

Probing finds plenty of muck in Texas bus tragedy

DALLAS — Two investigations into the bus fire that killed nearly two dozen elderly nursing home residents who were fleeing Houston in advance of Hurricane Rita are inching along amidst an almost daily barrage of new and alarming information.

The National Safety Transporta-

tion Board is digging into the Sept. 23 tragedy with an eye toward recommendations for federal and state regulators and the motorcoach industry, while the Dallas County Sheriff's Department is hunting for the cause of the fire to determine possible criminal liability.

The investigations follow earlier

action by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to shut down the motorcoach operator, Global Limo of Pharr, Texas, and the Sheriff's Department sending 23 criminally negligent homicide cases against the driver, Juan Robles Guterrez, 37, to prosecutors for possible grand jury indictments.

While motorcoach companies across the U.S. are eager to learn what caused the fire that killed 23 seniors and to see if it will have a regulatory impact on the industry, they'll have to wait for some time before they get answers.

NSTB investigations of serious bus accidents generally take be-

tween 12 to 18 months, said agency spokesman Keith Holloway. "But we will issue progress reports periodically," he added, saying he did not know when the first one would be filed.

Sheriff's spokesman Sgt. Don Peritz reports that his department's

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THRILLED. Gregory Wilson of Greyhound Lines, above left, whoops it up after receiving a \$1,000 check and a pile of other loot for winning the mechanic competition at the 15th annual South Jersey Transportation Authority Bus Rodeo in Atlantic City. Lloyd Newman, also of Greyhound, was judged the top driver; he also collected \$1,000, plus other goodies. See story page 11.

Jury awards bus crash victims \$17.5 million; wants coach seat belts

WACO, Texas — A jury has held Motor Coach Industries liable in a bus crash south of here two years ago that killed seven people, awarding \$17.5 million in damages to passengers and survivors.

The jurors said the coach was defective because it didn't have seat belts.

MCI intends to appeal.

Attorneys for the plaintiffs argued that motorcoaches without seat belts are unreasonably dangerous despite the fact federal regulations do not require them. They said seat belts, along with laminated safety glass on passenger windows, would have protected passengers who were ejected from the bus in the Valentine's Day 2003 crash.

The plaintiff lawyers urged the jury to embrace the case as an opportunity to enact changes to

bus industry safety standards.

"I think that what the verdict reflects is that the jury saw this as a significant issue and an issue that requires significant response," attorney Thomas Brown of Houston said after the trial. "Our hope is that this, in fact, will be a verdict that leads to change."

Attorneys for MCI argued that the company designed its coaches with a range of safety features, including "compartmentalization," or restraint provided by high-back, padded seats. They said the coach was designed to protect passengers in the most commonly occurring accidents, which are collisions that do not involve the bus rolling or tipping over.

After the trial, several jurors said compartmentalization was not an acceptable safety measure.

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IMG operators have high praise for 20 Group program

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Members of the United Motorcoach Association who join the new 20 Group program being offered by the trade group can pretty much count on one thing — their businesses will improve.

That's the assessment of

International Motor Coach Group carriers from around the country who've been participating in the popular business development program for the past several years.

"It is the most important thing I have ever done for my business," said John Crosswell, president of

Crosswell VIP Motorcoach Services in Williamsburg, Ohio. "It has just been extremely valuable to me."

Stephen Story, president of James River Bus Lines in Richmond, Va., calls the program the "key to a successful business" and said it helped his company get

through the difficult times following 9/11.

David Brown, president of Holiday Tours of Randleman, N.C., cites the program as the "single-biggest factor for the success" of his company.

And Brian Kurtz, manager of

Elite Coach in Ephrata, Pa., said the 20 Group has taught him an "incredible amount" about not only his own business but the entire motorcoach industry. "It's hard to overstate how much it has done for us," said Kurtz.

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New coach sales increase 45 percent in third quarter

Sales of new motorcoaches in the U.S. and Canada posted their sharpest quarterly increase of the year during the three months ended Sept. 30, soaring nearly 45 percent higher than the same period last year, *National Bus Trader* magazine reports.

Coach manufacturers sold a total of 428 new over-the-road buses during the third quarter of this year, up from the 296 units sold during the same three months a year ago.

The third quarter is typically the slowest sales period of the year

in the motorcoach industry. This year was different, however. The 44.6 percent increase compares with an 11 percent gain in the second quarter and a 42 percent jump in the first quarter.

However, the number of buses sold in the third quarter remained below the levels of the first and second quarters, when 464 and 533 coaches were sold.

Still, the third period of this year marked the fourth-consecutive quarter that coach sales in the United States and Canada posted a year-over-year gain. The fourth

quarter of last year marked the first upswing in new-coach sales after a five-year slump.

Sales to government units again bolstered deliveries for the most recent quarter. However, the impact appears to have been smaller than previous quarters. "If we excluded government agency sales we would still have a strong increase this quarter among private operators," said *National Bus Trader* Editor Larry Plachno, who compiles the magazine's sales report.

There were other nuances about



MCI's venerable D-model now comes in four versions, plus a commuter coach.

the most-recent sales figures.

While four coach models from three manufacturers again domi-

nated sales, there was some slip-page. The four models — the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ▶

Safety management seminar set by UMA for next month

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — A few seats are still available for the second-annual United Motorcoach Association Safety Management Seminar in mid-December.

The seminar is a reprise of the very successful inaugural program conducted last year.

This year's seminar will be Dec. 13 and 14, and is designed for managers and owners of motorcoach operations, as well as coach company safety and security directors and managers.

The seminar will again take place at the training facility of the National Transportation Safety Board in Ashburn, Va., which is near Dulles International Airport, off the Leesburg Pike west of

Arlington, Va.

The program builds on last year's agenda, meaning those who attended the "basic" track last year will be ready for the experienced or advanced program this year. A new basic program has been developed for this year.

"This seminar will present the kind of useful information that will help attendees better manage the safety aspects of their fleets and operations," said Victor Parra, president and CEO of UMA.

The program was developed by the Daecher Consulting Group under the guidance of Brian Scott of Escot Bus Lines in Largo, Fla., who is chairman of UMA's risk

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THE DOCKET

Trucking group gives support to electronic onboard recorders

BOSTON — The American Trucking Associations board of directors is conditionally supporting the use of electronic onboard recorders to assure hours-of-service compliance.

The controversial action was conditioned on the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration addressing a number of issues related to the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the recorders and launching a project to determine their effectiveness in promoting safety and compliance.

The FMCSA plans to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking on electronic recorders next year.

The motorcoach industry has long opposed onboard recorders, contending the industry's responsibility is to operate safely, not to pay for the enforcement tools of government.

There was speculation the ATA took the action because its membership is primarily composed of large operators and it was throwing the small, independent, owner-operator truckers to the government wolves.

ATA President Bill Graves said his association is "constantly seeking new solutions to improve highway safety for all Americans. As this issue is studied by FMCSA, we feel that the policy guidance offered by ATA represents a common-sense approach to a complicated issue."

The ATA has been actively studying and debating the issue for a year.

The ATA policy lists nine

issues that must be "satisfactorily addressed" for ATA to support a regulation requiring the use of electronic onboard recorders for hours-of-service compliance. The conditions include:

- There should be sound, consensus-based evidence that electronic onboard recorders use leads to enhanced fleet safety.

- Electronic onboard recorder systems should be based on the minimal, functional and performance specifications necessary to record and report hours-of-service compliance accurately and assure reliability and utility of operation.

- Statutory protections should be afforded to motor carriers pertaining to the control, ownership and admissibility/discoverability of data generated and derived from electronic onboard recorders, and to assure the privacy rights of drivers.

- Drivers shall be responsible for operating the electronic recorders in full compliance with all applicable regulations.

- Any electronic onboard recorder regulation must address the operational diversity of the trucking industry.

- Motor carriers using compliant electronic onboard recorders should be relieved of the burden of retaining supporting documents for hours-of-service compliance and enforcement purposes.

- Tax incentives should be pursued as a means to facilitate adoption of electronic onboard recorder systems.

FTA waiver for charters is worrisome

WASHINGTON — The Federal Transit Administration has told public transit agencies they can largely ignore federal charter service rules while providing hurricane evacuation-related services.

The blanket waiver, which has no geographic or time limitations, essentially allows any public transit system in the U.S. to sidestep federal charter prohibitions as long as the agency declares the service it is providing is "disaster relief."

Most waivers issued by other government agencies in response to the August and September rash of killer hurricanes were limited to certain states and had expiration dates.

Full details of the FTA waiver have not been widely released but bits and pieces of information about the waiver have turned up on government Web sites.

In one document, the FTA says that "although the charter rule (49 CFR 604.11) would normally apply," because of the emergency hurricane situation the FTA has waived "the requirement for public participation in the determination of whether there are willing and able private providers for this type of service."

However, the FTA also noted that transit agencies desiring to provide such services should make a "good-faith effort" to determine whether local private charter operators are able to provide the service.

"You should document these efforts," the FTA told the transit agencies it funds. "In addition, you should notify the American Bus Association and the United Motor Coach Association of your proposal to provide the service."

Like private operators providing service to evacuees, public agencies also may be eligible for reimbursement by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Motorcoach operators who believe their local transit may be abusing the waiver or stretching its intent, should notify the Government and Industry Relations Department at the United Motorcoach Association. Phone (800) 424-8262, or e-mail nlittler@uma.org.

2 crashes renew focus on brake maintenance, understanding 'slacks'

Two serious motorcoach crashes last month, including one that killed five people, have focused new attention on a long-running industry problem — out-of-adjustment brakes.

The National Transportation Safety Board has preliminarily reported that the brakes "were seriously out of adjustment" on a coach that crashed on Interstate 94 near Osseo, Wis., in mid-October.

The coach rammed into an overturned semi-trailer that had jackknifed. The NTSB has not made a determination whether the out-of-adjustment brakes played a critical role in the crash. However, survivors on the bus said the driver applied the brakes.

The NTSB said the brakes were so badly out of adjustment the bus should never have been on the road.

The coach was carrying members of a high school band and adults traveling with them. The band director, his wife, 11-year-old granddaughter, a student teacher and the driver all died in the crash.

In the other incident, nearly 50 passengers in a coach carrying high school and middle school students to a Christian youth camp plunged into a ravine in northern Georgia after its brakes failed. Some 27 passengers were treated for broken bones, bruises and head injuries. No one died.

Bus crashes involving out-of-adjustment brakes invariably refocus industry attention on automatic slack adjusters, the much-maligned component designed to automatically adjust the slack of drum brakes that occurs with normal wear.

Their functioning sounds simple and straight-forward, and it is. However, there is considerable anecdotal evidence that mechanics and technicians by the score, if not hundreds, still do not know:

- How to properly maintain automatic slack adjusters
- What it means when the brakes are out of adjustment on a bus equipped with automatic slack adjusters
- What the proper procedure is when the brakes are out of adjust-

ment on a bus equipped with automatic slack adjusters

- How to properly install or replace an automatic slack adjuster

Industry brake experts say there are far, far too many technicians who try to manually adjust automatic slack adjusters or the brakes themselves when they discover they are out of adjustment.

And, if those issues weren't serious enough, there appears to be a serious lack of proper brake inspections in the over-the-road bus industry. Misconceptions about how to properly and accurately check drum brakes are thought to be widespread in the industry, from fleet operators, to mechanics, to government inspectors.

A major challenge with the inspection of drum brakes, whether they have manual or automatic slack adjusters, is that a mechanic has to get underneath a coach to properly examine brake adjusters, and that's very difficult to do outside of a well-equipped garage. It's essential to have a pit or a lift. Then, to do an inspection right, it takes two people.

Brakes should be inspected as part of every preventive maintenance cycle, whether it's at 6,000-mile intervals, or when both the component and coach manufacturer recommend it.

Creating even more problems is the fact that many mechanics have their own ideas about what brake measurements work best on certain makes and models of coaches. Every mechanic seems to have a different theory or measurement in mind that they would like to see when someone steps on the brake to see what the throw is. If it does not meet their personal criteria then they say it is a bad brake, when, in fact, if they followed the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance criteria, it would not be a bad brake at all. (See Jan. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Additionally, mechanics often make the situation worse by installing automatic adjusters on one axle and leaving manually adjusted brakes on the other two axles.

And, many technicians think

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Transits seek charter operators

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 or to bid on contract opportunities.

UMA urges appropriate operators to take the time to respond to these notices:

Stillwater, Okla. Deadline:

Nov. 30, 2005. Write to: Hugh Kierig, Manager, OSU-Parking and Transit Services, 104 USDA Building, Stillwater, OK 74078. Phone: (405) 774-6525.

Monterey County, Calif. Deadline: Nov. 30, 2005. Write to: William Morris, Contract Transportation Manager, Monterey-Salinas Transit, One Ryan Ranch Road, Monterey, CA 93940. Phone: (831) 899-2558.

CBA loses bid to halt transit feeder service

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has signed into law a measure that will allow Monterey-Salinas Transit District to provide Amtrak Thruway bus services from Monterey to San Jose, Calif., which is more than 70 miles away.

The measure was opposed by the California Bus Association. (See Sept. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

CBA opposed the proposal on several grounds but primarily because of prohibitions against federally funded transit agencies operating outside of their jurisdictions. The CBA said the proposal will:

- Circumvent and change state

policy to subsidize commuter bus service.

- Violate state law that prohibits public transit districts from receiving Amtrak/Caltrans Thruway bus funds for service outside their jurisdictions.

- Violate federal law that prohibits public transit operators from receiving federal Amtrak funds to operate feeder bus service.

The staff of the Monterey Salinas Transit has admitted that additional Caltrans funding will not be enough to cover the cost of the proposed service. To make up the difference, the transit agency will have to seek additional money from Congress.

Iowa, Utah toughest on DWI-DUI

WASHINGTON — Iowa and Utah are the least likely states for people to die in alcohol-related traffic crashes, data compiled by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows.

Fewer than 30 percent of traffic accidents in both states involve alcohol.

Rhode Island, on the other hand, has the highest rate in the nation at 50 percent, the NHTSA said.

Iowa and Utah may be different in population, culture and landscape, but they share tough laws on drunken driving. It is estimated that Iowa's conviction rate in drunk-driving cases is 90 percent.

Watch program gets new protection

WASHINGTON — The \$30.8 billion in annual funding approved by Congress and President Bush for the U.S. Department of Homeland Security provides additional money for the American Trucking Associations' Highway Watch program and makes a significant change to the program.

The bill contains a "Good Samaritan" clause that provides protection for persons who have completed the Highway Watch awareness training, designed to train truck and bus drivers to watch for suspicious activities or poten-

tial terrorism on U.S. highways, or the Operation Secure Transport program sponsored jointly by the United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association.

When a participant reports a suspicious situation, activity or incident, that person "shall not be liable for damages in any action brought in a federal or state court which result from any act or omission unless the person is guilty of gross negligence or willful misconduct," the bill states.

ATA President Bill Graves said the new provision is vital because

Highway Watch members "deserve to be protected from those who would sue for malicious intent."

The provision was strongly supported by the United Motorcoach Association, which has been advocating the protection for the past three years.

Some in the motorcoach industry have used the threat of civil lawsuits as a reason for not participating in the security protection program.

The additional money for the Highway Watch program amounted to \$4.8 million.

FMCSA sets medical review board

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is establishing a medical review board that will provide scientific advice on a range of medical-related issues, including the physical qualification requirements for bus and truck drivers.

Establishment of the board was mandated by the six-year highway reauthorization and public transit funding bill passed by Congress and signed into law by President Bush in August.

The board will be composed of five physicians who will be appointed to two-year terms by the Secretary of Transportation. They're expected to be organized and working during the next 11 months.

The board, which officially will be known as the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Medical Review Board Advisory Committee, will not develop regulations or make decisions affecting programs. Instead, it will provide the FMCSA with scientific advice

on appropriate physical qualifications of commercial vehicle drivers; recommend medical standards and guidelines; come up with educational curriculum for training medical examiners who certify drivers, and develop tests for drivers with disabilities.

One of the first jobs for the new board will be to review current FMCSA medical standards.

For additional information, contact Dr. Mary D. Gunnels at FMCSA.



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Brakes

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automatic slack adjusters last forever. They don't. Nor are they maintenance free. They should be lubricated periodically, typically every 5,000 miles.

Graham Dunnege, superintendent of maintenance at Adirondack Transit Lines in Kingston, N.Y., is an expert on brake and slack adjuster maintenance, CVSA rules, and coach safety. Here are his thoughts on proper brake and slack adjuster maintenance:

"Any commercial motor vehicle manufactured after October 1994, which has air-assisted drum brakes, is equipped with automatic slack adjusters. As brake linings wear, and the brake push-rod travel increases, a ratchet mechanism inside the automatic slack adjuster automatically rotates the adjuster, keeping the pushrod stroke within the legal and, more importantly,

safe limit.

"Different slack adjuster manufacturers use somewhat different designs, but the principle is the same.

"There is one area that the manufacturers all agree on: Periodic adjustment of automatic slack adjusters is unnecessary *and* it can be damaging to the mechanism, possibly making it inoperative.

"Manufacturers specifically recommend not adjusting the automatic slack adjuster unless it is necessary during a maintenance procedure which requires disassembly of the brake system, such as replacing the lining, drum or S-cam.

"An automatic slack adjuster should never be adjusted unless the manufacturer's procedures are followed to the letter.

"The problem with trying to routinely adjust an automatic slack adjuster is that the component's adjusting mechanism is often damaged, and you have no idea of knowing how long the adjustment

is going to hold.

"Will it last for 100 applications? Ten? Two? You cannot afford to take a chance.

"Here is the crux of the issue: If, during routine inspection or investigation of a driver complaint, the automatic slack adjuster is found to be out of adjustment, even once, this is an indication that something is wrong, perhaps seriously wrong, and the problem needs to be rectified before the vehicle is returned to service.

"The problem could be a faulty automatic slack adjuster, but often the problem can be found elsewhere: The slack adjuster may have been installed improperly, or there are worn components such as S-cams, bushings or brake shoe rollers. All of those things should be investigated.

"Roughly half the states in the U.S. do not have a bus inspection program. One that does is New York and its program is specifically

designed to ferret out faulty brakes and bad automatic slack adjusters.

"During a New York Department of Transportation bus check, inspectors measure the brake throw at the beginning of the inspection. During the inspection process, up to 15 brake applications are made, and the brake throw is measured again. They routinely find automatic slack adjusters that do not hold adjustment for those 15 applications.

"When that happens, the bus is immediately put out of service, as it should be.

"Automatic slack adjusters are not only the law, they are a welcome addition to the industry and contribute greatly to highway safety.

"I strongly urge all operators to talk with the service representative from whichever automatic slack adjuster manufacturer you specify, and learn the proper inspection and maintenance procedures. Your company's safety record may depend on it."

Seminar

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

management committee.

Topics include establishing an effective driver training program, accident investigation, post-accident management, driver recruiting strategies, keeping your workforce healthy, workplace safety, reward/incentive programs, hiring, industry safety issues, and several aspects of risk management.

The seminar involves a day and

a half of classroom presentations. The first day begins at 1 p.m., and the second at 8:30 a.m. Each day concludes at roughly 4:30 p.m.

To register, call UMA at (800) 424-8262. The fee is \$195 for UMA members, slightly more for nonmembers.

A free UMA-ABA Security & Emergency Preparedness Workshop will precede the seminar on Dec. 12-13 at the same location. For information on the workshop, call (717) 975-9190.

Truck traffic: Two perspectives

BELLEVILLE, Ill. — A new study recommends diverting a substantial amount of over-the-road truck traffic to rail during the next 20 years to reduce road congestion.

The study by Demographia, a market research firm, recommends moving 25 percent of truck freight traffic off highways and onto intermodal freight trains by 2025.

Meanwhile, the trucking industry is pushing for larger trucks to

improve efficiency and traffic. In fact, trucking and logistics executives say the industry should launch a campaign to win governmental approval for increased truck weights and triple trailers nationwide.

Higher size and weight limits would result in the same number of vehicles being more productively and efficiently used, Doug Duncan, CEO of FedEx Freight, told a trucking convention.

Coach sales

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

J4500 and D4500 from MCI, the Van Hool 2045, and the Prevost H3-45 — accounted for 70 percent of all seated coach sales in this year's third quarter, which was down from 84 percent of total seated-coach sales in the second quarter.

Said Plachno: "As sales increase in number, it appears private operators are starting to purchase a wider range of models."

He noted, for example, that Motor Coach Industries now builds four different seated versions of its D-series model. The new MCI D4505 was the fifth best-selling coach in the third quarter, followed by the Setra S 417 at No. 6, and the Prevost LeMirage XL II at No. 7.

Slightly more 40- and 41-foot coaches were sold in the third quarter. A total of 25 of the shorter coaches were delivered, or 5.8 percent of the total, compared to 3 percent in the first quarter.

The percentage of new coaches bought by Canadians slipped in the third quarter of this year, with 7.5 percent of the total going to Canadian operators. That compares with 10.5 percent in the second quarter and 6.5 percent in the first quarter, and 11.1 percent during the third quarter of last year.

The percentage of new coaches headed to the conversion sector moved slightly higher in the third quarter. A total of 69 conversion shells were sold in the third quarter of this year, or 16.1 percent of the total. That compares with 79 units, or 14.8 percent, in the second quarter, and 83 units, or 17.9 percent, in the first quarter.

Allison B-500 transmissions were installed in more than 70 percent of the new coaches sold during the third quarter. That was up from the first and second quarters of the year.

The ZF-AS Tronic transmission was installed in 29.4 percent of all coaches delivered in the third quarter. That was down from 39.4 percent in the first quarter and 32.8 percent in the second quarter. The AS Tronic's market share in the overall motorcoach sector continues to be restricted because the ZF automatic stick-shift transmission is not being spec'd for conversion shells or those going to government agencies.

Questions about *National Bus Trader* quarterly and annual sales reports should be directed to Plachno at (815) 946-2341, or email lplachno@busmag.com.

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Early warning

A fascinating new study from the American Transportation Research Institute has taken a comprehensive look at "crash predictors."

The study evaluated and linked past driver traffic violations and convictions with their likelihood of being predictors of future crashes.

ATRI researchers analyzed data on 540,750 drivers gathered over three years to determine future crash predictability.

Working with the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, the researchers also were able to identify effective enforcement actions to counteract the driving behaviors predictive of future crashes. Plus, the types of education programs that best address potential or current driver behavior problems were identified.

For owners of commercial vehicles, the study provides significant safety-related insight on their drivers.

"Our research now gives us an early warning system, so to speak, where motor carriers can intervene when necessary within their driver force to improve and make a profound impact on safety behavior," said ATRI Chairman Jim Staley.

The study, titled "Predicting Truck Crash Involvement: Developing a Commercial Driver Behavior-Based Model and Recommended Countermeasures," identifies reckless driving and improper turn violations as the two violations associated with the highest increase in the likelihood of a future crash.

The four driving convictions with the highest likelihood of being a precursor of a future crash were: improper or erratic lane change; failure to yield right of way; improper turn, and failure to maintain a proper lane.

The ATRI, which has been conducting transportation studies for more than 50 years, is a nonprofit research arm of the American Trucking Associations and is headquartered in Alexandria, Va.

Can your company survive a severe crash?

By David Mitchell
Director, Risk Control
Aon Truck Group

For years, commercial vehicle safety professionals have paid close attention to "crash frequency" on the long-held belief that with frequency comes severity.

Even the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration uses the frequency-of-DOT-recordable crashes in its compliance reviews.

If your over-the-road fleet has less than 1.5 crashes per million miles you may be rated as satisfactory; if you have more crashes you cannot earn a satisfactory rating.

The flaw in this methodology is that the frequency calculation never examines the number of injuries, fatalities or total costs that result from a company's DOT-recordable crashes.

Crashing irony

Here are two examples: Say a fleet has 30 crashes that end up in the DOT database. Even if those crashes have few injuries, no fatalities and the total cost is \$1 million, the company would still receive an unsatisfactory rating for its accident factor.

That scenario would clearly be annoying, but at least it has the advantage of no one being killed or injured and the total cost was relatively modest.

On the other hand, take a fleet with the same annual mileage that has 20 DOT-recordable crashes, with 12 injuries, 3 fatalities, and a total cost of \$12 million. If this fleet had fewer than 1.5 crashes per million miles, it would receive a satisfactory rating for its accident factor.

This is not to say the second fleet would get off scot-free, of course.

Many attorneys specialize in commercial vehicle crashes and are able to obtain high jury verdicts or settlements. Hundreds of crashes are settled in the \$1 million to \$10 million range. I know a risk manager for a large fleet who now considers \$5 million as the "working claims layer" for any liability loss.

Survival 101

Severe crashes are frightfully expensive. Your business survival may depend on anticipating the high cost of a severe crash, plus arranging for appropriate insurance coverage and working to prevent crashes.

Reducing the total number of DOT-recordable crashes is an excellent and necessary thing. But when your business goal is to reduce total crash costs and guarantee business survival, you can't stop there.

You also must anticipate the likely and potential costs of a severe crash; arrange for appropriate insurance coverage, and develop a loss-prevention program for severe crashes.

Unfortunately, most information available concentrates on compliance or trying to prevent all DOT-recordable crashes, with no focus on specifically preventing those expensive severe crashes.

However, preventing severe crashes can be simplified by addressing three priorities: Know which crash descriptions are commonly tied to large liability losses; know the driver habits that often result in severe crashes and educate drivers about them, and cor-

rect driver habits and performance.

Costliest crashes

My firm studies losses from more than 100 motor carriers every year and can report that the greatest aggregate costs involve six crash descriptions: rear-end impact, lane change, rollover, intersection, U-turn and parking on the shoulder.

These crashes are not the most frequent, but they are the most severe. The losses greater than \$10 million I described earlier all resulted from rear-end and lane-change crashes.

As for driver habits, safety directors say there are 10 principal driving errors leading to serious crashes: following too closely, failure to reduce momentum, excessive lane changing, driving too fast for conditions, excessive speed on ramps or curves, failure to get off cruise control, inattention or fatigue, in-bus distractions, inappropriate U-turns, and stopping on the highway shoulder.

Natural opportunities for teaching and training drivers about severe crashes include orientation sessions, post-crash training, post-violation training and general safety education sessions. You can use driver trainers, individual counseling, safety videos, audiotapes, newsletters, satellite communication messages, group meetings, independent studies, driver recording systems, and computer training modules.

Even experienced drivers can develop bad habits and, if you neglect continuing education, they aren't likely to lose them. Drivers tend to do what management expects. If they are reminded not to make U-turns, they typically will

make fewer of them than drivers who didn't get the safety message.

The jury factor

Unsafe driver habits also may lead to larger settlements and jury awards. Jury verdicts may be based on a driver's previous performance and on fleet management's failure to counsel, retrain or discipline the offender.

Some fleets have tried to dismiss a driver's previous crashes by saying they were small or not preventable. This logic has not worked with juries, and the resulting high awards also point to jury anger at managers and owners for apparently ignoring bad driver behavior.

Many tools are available to monitor driver performance, including motor vehicle reports, engine electronic control module printouts, collision avoidance system exception reports, satellite communication system reports, road observations from motorists, driver-monitoring services, Drive Cam-type systems, and refresher commentary driving sessions.

By constantly monitoring driver performance, you will be able to take immediate action when a driver shows unsafe habits. Note, though, that monitoring driver performance but delaying or neglecting corrective action puts you in a dangerous position.

If you are adequately insured for the occasional severe crash and work to prevent it, it's likely your business will not only survive, but prosper.

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Texas tragedy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

investigation is moving along as planned, but he could not say when it might be finished. "While it may seem slow, we are moving along at breakneck speed," he asserted. "The investigation will be lengthy and detailed because we have a great need to know as much as we can about the driver, the operating company, the leasing company and the owner."

Preliminary reports have indicated that the bus, which was transporting 42 residents and employees of the Brighton Gardens nursing home in the Houston suburb of Bellaire to Dallas, may have caught fire at a rear wheel.

Robles, a Mexican national who was arrested on an immigration charge following the accident, reportedly pulled the bus to the side of the road and passengers were in the process of getting off when one of several oxygen tanks on board the bus exploded, engulfing the coach in flames and trapping the 23 victims inside. The driver and 18 of the passengers escaped.

The incident occurred on Interstate 45 in Wilmer, Texas, about 45 miles south of Dallas where the nursing home patients were being taken to escape the hurricane.

The Texas Department of Public Safety inspected the bus immediately after the fire and found two

violations — a defective brake caused by the loss of a wheel bearing and disc caliper, and improper brake maintenance that allowed a missing liner on the rear, outside brake pad, to go unnoticed. Additionally, it said Robles did not have a Texas commercial driver license.

Since then, a substantial amount of other information — much of it obtained by the news media — has surfaced that complicates the work of investigators and raises concerns about the ability of government regulators to flag problem bus companies and get them off the highway.

Among the most startling was information that when the FMCSA inspected the other coaches in the Global Limo fleet after the fire it found 168 alleged violations. "The violations covered everything from recordkeeping, to actual problems with equipment on the buses, to drug testing, to driver qualifications," spokesman Robert Johnson told *The Washington Post*.

It was those findings, which were described by the FMCSA as posing "an imminent hazard to the safety of the motoring public" and are "likely to result in serious injury or death," that led to the agency decision to close down the company.

The newspaper also reported that Global Limo's driver safety rating with the FMCSA at the time of the fire was 97 — with 100

being the worst — and that four of its drivers and three of its coaches had been ordered out of service over the past two years.

Still, the carrier had an overall federal safety rating of "satisfactory," which it received following a review in February 2004.

How it got that rating now is under review by the Office of Inspector General, the independent watchdog of the Department of Transportation, which oversees the FMCSA.

"We want to know answers to our tough questions," DOT spokesman Brian Turmail told *The Monitor*. "Are operators meeting their responsibility? Were the state officials meeting their responsibility? Were we meeting our responsibility? And are there things that we could do that are different? We feel the public has the right to expect that of us."

The review, according to the newspaper, also will include a look at Juan Jauregui, a former Texas state police inspector who found numerous violations during an April 2002 review and gave Global Limo a slap on the wrist by classifying the review as an "educational" stop. He later went to work for the FMCSA and then became a private safety consultant whose clients included Global Limo.

Bankruptcy filings also could play a role in the main investigation of the company, according to the

Dallas Morning News. It said owners James H. and Virginia K. Maples and investor, Johnny Ray Partain, filed for bankruptcy proceedings in the Southern District of Texas earlier this year. The Maples filing reportedly was aimed at blocking a takeover by another company over nonpayment of a debt.

In addition to Global Limo's history of troubles, Robles had problems, too. The Texas DPS said the bus driver had been stopped three times in the past seven months and cited for 11 traffic violations, including speeding. Also, he did not have a Texas CDL at the time of the fire, a requirement for someone driving a bus who has lived in Texas for more than 30 days.

Even the bus involved in the fire, a 1998 MCI, has investigators scrambling to sort out its history. Owned by a British Columbia company, it was registered in Oklahoma and leased to a company in Beltsville that then leased it to Global Limo. It also carried a Texas license plate that was registered to another bus in the carrier's fleet.

Meanwhile, the tragedy has spun developments that have shot off in several other directions beyond government regulations and criminal negligence. At least four civil law suits have been filed, the Mexican government has complained about the handling of

Robles, and a trade group is considering developing policies to help nursing homes when they charter motorcoaches.

Among the lawsuits filed is one that accuses Global Limo and Robles of negligence and asks for \$30 million in damages. Another was filed by an 84-year-old woman who escaped the fire, but witnessed people burning to death. Bus Bank, the company that recruited Global Limo for the evacuation service, also is named in at least one suit.

The Mexican Consulate in San Antonio took issue with statements made by sheriff's investigators who said they found no witnesses who saw Robles helping passengers from the bus before the explosion. Agustin Rodriguez, head of legal affairs at the consulate, told the *Morning News* the consulate knows of at least one witness who saw Robles rescuing passengers and that federal investigators know of others. He called the sheriff's investigation "sloppy."

And, according to the *Post*, the Assisted Living Federation of America, a Virginia-based trade organization, said it is looking into developing policies that would help nursing homes verify that a motorcoach carrier is operating legally. Sunrise Senior Living Inc., which owns Brighton Gardens, is a member of the association.

Super Bowl trip is contest prize

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Buoyed by the success of a summer promotional contest, Motor Coach Industries is sponsoring a new "Experiences Event," with the grand prize a trip for four to Super Bowl XL in Detroit.

The contest runs through the end of the year and no purchase is necessary to enter. However, for every \$1,000 a company spends with MCI — for coaches, parts and service, it earns more chances in the contest. Other rules and restrictions apply. A drawing for the trip will be conducted in early January.

The prize package includes a weekend in Detroit, Feb. 4-5, including airfare and hotel accommodations. Plus, the winner will have use of a personal driver for a new MCI LX series entertainer coach that will pick up the winning party at the airport, transport them to dinner and provide transportation all weekend.

Additional information, including rules and registration, is available at www.mcicoach.com.

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Jersey Rodeo popularity grows

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — A record number of drivers entered the 15th Annual Bus Rodeo sponsored by the South Jersey Transportation Authority but the result was the same — a Greyhound driver won again.

A total of 34 drivers and 8 mechanics entered this year's competition, which was conducted at the Atlantic City Transportation Center on Albany Avenue. At stake was the largest pool of prizes for motorcoach industry drivers and mechanics.

The top driver this year was Lloyd Newman of Greyhound Lines who won \$1,000 after scoring best on a written exam, driving an obstacle course and undergoing a personal interview.

Last year's top driver, Michael Barksdale, also of Greyhound, was second this year, winning \$750. Third place went to Karl Besancon of Martz Trailways. He left with a \$500 check.

A similar scenario played out among the mechanics. Last year's runner-up, Gregory Wilson of Greyhound, won the top prize this year and \$1,000. Finishing second among mechanics was Scott Wolf of Lion Trailways, who was the first-place mechanic a year ago. He took home \$750, while the third-place mechanic, Miguel Alba of Academy Bus Line, won \$500.

All 42 contestants were awarded thousands of dollars worth of packages of Atlantic City gifts, including overnight stays and meals at participating hotel-casinos and non-casino sponsors, helping make



Donald Harris of Peter Pan Bus Lines navigates the obstacle course at the bus rodeo.

the South Jersey Transportation Authority Bus Rodeo the most lucrative in the coach industry.

The rodeo is designed "to recognize the skills and professionalism of the men and women who bring millions of passengers to Atlantic City safely," said Wade Lawson, director of SJTA's Tourist Services Department. "Along with the bus industry, this is the authority's way to thank these professionals."

Texas offers 'thank you' for evacuation assistance

AUSTIN, Texas — A procurement official with the state of Texas has thanked the motorcoach industry for its assistance in evacuating people during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Ted R. Maddry, manager of purchasing operations and customer service for the Texas Building and Procurement Commission, offered the thanks in a communication to the United Motorcoach Association.

"On behalf of Texas, this agency and the persons who were affected by the impact of hurricanes Katrina and Rita, I greatly appreciate your organization's responsiveness and the participation of your membership in the relief effort," wrote Maddry.

Texas contracted directly for 307 evacuation buses and another 87 coaches were contracted by the Federal Emergency Management Administration in the Texas relief effort.

"Many of the buses were obtained as result of your communication to your membership and their timely response," said Maddry. "Consequently, you have our thanks for the professionalism displayed by the participants and for a job well done under stressful conditions."

"We will remember your organization and its capabilities should we need mass transport services in the future," Maddry added.

Calendar

NOVEMBER 2005

19-23 Canadian Urban Transit Association TransExpo, Vancouver, British Columbia. Info: (416) 365-9800 or go to www.cutaactu.on.ca.

20-22 Motor Coach Canada Connections West annual meeting, The Fairmont Waterfront, Vancouver, British Columbia. Info: (416) 229-9305 or go to www.motorcoachcanada.com.

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20 groups

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

IMG has offered the program to its 50 members since 1998 and now has two separate 20 Groups going.

The program that has helped produce dramatic results for IMG participants was developed by Spader Business Management Inc., a Sioux Falls, S.D., consulting company. It manages the 20 Groups for IMG, and now is partnering with UMA to bring the same program to its members.

Participants form what are called Spader Management Groups, which consist of up to 20 noncompeting coach companies that hold two- to three-day meetings up to four times a year. They review each other's financial reports, develop benchmarks for performances and discuss all aspects of their businesses — from challenges, to problems, to solutions. Most meetings are conducted near a member business so the group can visit the host member's facility.

"There is no doubt that our involvement in the 20 Group has helped us avoid a lot of mistakes," said Kurtz, whose family had no

experience in the motorcoach industry when his father, Paul, purchased the business in 1997.

He said the financial benchmarking and operational ideas he has taken home from the meetings has helped him hone his business skills and create new opportunities for the company to grow and expand its profitability. "I tell people that I got 30 years worth of bus experience in five years," he emphasized.

Story, an original member of his IMG 20 Group, said the practice of exchanging financial information not only allows participants to see how well they are doing in the mix, but it also leads to valuable discussions.

"While I have found the numbers to be very meaningful, I've also found that they prompt conversations about issues, problems, solutions and innovative thinking," he said. "They've become the tool to generate conversation for us."

He also credits the program for giving him the confidence after 9/11 to retain his employee base rather than layoff people or reduce their hours. Doing so meant the company was ready to go when

business rebounded.

"We were able to do this because we knew our numbers, we knew what our thresholds were and we felt comfortable going through the process," he said. "Our ability to get through the 9/11 period was, I think, directly related to our experiences in the 20 Group. When business returned, we were there, we were strong and we were able to make money."

Story's experience with the program has been so good that he now is trying to organize one for another part of his business — limousine service. "I'm trying to get a group involved in an existing 20 Group and if we can't shoehorn into that one, then we want to start our own," he said.

IMG President Steve Klika sees the 20 Group program as serving as a substitute board of directors, allowing operators to talk openly about their problems and share possible solutions. "Many of the operators don't have boards of directors, so the decisions they make on their own impact themselves, their employees and their customers," he added. "By having a network to work within, it almost creates a

kind of board of directors for each of them."

Crosswell suggests that the IMG 20 Groups have found great success partially because of the grouping of the participants, which fostered the openness and honesty required for the program to work. "The challenge is that you have to be grouped with people who have something to offer and are willing to expose themselves, and that can be a very difficult challenge," he said. "You have to be very open with one another."

He said IMA members had an advantage when they first became involved in the program because they all knew one another well and already were sharing various types of information about their business. "To be in IMG, you have to meet certain standards, including compatibility with the group and that in and of itself created a clean pool," he said. "It is about the quality of the people and we have a very high quality of people."

Klika also emphasized the importance of grouping members who do not share the same market. "Because they don't compete against each other, they are freer to



Steve Klika



John Crosswell

share numbers and internal information," he said.

Meanwhile, he believes that UMA's involvement in the 20 Group program will be good for the motorcoach industry.

"IMG wants as many coach companies that can better their situations, better their business practices because it is to the industry's advantage to have quality companies out there," Klika said. "We believe that the more quality companies we have, the better our industry will be to the general public."

Added Kurtz: "Anybody who has the opportunity would be crazy not to join."

UMA members interested in participating in a 20 Group should watch the association newsletter, *The Exchange*, for information, or call UMA at (800) 424-8262. For more information about the Spader company go to www.spader.com.

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Memorial honors Peter Picknelly

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — A permanent memorial has been erected to honor Peter L. Picknelly Sr., the long-time head of Peter Pan Bus Lines and a successful real estate developer and civic leader in Springfield, his hometown.

Mr. Picknelly died in October 2004, while vacationing in Portugal.

Mr. Picknelly headed Peter Pan Bus Lines for 40 years, building it into one of the industry's leading companies. The diversified operator has a fleet of 400 buses and employs more than 1,500.

A sharp, stainless-steel pyra-

mid mounted against a stone façade has been erected in front of the Springfield bus terminal on Main Street, which has been renamed the Peter L. Picknelly Transportation Center.

For more than a decade, Mr. Picknelly was president of Springfield Transit Management, which operated the public transit service in Springfield.

The memorial was unveiled at a ceremony attended by elected officials, business associates, bus industry executives, friends and family members.



OMCA recognizes achievements

TORONTO — The Ontario Motor Coach Association has honored a number of its members, plus two coach drivers who helped passengers who were on board the Air France plane that crash landed at the Toronto airport in August.

The drivers, Steve MacSween of Greyhound and Jose Mafra of Parkinson Coach, received Heroism Awards from OMCA for assisting passengers in the jet that overshoot a runway and burst into flames at Pearson International Airport.

OMCA honored the drivers and others at its annual marketplace and conference here late last month.

Two individuals were inducted into the OMCA Hall of Fame, Joe Palangio of Deluxe Coach and Wayne Asquith of New Dimensions in Travel. Palangio was chairman of OMCA, served on the OMCA board, and owned and operated Deluxe Coach/Northern Trails.

Asquith co-owned, until recently, New Dimensions in Travel/School Voyagers. He represented tour operators on the OMCA board, chaired the Tour Operator Council, is chairman of Motor Coach Canada and was instrumental in the

formation of Motor Coach Canada.

Reg DeNure was presented the Lifetime Achievement Award for his long-time commitment to the industry and OMCA. He was the owner of Chatham Coach (Cha Co Trails) until he sold it to Greyhound. He operated scheduled services, charter services, school buses and operated a transit service under contract — a contract that lasted for more than 50 years.

He has held every executive position at OMCA and oversaw the structural and administrative changes at the association that positioned it for its growth into one of the largest associations in Canada.

Mary Anne Evans of Car-ar Coach received the Employee Excellence Award.

Kelly Dean and Diane Houston of Ottawa Tourism received the Supplier Member of Distinction Award. The award recognizes an OMCA supplier member who has made an outstanding contribution and commitment to the organization and the motorcoach industry over an extended period of time. The OMCA Tour Operator Council nominated Dean and Houston.

ABC Cos. announces training programs

FARIBAULT, Minn. — ABC Companies has announced the scheduled for its 2006 training programs, which will include seminars on both Van Hool and ABC-branded M1000 motorcoaches.

These training seminars are offered at no charge and are available to seasoned technicians who know the general principles and operations of coach systems and components.

In addition to the multiple classes that will be offered at

ABC's facility in Winter Garden, Fla., there will be a Van Hool training session at the ABC location in Garden Grove, Calif.

The M1000 training will be at the Florida facility March 27-30. Vendor representatives from Freightliner, General Coach America, and Carrier will be at the seminar.

The Van Hool seminars at the Florida facility will be Jan. 30-Feb. 3, March 13-17, July 31-Aug. 4, and Nov. 6-10.

The single California session in Garden Grove will be Feb. 28-March 2.

The Van Hool seminars focus on identifying problems, troubleshooting and making repairs. Representatives from a variety of coach industry suppliers will also be on hand to provide training on their products.

Details are available at www.abc-companies.com, click on service, or call (800) 222-2871 Ext. 7230.

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Greyhound courts urban young

DALLAS — Greyhound Lines has launched a marketing campaign, called Greyhound Unleashed, targeting young urban customers.

The first activity is a contest, called the "Ride. Win. Party with Flex." Contest winners receive a night at the third-annual VIBE Awards in Los Angeles this month.

A key element of the contest is a ride to the awards show in a Greyhound coach that has been customized by Funkmaster Flex, a hip-hop, custom-car aficionado and TV personality known for cus-

tomizing celebrity vehicles on his ESPN 2 cable television program, *All Muscle with Funkmaster Flex*. Among other things, the "pimped out" Greyhound coach will have a renovated interior, dubbed the "Flexterior."

Flex and the customized bus will tour the U.S., making appearances at various events, said Toby Purdy, senior vice president of marketing at Greyhound. "Flex is a natural fit for Greyhound, given his connection to America's urban youth and his passion for customizing classic vehicles."

Bus crash

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"If that bus turns over, right out the window you go," said Gary Paris, 60, of West, the jury foreman. "You've got no protection at all."

The crash occurred as 34 people from Memorial Baptist Church

in Temple, Texas, were traveling in a chartered coach to Dallas, for a Christian music concert. The driver lost control in rainy conditions near Hewitt, Texas, crossed the median and crashed into a southbound Chevrolet Suburban.

Seven people were killed, including five on the bus and two

UMA award to honor industry best

TAMPA, Fla. — Each year, the United Motorcoach Association presents the UMA Vision Award to a company that exemplifies the best in the motorcoach industry.

Presented during the annual Vision Awards banquet at Motorcoach Expo, the award honors a company that best exemplifies industry integrity, innovation and leadership.

For the first time, the 2006 UMA Vision Award will recognize two companies — a large operator of 15 or more coaches, and a small operator, having fewer than 15 coaches.

Other than the size distinction, the criteria for both awards will be the same. UMA expects the new category will encourage more, smaller operators to compete for the award, and that both winning companies will embody the vision to lead the industry into the future.

UMA associate members — that is, industry suppliers — nominate operators for the Vision Award. Supplier companies, along with UMA, have the opportunity to recognize the best in the industry, who may also be their customers.

In recognition of nominating a

company, the associate members are recognized in *Bus and Motorcoach News*, at the Vision Awards Banquet, and in the awards banquet program, a brand new offering for Expo 2006.

Nominations are now being accepted for 2006 Vision Awards.

To nominate a motorcoach operator, UMA associate members can obtain a nomination form on the "exhibitor" page of www.motorcoachexpo.com, or by calling (800) 424-8262. Forms also were mailed late last month to all UMA associate members. The '06 Vision Award banquet will be Jan. 20.

in the Suburban,

Defense lawyers argued that the bus driver, whom they said was driving too fast for the rainy conditions, was the cause of the accident, deaths and injuries.

In interviews after the verdict, jurors indicated they adopted the plaintiffs' argument that a need for

seat belts in buses eclipsed the specifics of the crash or minimum federal standards.

"My personal view is everybody has waited for somebody else to do something and nobody has done nothing for public safety," said Paris. "You can meet minimum requirements but can they do more

to make it safer for the public?"

"I hope in five years when my grandson gets on a bus, if he's got to go on a school trip or whatever, I hope that there are seat belts on that bus so he can have the choice to use it or not," Paris said.

The trial lasted four weeks; it took the jury 15 hours of deliberation to reach a verdict. The jurors gave the plaintiffs everything they sought in their lawsuit.

"A person who sits on a bus ought to have the opportunity to be as safe as possible," said David Hinton of Temple, Texas, whose mother Dolores Hinton was killed in the crash. "To not have a seat belt on a bus, knowing what buses can do in an accident, is unacceptable. Clearly we had to have a trial in order to prove that point."

MCI spokeswoman Pat Plodzeen said the company would appeal the verdict.

"Passenger safety is the highest priority for (MCI), and we stand behind the design of our coaches," she said.

Plodzeen said MCI, like all other manufacturers who produce coaches for North American use, do not include seat belts because the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and other industry experts have found that installing seat belts would not "enhance overall occupant protection."

Nineteen passengers and their family members sued MCI for a range of damages, including medical bills, past and future lost wages, burial expenses and the mental anguish resulting from the death of a spouse or parent.

A second trial with a second set of plaintiffs from the same case has yet to be scheduled. The second trial involves plaintiffs who sued MCI after Texas tort reform laws took effect in 2003. The lawsuits completed with the \$17 million verdict involved plaintiffs who sued before tort reform took effect.

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Robert Jones, formerly the top new-coach sales executive at **Setra of North America**, has joined **Prevost Car** as manager of the VIP bus shell sales division.

In his new job, Jones will report to **Steve Zeigler**, national director of Prevost's bus shell sales division, and work closely with Prevost sales manager **Denis Lafleur** in the entertainer market.

"Robert is an important addition to the Prevost bus shell sales team," said Zeigler. "Our converters and customers will benefit greatly from his 15 years of experience in the bus industry."

Jones has held several executive positions in the coach industry and previously ran a small manufacturing company. He's expected to help Prevost-affiliated coach

converters expand their businesses and seek new markets for Prevost coach shells.

Motor Coach Industries has promoted **Mike Hemby** to general manager of the MCI service center in Orlando, Fla. Hemby was formerly director of MCI Fleet Support, eastern region, and also served as director of customer service and remanufacturing at MCI's service parts affiliate.

Hemby joined MCI six years ago after a career as superintendent of maintenance for a leading New Jersey-based coach operator. As general manager of MCI's Orlando service center, Hemby will be responsible for day-to-day operations, plus new and pre-owned coach deliveries to area operators.

MCI moved to an expanded

Orlando facility last year.

Tim Cruz has joined **Radio Engineering Industries** as advertising/graphic design manager, overseeing all aspects of REI's publication/print advertising and Web design. He previously was with a multimedia firm.

Bob Beard, who drove buses for **Trailways** and **Greyhound** for

30 years, has been elected to the board of the **Museum of Bus Transportation**. Beard, who has recounted his bus life and driving years in a book, *Square Wheels on the Interstate*, is chairman of the Trailways Retirees Association, a talented photographer, and curator of the museum at the Trailways headquarters in Fairfax, Va.



Robert Jones

Mike Hemby

Ruth Shuman, operator in South Carolina, dies

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. — Ruth Wimberly Shuman, an extraordinarily accomplished motorcoach operator and civic volunteer, died late last month after suffering a heart attack. She was 77.

Mrs. Shuman retired after 20 years as an accountant with **Burris Chemical** in Charleston before entering the coach industry.

For the past 27 years, she was president and CEO of **Great American Bus** of Charleston, a tour and charter operation.

She was a board member for three years and charter member of **Motor Coach Association of South Carolina**. Earlier this year, the association honored Mrs. Shuman with its *Operator of the Year* award.

She also was a member of the **Charleston Tourism Board**.

Her volunteer activities, professional associations and civic honors would take a page in this newspaper to list and wear you out reading it. They include a decade of work for the **American Association of Retired Persons**, including serving as state coordinator of eight AARP chapters.

She was a **Hanahan (S.C.) Senior Citizens** member for 27 years and was president for four years during construction of the **Senior Center of Hanahan**.

She was a member for 30 years and past president of the **Charleston Federation of Women's Clubs**. She was current vice president and 12-year member of the **Woman's**

Club of Charleston.

She was state president of the **South Carolina Business and Professional Women's Club** in the 1980s and was instrumental in raising thousands of dollars to fund scholarships given by the organization.

She was a charter member of the **Charleston/Palmetto Business and Professional Women**.

She was an active member for 38 years at **Highland Park Baptist Church**, serving on its finance committee, as a Sunday School teacher, singing in the choir and as a missionary to Romania.

She was a board member of **Trident Education Business Alliance**, **Elderlink of Trident** and the **South Carolina Silver Haired Legislative Inc.**

Her awards include **BPW District Woman of the Year**, and the **South Carolina Order of the Palmetto**.

She was a long-time square dance aficionado and former president, vice president and secretary of a square dancing group.

Mrs. Shuman was the widow of **Joseph William Shuman** and a son, **William**, preceded her in death.

Survivors include her daughters, **Lyn Ryan** and **Faye S. Turner**, both of Charleston; a brother, a sister, six grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

A memorial has been established in Mrs. Shuman's name with the **Highland Park Baptist Church Building Fund**, 621 Murray Dr., Hanahan, SC, 29406.

REI engineer, Jim McNabb, dies

OMAHA, Neb. — **Radio Engineering Industries** announced that long-time company engineer **Jim McNabb** died last month. He was 59.

Mr. McNabb had spent more than 35 years at REI and was a

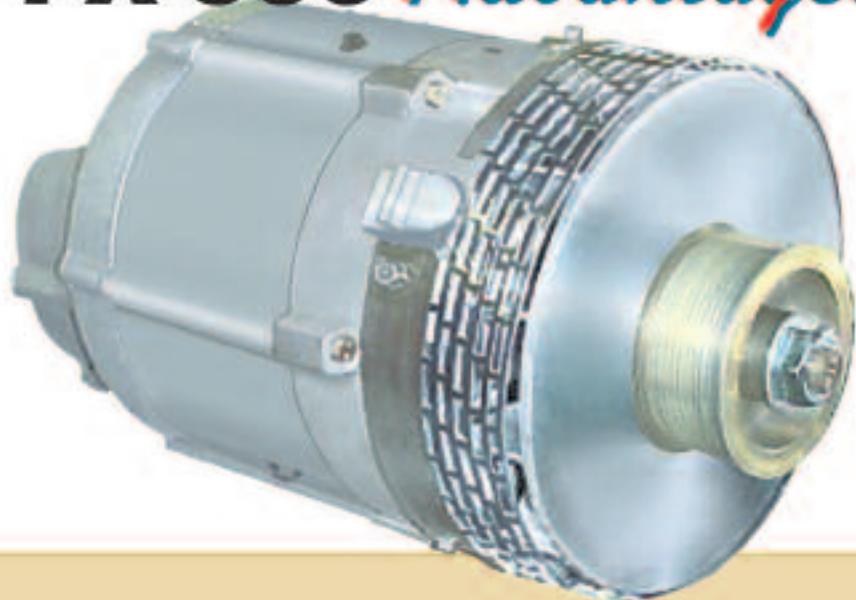
senior engineer. The company said he was integral to its success. Many REI customers had worked with Mr. McNabb over the years.

He is survived by his widow, seven children and 13 grandchildren.

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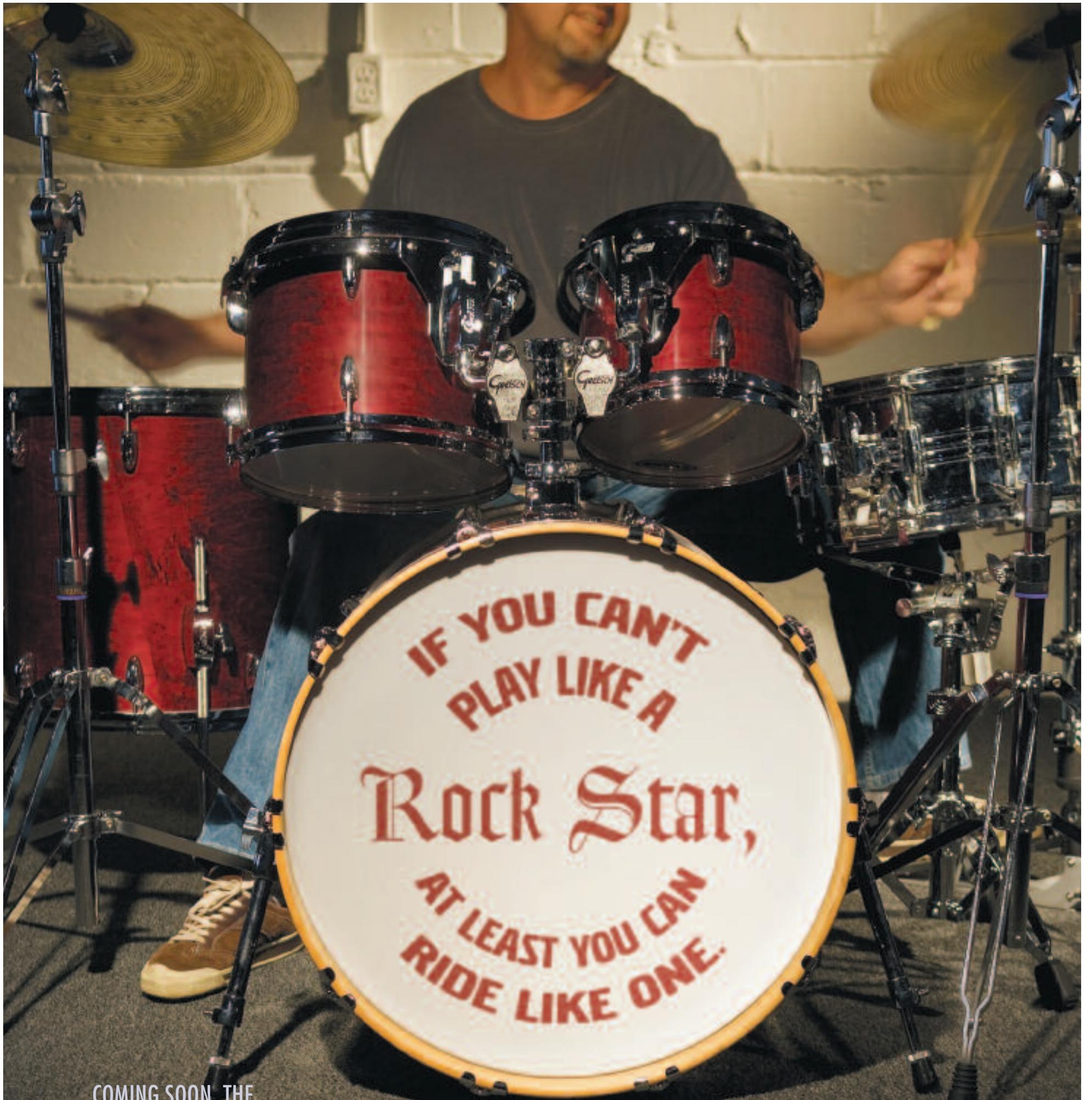
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