel domain name, upwards of 17,000 Web sites have been registered using the .travel extension.

“We are pleased to report that the travel industry’s exclusive Internet domain continues to expand at a steady pace across all sectors of the global travel and tourism industry and from around the world,” reports Birger Backman, president and chairman of the Travel Partnership Corp., one of the groups backing development of the .travel initiative.

At the same time, however, the

.travel advocates like Backman are concerned that companies and organizations aren’t activating their .travel Web sites or using their .travel e-mail addresses.

Backman is urging travel industry companies “to lead our industry by example and establish your .travel Web sites and .travel e-mail addresses to reinforce that the travel industry’s exclusive Internet domain is up and running and open to all industry members.

“All of us using our .travel e-mail addresses equates to thousands and thousands of no cost “advertisements” going out every-

day to our industry colleagues and travel consumers alike, all over the world,” Backman asserted.

As companies implement the use of .travel domain names, the .travel Web site, www.travel.travel, has information on search-engine optimization.

Plus, having a company or organization profile in the .travel Directory can increase visibility, says Backman.

Motorcoach companies interested in adopting a .travel Web identity can sign up at the Web sites of the United Motorcoach, American Bus and National Tour associ-

ations. Look for the green .travel logo and click on it.

The NTA is one organization that has simplified its Web identity by migrating to a .travel domain name. Because www.nta.com was already

registered by another organization when NTA established its Internet presence, the association was forced to adopt www.natonline.com. However, its .travel domain name is simply www.nta.travel.

Lift, tire associations arrange safety alliance

CORTLAND, N.Y. — The Automotive Lift Institute Inc. and The Tire Industry Association have entered into what they are calling a “strategic safety alliance” designed to support automotive lift safety among technicians who rely on the use of a vehicle lift to perform their jobs.

Christine Bell, director of training for The Tire Industry Association, said that inclusion of the Automotive Lift Institute’s training materials, such as the *Vehicle Lifting Points Guide*, “will enhance our training program, as well as provide an important element of

risk management opportunity for TIA members taking advantage of this value-added agreement.”

R.W. “Bob” O’Gorman, president and chief executive of the Automotive Life Institute, said the two-year agreement furthers the goal of his association’s members to promote the safe design, construction, installation and use of automotive lift products.

To view safety materials provided by the lift institute or to examine the *Directory of Certified Automotive Lifts*, go to www.auto-lift.org.

STEMCO redesigns Web site

LONGVIEW, Texas — STEMCO has launched a redesigned Web site that includes updated product information and a searchable online parts catalog.

Behind the Web site is a new content management system designed to assure timely and reliable information.

The newest feature of the site is

an online parts catalog database.

The catalog includes maintenance information, plus a cross-reference to competitors’ products.

STEMCO supplies the bus industry with air dryers, axle parts, hubometers, oil seals and other heavy-duty wheel-end products.

The new site is at www.stemco.com.



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Calendar

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JULY 2006

20-23 National Motorcoach Network 2006 Invitational 100, Stonewall Jackson Hotel & Conference Center, Staunton, Va. Info: (540) 477-3323 or go to www.motorcoach.com.

29-Aug. 3 International Motor Coach Group, 2006 Strategic Alliance Meeting, Carnival Cruise Lines' ship Carnival Victory, New York City. Info: Go to www.imgcoach.com.

AUGUST 2006

12-15 Alabama Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting

and Marketplace, Riverview Plaza Hotel, Mobile. Info: Go to www.alabamamotorcoach.org.

14-17 Family Motor Coach Association International Convention, Charlotte, N.C. Info: Go to www.fmca.com.

20-24 Motorcoach Association of South Carolina Annual Meeting and Marketplace, Embassy

Suites Airport Convention Center, Charleston, S.C. Info: Go to www.scmotorcoach.org.

29-31 Florida Motorcoach Association 2006 Appointment Show, Renaissance Resort at World Golf Village, St. Augustine, Fla. Info: Go to www.floridamotorcoach.org.

SEPTEMBER 2006

1-3 Bus Bash 2006, Grand Rapids, Mich. Info: (815) 946-2341, or go to www.busmag.com.

29-Oct. 3 Virginia Motorcoach Association Annual Convention, Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center, Roanoke, Va. Info: www.vamotorcoach.com.

OCTOBER 2006

23-25 BusCon, Navy Pier, Chicago. Info: Go to www.buscon-expo.com.

26-28 Gray Line Annual Meeting and Marketing Conference, Phoenix. Info: E-mail info@grayline.com or call (303) 394-6920.

People



Randy Angell



William Danner

ABC Companies announced the appointment of *Randy Angell* to the position of account executive for its Midwest region.

Based at ABC headquarters in Faribault, Minn., Angell initially will be responsible for coach sales in Indiana and southern Illinois.

Angell has more than 17 years of sales experience, primarily in the fishing industry. For the past 13 years, he has represented leading fish equipment manufacturers in Minnesota.

Angell is a Faribault native and a graduate of Bethlehem Academy. He will report to *Lee Loper*, vice president and general manager of ABC's Midwest region.

Blue Bird Corp. of Fort Valley, Ga., announced that *William Danner* has been promoted to director of distributor sales, school/activity. In his new role, Danner will be responsible for all North American regional sales managers and the Blue Bird distributor organization and report directly to *Kim Cassell*, vice president of sales and marketing, school/activity.

Danner joined Blue Bird last year as director of sales and marketing, product support. Previously, he held managerial positions for Nissan North America.

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