

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Coach operators and drivers mostly adapting to ELDs

The motorcoach industry was largely prepared by the April 1 deadline for enforcement of the federal electronic logging device mandate.

Many users continue to report glitches in software, but the devices generally are working well and even the least technically savvy drivers have accepted them.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration put the ELD mandate, which automates driver hours-of-service monitoring, into effect on December 18 but asked enforcement agencies to delay enforcement until April 1 to give operators more time to install the equipment and train drivers.

After April 1 a driver found out of ELD compliance can be ordered out of service.

"Most people in the motorcoach industry, from what I have heard, were proactive and got on top of it no later than August and September," said John Bailey, owner of Bailey Coach Trailways in York, Pa., and chairman of the Pennsylvania Bus Association.

"By December 18 they were in pretty good shape."

Some motorcoach carriers had not in-



Many motorcoach operators continue to report glitches in ELD software, but the devices generally are working well and even the least technically savvy drivers have accepted them.

stalled the devices when Motorcoach Expo 2018 was held in San Antonio two weeks after the rule took effect.

"Several of the vendors mentioned people that were still holding out," said David

Moody, general manager of Holiday Companies in Randleman, N.C., and chairman of the United Motorcoach Association's technology committee.

"When we were in San Antonio I talked

to a couple of operators who still had not put on ELD systems," said Henry Palmer, maintenance manager of Quick's Bus Company in Staunton, Va.

"I don't know their reasoning or if they hadn't run any trips at that time of year," Palmer said. "If they had been running trips they would not have been legal."

ELD compliance has reached 96 percent, according to new FMCSA Administrator Ray Martinez. Although out-of-service orders were not being issued before April 1, the agency had asked law enforcement officers across the country to report their findings.

The independent segment of the trucking industry continues to fight the ELD regulation with appeals to the U.S. Congress and state legislatures.

"I have talked to some smaller truckers, people who are friends of mine, and they thought the rule would be eliminated," Bailey said. "Well, it wasn't overturned. They didn't realize what was going on. From the Pennsylvania Bus Association perspective,

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Spring Fling, the annual event at the Museum of Bus Transportation in Hershey, Pa., will feature several vintage buses, such as this 1959 GM Suburban used in the 1994 movie "Forrest Gump." See story on Page 3.

AOBRDs allowed on new motorcoaches

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has once again modified the electronic logging device mandate, this time to allow the use of automatic onboard recording device (AOBRD) software on new vehicles for another 20 months.

AOBRDs are based on older technology than is used in ELDs, which are more precise in tracking driver hours of service.

When FMCSA approved the ELD mandate, effective December 18, 2017, it grandfathered in existing AOBRDs and said they could be transferred to replacement vehicles in a fleet. The mandate still required ELDs to be placed in any new vehicles that expanded the fleet size.

However, in a frequently asked question posting to its website last month, FMCSA said operators

could continue using AOBRD software on any vehicle in their fleets, including new ones that expand the size of their fleets, through December 16, 2019, the date that all AOBRDs must be replaced by ELDs.

However, they must still install ELD-capable devices on those vehicles that run the AOBRD software.

Brief response

FMCSA didn't offer any explanation, only the following question and brief response:

Question: "May a motor carrier that installed and required its drivers to use an AOBRD before December 18, 2017, install and use a new ELD-capable device that runs compliant AOBRD software after that date?"

Answer: "Yes, until December

16, 2019."

A few days later, during a webinar, Bill Mahorney, an FMCSA division chief, clarified that a fleet expansion must install ELDs, but that they can operate on the less-precise AOBRD software.

"That fleet may purchase and install ELDs that are running on AOBRD software until December 2019," he said.

"In other words, everything has to be ELD. It's just something that would require a software push."

Joseph DeLorenzo, director of FMCSA's Office of Compliance and Enforcement, said during a telephone news conference last month that the change would "allow them (operators) to make the transition quicker and keep their operations running smoother."

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Spring Fling at Museum of Bus Transportation is June 2

HERSHEY, Pa. — Spring has sprung, which means it is almost time for the Museum of Bus Transportation's 2018 Spring Fling.

The annual "Homecoming of the Bus Industry" will be held on Saturday, June 2, from 8 a.m. to 4

p.m. at the Hershey museum.

The museum's entire fleet of vintage buses will be on display for viewing and photos, both at the museum itself and at its private annex.

The day's activities will include multiple vendors selling var-

ious bus memorabilia. Food also will be available for purchase.

"This is a great day to spend with others who have an interest in the history of bus transportation," said Mark Szyperski, vice chairman of the museum's board of di-

rectors and chairman of its marketing committee.

"Our entire operation is run by volunteers who work all year in improving on this annual event."

Not only is the entire museum fleet on display this one special

day, but many visitors bring their own vintage buses. Last year there were an additional 50 buses on display from around the United States, including transit buses, motorcoaches, school buses and conversion coaches.

"One year, we had Model 5, Model 10 and Model 15 Eagles all on display" by private owners, Szyperski said, adding that the museum is never sure what buses will show up.

This year's theme centers on Trailways buses.

There will be four awards presented at this year's Spring Fling. One, the "People's Choice" award, is based on viewer votes. The "Long Distance Award" will be presented to the privately owned display bus that comes the farthest to the event. There will also be an award for the "Best in Show School Bus," as well as one for "Conversion Coach."

In addition, there will be a "Parade of Buses" around the museum property, allowing visitors some great video and photo opportunities of the historic buses.

For additional information and to sign up to bring a bus to display, go to the museum's website at www.BusMuseum.org.



The annual Spring Fling "Homecoming of the Bus Industry" will be held June 2 in Hershey, Pa., and will include, left to right, a 1952 GM PD 4103, 1956 GM PD 4104 and 1964 GM PD 4106. Several private owners bring their vintage vehicles.

Texas city replaces buses with ride sharing

ARLINGTON, Texas — This Texas city has ditched its bus service in favor of ride sharing.

Via, a startup with funding from Mercedes Benz, has an arrangement with Arlington to deploy 10 six-passenger Mercedes vans, primarily in the city's downtown area.

Residents will be able to hail the vans using a smartphone app, just like in any other city where Via operates. But the fares will be subsidized, keeping them \$3 per ride or \$10 for a weekly pass.

"We are at the beginning of an exciting transportation technology revolution," said Arlington Mayor

Jeff Williams, adding that it is an example of the city's "willingness to explore innovative transportation technology solutions for our residents, employees, students and visitors."

Williams said that subsidizing Via was much cheaper than other potential public-transit projects,

such as a light-rail line. Arlington is contributing \$322,500, or about one-third of the project cost. The rest will come from the Federal Transit Administration.

Via, which was founded in September 2013, has a one-year contract with Arlington, with four one-year renewal options.





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THE DOCKET

Legislation would endorse younger interstate drivers

WASHINGTON — Two Republican congressmen have introduced legislation that would allow people between the ages of 18 and 21 to drive commercial motor vehicles across state lines.

Current federal law does not permit 18- to 21-year-olds to drive commercial vehicles for interstate commerce. They can only drive within state borders.

Under the Developing Responsible Individuals for a Vibrant Econ-

omy, or DRIVE-Safe Act, young drivers would have to complete a two-step internship once they obtain a commercial driver's license.

The legislation, introduced by Rep. Duncan Hunter, R-Calif., and Rep. Trey Hollingsworth, R-Ind., would require these drivers to log 400 hours of on-duty time and 240 hours of driving time with an experienced driver after earning a CDL.

Once they completed the required hours, the young drivers

would be able to participate in interstate commerce.

While the proposed legislation is truck-focused and doesn't specifically mention passenger-carrying vehicles, it could end up being good for the bus and motorcoach industry, said Ken Presley, vice president of legislative and regulatory affairs and industry relations/COO for the United Motorcoach Association.

"By gaining three years of commercial driving experience,

there will be some 21 year olds who will want to cross over to driving a motorcoach, thereby increasing the pool of drivers," Presley said.

Supporters of allowing younger interstate drivers say the bill would help address the shortage of commercial motor vehicle drivers. And, because CDL holders tend to be older, recruiting younger drivers is crucial.

Supporters also point out that

under the current federal restrictions, a driver younger than 21 can't make a one-hour trip across a state line but can drive for several hours within a large state.

In the Washington, D.C., area, for example, such a driver is prohibited from making a quick trip between Arlington, Va., and Bethesda, Md., yet can legally drive a commercial vehicle from Arlington to Norfolk, Va., a more than six-hour round-trip drive.

USDOT awards \$500 million in infrastructure grants

WASHINGTON — The federal government has awarded about \$500 million in Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER, grants, which support infrastructure projects for state and local government agencies.

The grants, awarded by the

U.S. Department of Transportation, will fund 41 projects in 43 states and territories.

The projects range from \$10.8 million to help replace three structurally deficient bridges in Maine to \$25 million in improvements to the U.S.-Mexico border crossing in Nogales, Ariz.

Bridge repairs and replacement make up a large portion of the grants.

The American Road and Transportation Builders Association published an analysis earlier this year revealing that more than 54,000 of the nation's 612,000 bridges are structurally deficient.

Other states receiving funding for bridges include Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Oregon and Arkansas.

Since its inception nearly a decade ago, the TIGER program has awarded nearly \$6 billion for surface transportation projects.

But the future of TIGER grants

remains uncertain. President Donald Trump's budget proposal, released in February, included no funding request for the TIGER program.

The proposal also slashes USDOT's discretionary budget by 19 percent. The budget is preliminary and could change.

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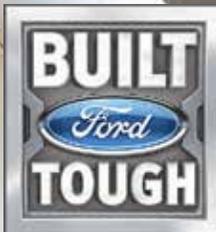
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2018 Roadcheck to focus on hours-of-service compliance

GREENBELT, Md. — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance has scheduled its 2018 International Roadcheck for June 5 to 7.

Over the 72-hour period, inspectors in jurisdictions throughout North America will conduct inspections of commercial motor vehicles and drivers, with a focus on hours-of-service compliance.

“The top reason drivers were placed out of service during 2017 International Roadcheck was for hours-of-service violations,” said CVSA President Capt. Christopher Turner of the Kansas Highway Patrol.

Turner said 32 percent of drivers who were placed out of service during last year’s Roadcheck were

cited for violations related to hours-of-service regulations.

“It’s definitely an area we need to call attention to this year,” he said. “Although the electronic logging device rule that went into effect on Dec. 18, 2017, does not change any of the underlying hours-of-service rules or exceptions, the ELD mandate placed a spotlight on hours-of-service compliance.

“We thought this year would be a perfect opportunity to focus on the importance of the hours-of-service regulations.”

During International Roadcheck, inspectors will primarily conduct the North American Standard Level I Inspection, a 37-step

procedure that includes an examination of both driver operating requirements and vehicle mechanical fitness.

The vehicle inspection includes checking brake systems, cargo securement, coupling devices, driveline/driveshaft components, exhaust systems, frames, fuel systems, lighting devices, steering mechanisms, suspensions, tires, van and open-top trailer bodies, wheels, rims and hubs, and windshield wipers.

Additional items for buses include seating, emergency exits and electrical cables and systems in the engine and battery compartments.

Drivers will be asked to provide their operating credentials

and hours-of-service documentation and will be checked for seat-belt usage. Inspectors also will be attentive to apparent alcohol and/or drug impairment.

If no critical inspection item violations are found during a Level I Inspection, a CVSA decal will be applied to the vehicle, indicating that it successfully passed a decal-eligible inspection conducted by a CVSA-certified inspector.

If an inspector does identify critical inspection item violations, he or she may render the driver or vehicle out of service if the condition meets the North American Out-of-Service Criteria. This means the driver cannot operate the vehicle until the vehicle and/or driver qual-

ification violation(s) are corrected.

International Roadcheck is the largest targeted enforcement program on commercial motor vehicles in the world, with around 17 trucks and buses inspected, on average, every minute in Canada, the United States and Mexico during a 72-hour period. Since the program’s inception in 1988, more than 1.5 million roadside inspections have been conducted.

International Roadcheck is a CVSA program with participation by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators, Transport Canada, and the Secretariat of Communications and Transportation in Mexico.

Alabama medical examiner indicted

WASHINGTON — A Certified Medical Examiner in Alabama has been indicted by a federal grand jury and charged with crimes related to conducting incomplete examinations of commercial motor vehicle drivers.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration said it intends to revoke 2,000 medical certificates issued to commercial motor vehicle operators within the

past two years by Dr. Kenneth G. Edwards, a Phenix City, Ala., chiropractor and a CME listed on the National Registry.

An investigation initiated by the U.S. Department of Transportation determined that Edwards conducted incomplete examinations, failed to perform required tests and falsified information on medical examination forms.

FMCSA, which removed Ed-

wards from the National Registry in December, said its offices nationwide are working with state driver’s licensing agencies to obtain the contact information for all affected drivers.

FMCSA is contacting the drivers and informing them that they have 30 days to obtain a Medical Examiner’s Certificate from an examiner with valid certification on the National Registry.

Bay Area shuttle company accused of ADA violations

SAN FRANCISCO — Monterey Airbus, Inc., has entered into a settlement agreement with the U.S. Attorney’s Office to resolve allegations that the company violated Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act by discriminating against customers with disabilities.

As part of the settlement, Mon-

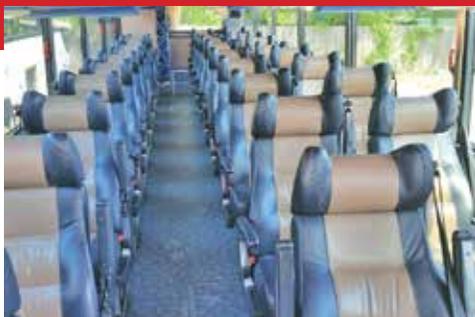
terey Airbus will take steps to ensure that it provides equivalent service to individuals with disabilities.

Monterey Airbus, a private transportation company with its principal place of business in Monterey, provides airport shuttle service between the Monterey Peninsula and the San Francisco and San Jose airports.

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One in eight U.S. motorists lack automobile insurance

MALVERN, Pa. — Bus drivers beware: Nearly one in eight U.S. motorists is driving around uninsured and putting you at greater risk in the event they cause an accident.

A study directed by the Insurance Research Council (IRC) and co-sponsored by The Hanover Insurance Group found that 13 percent of all U.S. motorists were uninsured in 2015, up from 12.3 percent in 2010, following a seven-year decline from a high of 14.9 percent in 2003.

When an uninsured driver is at fault in an accident, insured drivers or their insurance companies often are left to pay for the resulting physical damage and health costs. Similarly, an underinsured driver may not have high enough policy limits to cover all costs of damage.

“The results of the survey sound an alarm,” said Daniel Halsey, president, personal lines, at The Hanover. “Uninsured motorists represent a significant risk to insured drivers.”

Halsey said the average cost of an uninsured motorist claim is about \$20,000, excluding any physical damage to the vehicle.

Despite the fact that 49 states require car insurance, some drivers choose to drive without coverage. The number of uninsured motorists varies by state, ranging from a low of 4.5 percent of all drivers in Maine to a high of 26.7 percent in Florida, according to the IRC.

Mississippi, New Mexico, Michigan and Tennessee join Florida in the top five states based on rate of uninsured motorists, while North Carolina, Massachusetts, New York and Maine have the lowest rates.

Despite the recent increase in

the countrywide rate, several states experienced significant declines. Oklahoma’s uninsured motorist rate in 2015 was 10.5 percent — 15.4 percentage points lower than in 2012. New Mexico’s rate fell from 29.8 percent in 2006 to 20.8 percent in 2015.

However, twice as many states saw their rate increase as decrease from 2010 to 2015.

“While some states saw significant drops in their uninsured motorists rates, overall, the rate is increasing nationwide,” said Elizabeth A. Sprinkel, senior vice

president of the IRC. “This can mean added risk for all motorists.”

The IRC study, *Uninsured Motorists, 2017 Edition*, examined data collected from 14 insurers representing approximately 60 percent of the private passenger auto insurance market in 2015.

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Woody Story dies at age 94

HENRICO, Va. — Luther Woodrow “Woody” Story of James River Transportation died last month. He was 94.

Story sold cars before beginning his career at James River Bus Lines in Richmond in the mid-1950s. He purchased the company in the mid-70s and enjoyed his lifelong love of the transportation business.

He served in the U.S. Navy aboard the Destroyer Escort USS Levy.

His wife, Anne Webster Story; his brothers, E. Seldon Story, Leon O. Story, Willie T. Story and Norwood P. Story; and his sister, Beatrice Daniels, preceded Story in death.

Story is survived by his three children, Dr. L. Woodrow “Woody” Story Jr. (Gloria), Diane Story Hall (Gene) and Stephen W. Story (Rhonda); eight grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.



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Deadly fatigue can sneak up on coach drivers

By Pete Brenenstuhl

One day in 1967, as I rolled into the crowded Trailways bus terminal in Washington, D.C., at 10 a.m. after working the extra board around the clock for the previous five days, I thought I would finally have some time off to catch up on some sleep.

But the dispatcher had other ideas. "Take eight," he said.

There was no use in protesting. If you said that you were out of hours, dispatchers would audit your log for that past week and could find 15 to 30 minutes here and there, and tell you to redo your logs to reflect the found time.

That meant no time off, so now I had to drive the bus four miles to the garage, pick up my car and drive 45 minutes home. When I finally got home it was noon and I had used up two hours of my eight hours off-duty time.

Trailways rules permitted the dispatcher to call you one and a half hours before your eight hours were up to ensure you would be at the terminal just as your eight hours off duty expired and, sure enough, Teddy called at 3:30 p.m. and said, "Report at 5 p.m."

Of course, I had not had a full eight hours of sleep.

So, at 10 p.m., after being on "protection" for five hours, the dispatcher finally called over the P.A., "Operator Brenenstuhl, track 5."

I quickly finished my third cup of coffee at the snack bar and

pushed through the heavy crowd out to the loading tracks and picked up the dispatch phone on the pole next to the bus.

I heard the dispatcher say, "Schedule 1151, third section to Houston, loads Charlottesville, Lynchburg and Danville; cushion home from Danville; have a safe trip."

I took tickets and counted heads. I checked the overhead parcel rack to make sure carry-on luggage was secure, closed all baggage doors and did a quick pre-trip. Then I counted tickets, slipped them in the envelope, started my log and hit the horn. Beep beep.

With flashers on, I carefully backed out onto the street then went through the gears listening to the Eagle's deep-throated dual exhaust echo off the empty office buildings on I Street. I was feeling great and it was now 11 p.m.

After driving out of D.C. and through northern Virginia, it was about 12:30 a.m. as I piloted my Eagle crammed full of luggage, freight and sleeping passengers. I could hear their deep breathing and occasional snoring as we glided through the dark night down smooth Route 66.

About then I noticed I was getting very sleepy, so much so that I opened the little toll window and thrust my hand outside trying to direct cool air up to my face. I remember forcing my eyes wide open, shaking my head and slapping my face.



Pete Brenenstuhl, shown here in 1967 when he was a Trailways driver, fell asleep that year while driving a bus from Washington, D.C., through northern Virginia. He said deadly fatigue creeps up on drivers.

Then, suddenly, it felt like someone pulled a chain on a lamp and I was out! To this day I can recall the exact spot on Route 66 where it happened.

The next thing I knew I was miles past the end of four-lane Route 66 when I felt cold air across my face and awoke to find that I was stopped at the RT 29 Railroad crossing in Haymarket. My door was open and the flashers were on!

I was shocked and amazed. How did I get here? But now I was fully awake, so I continued on to Danville for the next three hours, stopping a couple of times "to check tires" and get some fresh, wake-up air.

I experienced a phenomenon called "Perception without awareness." My conscious mind went to sleep and my subconscious was driving the bus. This is a common, but dangerous, condition, reported by many overnight shift workers including truck drivers, cab drivers and even police officers.

In my case it was a "double whammy" — weeks of sleep-deprived fatigue and disruption of the natural circadian rhythm. Mystery miles (perception without awareness) were so common in the industry that we all joked about how many miles we slept behind the wheel.

So how did we get away with it for so long, especially when (before DOT hours-of-service changes) our extra board was filled with

part-time drivers (teachers, police officers, firemen, clerks, city bus drivers, etc.) on weekends and holidays that already worked full-time jobs during the week and reported Friday night after getting off work?

Perhaps it was because most of our runs were on two lane winding roads, coupled with the constant planning and calculation for braking and shifting of our non-automatic transmissions (stick shifts to us older guys).

We had no reportable sleep-related accidents ourselves, but I did lose eight of my colleagues in two years (six killed while deadheading on one bus, two on another) because of sleepy, semi-truck drivers crossing the centerline, one of whom had failed to take his eight hours of rest at the company hotel room and went out dancing instead.

So now that we have these glaring examples of deadly fatigue, let's take a look at how the problem is sneaking up on our drivers today.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported more than 37,000 traffic fatalities in 2016, 803 of them caused by "drowsy driving."

This occurs not only at night, but also mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

Some of those statistics occur later in the day because there is also a natural increase in our brains' drive to nap during the

Regional associations offer local benefits, peer network

By Cherie Hime

Belonging to a national association encompasses a vast wealth of expertise and knowledge as well as federal legislation support.

However, belonging to a regional or state association provides members with the ability to network with their local peers and build relationships that can be easily tapped into during times of roadside or driver assistance needs.

The Midwest Bus & Motorcoach Association (MBMCA) represents members in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and North and South Dakota.

Association services include legislative bill tracking for each state, assistance with local and state laws, an annual convention and trade show, a biennial Rodeo and, most importantly, the ability

to network with operators in the Midwestern states.

MBMCA lists helpful opportunities that member companies provide on its website. They include:

- Fueling
- Windshield, A/C and tire repair
- Coach cleaning
- Towing
- Emergency services
- Drivers and replacement coaches
- Lavatory dump
- General maintenance

If your company is not a member of MBMCA and is located in one of the states listed above, we encourage you to learn more about how you can join this great network of companies at www.mbmca.org.

Cherie Hime is executive director of the Midwest Bus & Motorcoach Association.

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Be careful making left turns; you might need an exorcism

By Dave Millhouser



Left turns make me nervous. You may think it's because I'm a fairly conservative guy, but the real reasons are far more rooted in physics.

My recent tome on right-hand turns failed to generate any personal threats, so it seemed safe to move on to the dreaded left turn.

Assuming you didn't memorize the right-turn article, it bears repeating that a number of sophisticated European cities severely limit, or outright ban, left turns. They apparently feel that they're either unsafe or disrupt traffic flow.

We red-blooded Americans can't be bothered with such things.

Negotiating a left turn safely requires some effort, but your insurer would tell you it is worth it.

First, make sure that the crossroad you're approaching allows them. There are intersections where they're not permitted, either for

traffic reasons or because a city wishes to appear more "European."

You'll want to look for signs and traffic signals that give you a hint. On occasion they are cleverly concealed and sometimes have designated time periods when turns are allowed. Who knew there'd be math?

Signs can hide in many places: behind trees, next to stoplights or my personal favorite, arrows painted on the street.

Once you've determined that you are going to "hang a left," you might want to peek through the windshield to see if anything is coming at you in the opposing lane. I'm kidding because you do that, but sometimes we wait long enough to lose track of oncoming traffic or someone pulls into the lane from a secret hiding place.

We've got a ton of new electronic safety thingys, but to the best of my knowledge none of them does diddly to prevent you from turning into the path of a stealth vehicle.

It is difficult to accurately judge the speed of oncoming traffic, particularly large trucks. They seem to

get to you faster than you'd expect. In sports, a tie is acceptable, but in traffic somehow it is accompanied by loud noises and the big guy always makes out best. When in doubt, wait him out.

This is true at rail crossings too, and it is a more serious situation because locomotives rarely swerve to avoid you.

Waiting for traffic to pass, it's easy to succumb to the temptation to begin turning the steering wheel to the left. Bad idea. If something nails you from behind, you may be nudged (or rammed) into the path of oncoming traffic.

Avoid a 'twofer'

Keep the wheel aimed straight and you only have one rear end accident. If you turned that sucker to the left, you may slide into a "twofer."

Another phenomenon associated with left-hand turns is the frequently fatal "second train syndrome." You may have seen it on reality videos of rail-crossing disasters, but anything trains can do, we can do better.

You're waiting at a traffic light

(wheels straight, because you studied the earlier paragraph) and what looks like the last oncoming truck thunders on by. You spin the wheel left, mash the throttle and get clobbered by a car in the far lane that was hiding behind the truck.

The bright side is that, if you're nailed by an oncoming car while in the middle of a left turn, it will hit the passenger side of the bus. You should be OK. If, on the other hand, you're hit by a truck, all bets are off. In practical terms, being struck by either might degrade your passengers' willingness to tip.

Right-hand turns offer opportunities to stalk pedestrians even while they are on the sidewalk. Due to a longer turning radius, hunting them is more difficult in the left-hand mode.

Jaywalkers are frequently difficult moving targets and are alert to their surroundings. Keep an eye out for strays with their faces buried in smartphones, or older folks who don't hear or see well. It can be entertaining watching them scramble to avoid being scrambled.

I once flew to Jamaica, a for-

mer British colony. When I got to the rental car, it appeared that someone had put the steering wheel on the wrong side. After ruminating briefly, it occurred to me that Jamaicans not only speak metric, they drive on the wrong side of the road (it seemed important to get "rumination" into an anecdote about Jamaica).

The first thing you encounter leaving the Montego Bay airport is a "roundabout" — the sophisticated British term for "left turn demolition derby."

Getting on was fairly easy, but I did more orbits than John Glenn before managing to exit. Apparently the British Empire hasn't entirely forgiven us for the Revolutionary War.

Driving on the left side never got completely comfortable, but one benefit was that it made me think about turns. When you do them correctly, your head swivels like Linda Blair's in "The Exorcist."

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him by email at Davemillhouser@gmail.com.

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Following up on quote requests is key to closing sales

By Christian Riddell
Motorcoach Marketing Council



The Marketing Council's mission is to help operators sell more charters, to more people, for more money.

Sure, it's catchy and rolls off the tongue, but even more than that? Those words are powerful — and true.

In order to ensure a healthy future for our industry, we need more charters to grow our businesses, more people to broaden our consumer base and, probably most of all, we need to increase our profit margins.

Simply put, the margins we currently garner aren't proportionate to the liability we are exposed to or the effort it takes to run a charter business.

Though we all employ advertising, sales and marketing strategies in our businesses, our ability to grow and progress can ultimately be boiled down to the most fundamental of all principles: supply and demand.

If the demand for our product

outpaces supply, our prices can be raised to a level commensurate with our effort and exposure. If supply outweighs demand, prices remain low and we continue to squeak by, unable to adequately address the elephants in the room (driver shortage, anyone?).

While there are myriad ways one could address supply and demand, there are a few generally accepted business practices at work in almost all other industries that we need to build into our operations. I am going to address something that we all probably "know" on some level, even though we're not likely doing it — at least not 100 percent of the time.

If you are a charter operation, you'll probably get a quote request today. This means that through your website, social platforms, busrates.com or another channel, someone will find you.

Responding to quotes

That request suggests that a potential customer has discovered that you exist and offer a service they are considering, or they know enough about our industry to consider using a piece of your equipment to move their group. In all

Marketing Minute GoMotorcoach It's the Smart Move

likelihood, you'll soon respond to that quote, sending them details about the move, along with a price.

You'll inevitably receive more quote requests during this same window of time, and once you hit send on your response to that initial quote request email, you'll likely move on to the next in line. By the end of the day (or week), the stack of quote requests you received will likely be close to the same size as the stack of quotes you responded to.

If you are like most operators, you will start and end each week working to keep on top of the flow of quotes. Your objective might be to respond to quotes more quickly, and you might even dream of a world where quotes are software-based (hello instantaneous!) so you can work on more pressing matters.

But we're missing a step here. In every sales training program,

you'll learn that one of the fundamental pieces of the puzzle is the close. Maybe this immediately makes you think about some sleazy used-car salesman ("you'll get a free undercarriage coating if you buy right now"), or perhaps you're thinking that you don't need to close. If they really want what you have, they will buy it.

When we send quotes in this industry, we make a couple of assumptions. First, we assume that because they contacted us, they know about us and we're going to be their only choice.

The reality? Most shoppers are just that: shoppers. They are looking around, trying to figure out what company they want to use. And second? We assume that they'll call us back if they want what we have.

Many more deals

Studies show that when salespeople follow up and ask for the sale, they close many more business deals than the times they choose not to follow up. That's right, many more deals. Studies also confirm that people are often willing to pay significantly more when they speak with someone

who cared enough to follow up.

I am often asked what one thing will help a company to grow the most quickly. Most people are looking for an answer like "post more frequently on Facebook" or "buy an ad in this magazine."

But honestly, the fastest way to meaningful growth is following up, via phone, with 100 percent of the quotes that you send, and within 24 hours of sending them.

(Sales and marketing are two different animals. Sales are about responding to existing demand for your product or service, while marketing focuses on increasing the demand. It is easy to look at following up as a strictly sales-related activity, but it actually has a marketing component as well.)

The next step to harvesting more business is to market to your customer base. This marketing is key to increasing demand. Once we've worked with a customer, we often assume they'll call us when they need transportation again.

This belief is simply NOT TRUE, and it's costing you real dollars every month. Sure, you have a base of loyal customers; they are usually people who book

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Marketing Minute

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

frequently or have booked over several years. These people have been with you through thick and thin, and they tell you when other companies call on them.

They are good customers, but they're the exception, not the rule. If a soccer parent books a team bus, or a company books a holiday shuttle this year, it's not a guarantee that they'll do the same thing next year. They'll shop around, just like they did this year, unless you give them a reason not to. Marketing is that reason.

So, this is how you do it: every time you quote a charter, add that information to a working database. Record who the potential customer was, what they wanted to book a charter for and whether that activity is something they do every year. Then, use the information.

Talk to these people on a regular basis and find out what they like. If they're interested in corporate transportation, for example, send them emails about that. You can also suggest other ways they can use a coach, and introduce them to your sales team.

You can teach them how to be a better consumer, how to know something is a good deal and how they can recognize when they're trading safety and reliability for dollars. Inform them, inspire them, educate them — and be consistent! Here's why: the next time that consumer needs a coach, they won't think about shopping; they'll think about you.

Better than nothing?

I know that implementing these changes is far easier said than done. Believe you me, I have been there. It's just easier to fall back on sending a bulk email to everyone with pictures of your new coaches. (Doing something is obviously better than nothing, right?)

But here's the thing: in all likelihood, getting that email out becomes a low priority when it snows, or it's spring break or when 1,000 other reasons come up. Bottom line? Pretty soon, six months have gone by and you're asking yourself this question: Is it even worth talking to them now after six months of zero communication?

Chances are good that your organization, right now, may not have anyone who has the capability, time, training or technical prowess to accomplish these follow-up tasks. You may not have a person whose job consists of creating those emails or making phone calls.

As an industry, we are so focused on quote delivery as the be-all and end-all of our sales tasks. Because of this, we staff to that

level by building organizational structures that allow us to keep our noses above water in the race between quote requests and responding to them.

This leaves little room for closing or prospecting. But if you have ever sat in, or listened to, a sales training by the likes of Tony Robbins or Zig Ziglar, you will recall the fact that a good sales or marketing person will not cost you money; they will make you money.

Initially, hiring a person for that particular job can be hard to stomach as you watch your payroll go up. Done consistently, however, these activities can't do anything but help you grow, and the key to doing them consistently is having someone whose sole job is to make that happen.

Gold mine

The last thing I want to touch on is anniversary based selling. Remember how I asked you to find out whether a customer anticipates doing a particular move on an annual basis when you're in the middle of the quote process? The answer to that question is a veritable gold mine.

If you're willing to accept that most customers won't be inherently loyal as a result of using your services once, and you know that they are going to be doing the same type of move on an annual basis, you can begin to harvest that business before it ever becomes available to a competitor.

This technique works like you can't imagine, and the reason it works is simple: people are willing to work with you to avoid the process of getting quotes. Calling to say "I see that you booked about this time last year with us, and I wanted to see if you were ready to book again," will lead to more business.

Alternately, when you don't call, some customers will go to other providers and some will forget to book again. In many cases, however, this step will get them to book directly, eliminating a lot of the price sensitivity that comes from the shopping experience.

The stuff we're talking about isn't simple, and I'd wager that, in most cases, you probably already know that these things would help you grow your business. I'd also wager that, in almost every operation in North America, all three of these things aren't happening all of the time.

Consistency is king in the sales and marketing world — and prince, and queen and every other royal title. It is the only thing that matters. I have seen people who took marketing in a tacky, weird, cliché direction, but because they did it routinely, consistently, even

religiously, they were wildly successful.

In contrast, I've seen others invest in beautiful, well-crafted marketing that was used inconsistently at best, and those efforts became little more than a reminder of what could have been when they actually decided to go belly up.

Supply and demand is what

drives our ability to increase prices. If you were sold out every day, you could raise your prices, replace low-profit business with high-profit work, pay drivers more and fill up your driver pool. With increased demand comes the control to hire the right people, pay the right people and keep the right people in your operation.

If we invest in people who can help us accomplish these three things, we'll grow, see measurable changes in our businesses and absolutely sell more charters, to more people, for more money.

For more information about the Motorcoach Marketing Council and its programs, go to www.motorcoachmarketing.org.

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ELD compliance

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

we did a lot of education to make sure people understood. We informed all of our members that this is reality.”

Carriers that have smoothly transitioned from paper logs to ELDs credit early starts on research, installation and training.

“We started piloting five or six of the systems on the market late in 2016,” Palmer said. “We had them all installed by the first of September. The systems seem to be working well. Occasionally, as with anything electronic, there are a few hiccups and glitches, but the supplier has responded well. Generally it just takes updates.”

Buddy Young, owner of Capitol Bus Lines in West Columbia, S.C., said the company installed automatic onboard recording devices (AOBRDs) in 2014 and they have worked well.

“We should convert to ELDs later this year,” Young said. “There appear to still be some issues with the technology, but our vendor has been responsive in addressing each issue.”

When FMCSA approved the ELD mandate, it grandfathered in existing AOBRDs and said they could be transferred to replacement vehicles in a fleet, but still required

ELDs to be placed in any new vehicles that expanded the fleet size.

The agency issued new regulatory guidance last month saying operators could continue using AOBRD software on any vehicle in their fleets, including new ones that expand the size of their fleets, through December 16, 2019. However, they must still install ELD-capable devices that run the AOBRD software.

“Our drivers have been paperless for nearly four years,” said Dennis Streif, a UMA technology committee member and vice president of Vandalia Bus Lines in Caseyville, Ill.

He said Vandalia changed its technology vendor last summer.

Not bullet-proof

“Neither one is bullet-proof. I would love to meet one that is,” Streif said. “All systems had and will have some minor issues. Our current provider is fairly responsive to problems.”

Tom Crouch, president of Young Transportation and Tours in Asheville, N.C., said the company switched from paper logs two years ago.

“We want to stay in front of all regulations and always look for more efficient operating tools,” Crouch said. “Anytime you change software or electronics there is a

learning curve.”

Dale McMichael, president of Executive Coach in Lancaster, Pa., said the company has used AOBRDs for three years so it was already comfortable with electronic logs when the mandate was implemented.

“We upgraded our hardware this winter and converted to ELDs two weeks ago,” McMichael said. “Everything has gone well for us.”

That’s not to say everything is problem free for ELD users. Technical glitches do occur.

“When I come in on Monday morning there are always one or two buses written up for ELDs that aren’t working,” said Jim Lienhart, president of Arrow Coach Lines in Little Rock, Ark.

“I have talked to some operators who are on their third vendor because they didn’t like the first two,” Lienhart said. “This is not as easy as I think the government thought it would be. It didn’t give us any help or tax breaks to help pay for it but told us it would save us money in the future. I haven’t seen any savings yet.”

Chris Sours, safety manager of Richards Bus Lines in Luray, Va., said he has experienced glitches both with the devices and with drivers learning to use them.

“The only major issue we’ve had was with power in some of our

Prevost coaches causing the ELD display to cut out,” Sours said. “Sometimes it would take only a couple of minutes to reload but other times it could take over 30 minutes. I am not sure why. We didn’t have this issue with our MCI coaches.”

“Per the advice of our vendor, our mechanic installed a 24-volt relay in place of the 12-volt relay and the issue has been fixed,” he said.

Palmer of Quick’s Bus said he knows one operator that had issues with the ELD in one of its new coaches.

“It caused a ‘check engine’ to come on and the coach to shut down,” he said. “They ended up leaving that (ELD) company.”

Other common issues are drops in service or slow loading times.

Slow updates

“We are still struggling with updates and satellite connections when we get into areas where there are a lot of tall buildings,” Lienhart says.

Brenda Tidwell, director of tours at Leisure Time Charters and Tours in Emerson, Ga., said there is a learning curve, but the biggest problem occurs when the Internet connection doesn’t work.

Some drivers have had to wait up to 45 minutes for their ELD to download their hours-of-service

history, said Alan Thrasher, president of Thrasher Brothers Trailways in Birmingham, Ala.

“We have had to issue logbooks so the drivers can leave to pick up customers somewhat on time,” Thrasher said. “Customers want to be picked up at the time they contracted for. An ELD problem is not their problem.”

He also has heard of problems with crude installations — sometimes on his motorcoaches.

“Some ELD suppliers are contracting local installers who may or may not be qualified,” Thrasher said. “Many installers never ask nor seem to care what wires they cut into.”

“There also has been an amusing variety of ways to cut up dashboards. I had to make the installer pay to have several dashboards repaired from the sloppy work left behind on new, expensive coaches.”

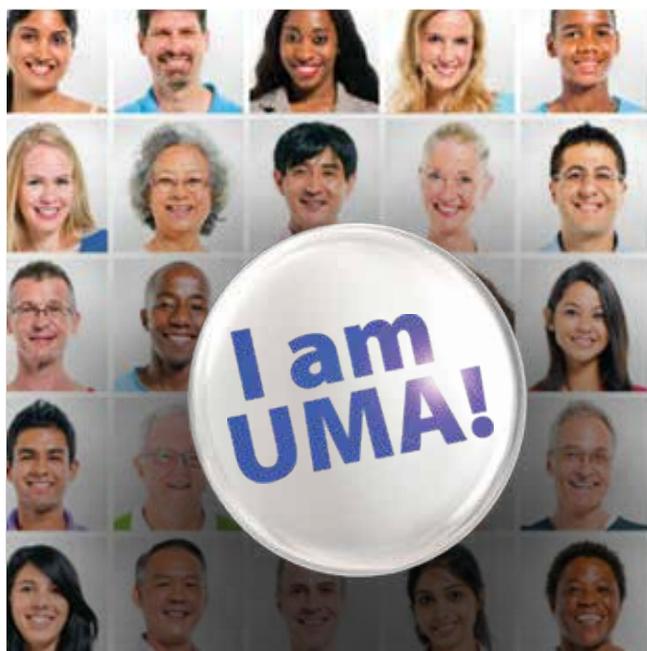
Some motorcoach drivers also have complained about ELD glitches, while the devices have pleasantly surprised others.

“I thought the ELD was going to be a royal pain,” said Tammie Moore, who has spent 19 of her 25 driving years at Bailey Coach. “Now that I am in and out of it, I really like it.”

While most ELD issues at Bailey Coach arise from technical

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ►

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UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

ELD compliance

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

issues, “Some drivers are having problems all the time, I think because they are older and can’t catch on to the technology,” Moore said.

The company’s most experienced driver has been driving a bus for 40 years,” Bailey said. “We got an iPhone and loaded the app for him. He has really been doing well with it.”

Arrow Coach lines started its preparations for ELDs more than a year ago because of the expected learning curve for drivers, Lien-

hart said.

“We wanted to get ahead of the curve. Like most companies, a good percentage of our drivers are elderly. Some of them struggled with it and some understood the process pretty quickly,” he said.

Initial fears

Ed Richards is a full-time teacher and part-time bus driver for Richards Bus Lines. He said he was afraid about the transition from paper logs but quickly caught on to his ELD.

“In my opinion, the start-up period was too long,” Richards

said. “I would like to have dumped my paper logbook long before we went live.”

A common error — for drivers young and old — is forgetting to change duty status when logging off at the end of a day.

“The biggest thing I have seen and heard about in the industry is forgetting to change status to ‘off duty’ when they log off the device,” Palmer said. “They leave themselves on duty, which causes an issue the next morning when they log back on and find they have no hours left.

“Our system has a portal, which

is mandated by law, where the driver can go to fix the mistake. I make them fix it themselves because I have a feeling if I fix it for them they are not going to care if they make the mistake or not,” he said.

Good news and bad news are predicted as a result of closer monitoring of driver hours of service.

ELDs “will be good for the entire industry,” Bailey said. “It is going to decrease accidents and fatalities, mainly from the trucking standpoint because they are the largest segment of the transportation industry that probably was not following all the rules.”

Electronic logging also will level the competition between compliant carriers and those that

cut corners in order to cut their bids, he said.

“From time to time we would notice other companies that had to be pushing the envelope to do the trip. Now they can’t push the envelope,” Bailey said. “Everybody will have to be more honest and, I think, raise their rates to compensate for that.”

And then there is bad news.

“What poses a large issue for the industry as I see it is problems such as traffic and weather delays that are outside the control of the operator and the company and the log violations that could be involved,” said J.P. Campbell, a driver for Richards Bus Lines in Luray, Va.

Independent truckers taking ELD fight to Congress, states

GRAIN VALLEY, Mo. — An organization of independent truckers continues to battle the federal electronic logging device mandate nearly four months after it became effective.

After failed efforts to defeat the rule in the federal regulatory agencies and courts, the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association has turned its focus to the U.S. Congress and state legislatures.

In a letter sent last month to the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, OOIDA asked for an oversight hearing into the “serious difficulties” their constituents are experiencing.

The association said the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has not sufficiently addressed the many technical issues that commercial motor carriers have experienced with ELD adoption.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao heard complaints from four congressmen during a recent appearance before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Rep. Brian Babin, R-Texas, told her the ELD mandate is counterproductive and harming the national economy.

Chao replied that she is sympathetic to the industry’s concerns but is “very much constrained by the law.”

Efforts to undercut the ELD regulation are underway in at least six states, according to the trade news site *FreightWaves.com*. Idaho and Alabama are seeking federal relaxation of the rule for agricultural and livestock shippers. South Dakota has passed a resolution asking Congress and the FMCSA “to overturn the rules.”

Legislation has been proposed

in Missouri and Wyoming to forbid state enforcement of the ELD regulation. A Tennessee bill would prohibit the use of state funding for ELD enforcement.

Industry experts don’t expect those efforts to make a difference.

“It is difficult to imagine any state pre-emption that would apply to interstate travel,” said Ken Presley, vice president of legislative and regulatory affairs and industry relations/COO for the United Motorcoach Association. “Keep in mind that you do not have to go out of state to be engaged in interstate commerce.”

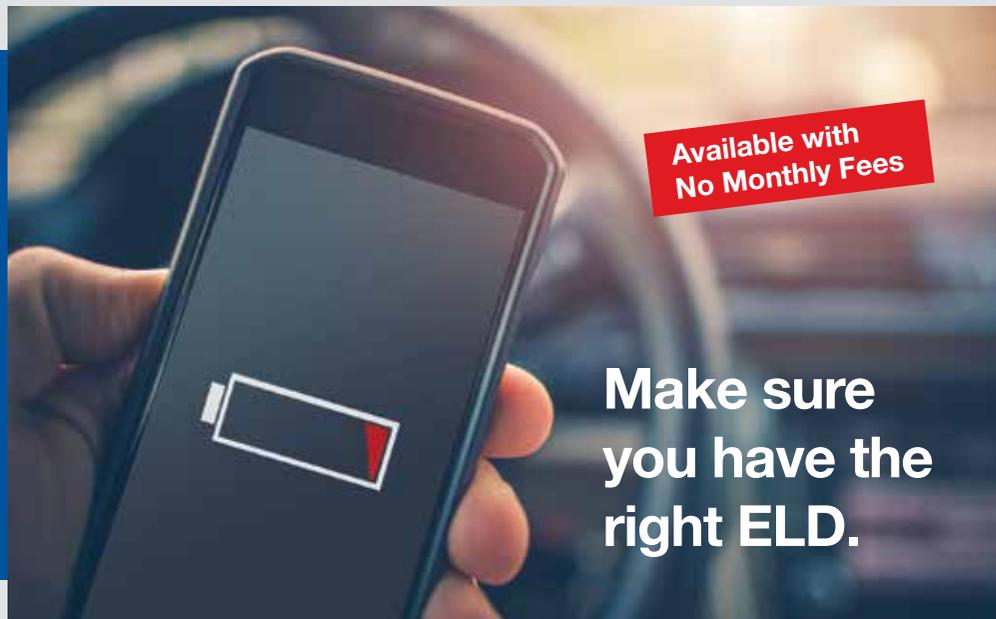
There could be repercussions for an official prohibition of state ELD enforcement, Presley said.

“It seems likely that any state attempt to pre-empt federal regulations would jeopardize federal Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) funds,” he said.

A section of the Code of Federal Regulations says, “No State shall have in effect or enforce any State law or regulation pertaining to commercial motor vehicle safety in interstate commerce which the Administrator finds to be incompatible with the provisions of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.”

According to FMCSA, “MCSAP is a Federal grant program that provides financial assistance to States to reduce...commercial motor vehicle-involved crashes, fatalities, and injuries through consistent, uniform, and effective CMV safety programs. MCSAP is FMCSA’s largest grant program that supports state and local law enforcement agencies to utilize over 12,000 enforcement officers to increase enforcement and safety activities nationwide.”

MCSAP funding for the 2018 federal fiscal year is \$298.9 million.



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OAK CREEK, Wis. — **GO Riteway Transportation Group** has announced the following promotions:

Joshua Smith was promoted to chief financial officer. He started with the company in 2011 as operations controller and most recently was vice president for finance.

Nate Hamilton was promoted to vice president for western region school bus operations. He joined the company in 2013 as an operations supervisor in Oak Creek, advanced to terminal manager there, and in 2016 was promoted to western regional operations manager.

Jason Ebert was promoted to vice president for fleet and facilities. He started at GO Riteway in 2010 as a fleet and facilities coordinator. In his new role he will continue to be responsible for acquiring and maintaining company vehicles and properties.

Jenny Stanley was promoted to corporate controller. She has served as assistant controller for the past three years, helping to create and drive efficiencies and process improvements throughout the accounting and finance functions.

ATLANTIC CITY — The **Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association** presented its 2018 Motorcoach Professional Awards in Atlantic City.

The annual awards honor employees who demonstrate excellence and professionalism in the industry. The Motorcoach Profes-



Anthony Tomasello



Jeff Goldwasser



John Busskohl



Radu Pop

sional Award is the association's way of giving member companies a platform to recognize their outstanding team members before industry leaders.

Recipients received a plaque, a watch, a two-night hotel stay and a \$100 food voucher from GNJMA's casino partners.

This year's winners are:

• *Fransioir Scott, Suburban Transit*

• *Santos Hunt, Community Coach*

• *Rosemarie Martorelli, DeCamp Bus Lines*

• *Michael McNeil, Greyhound Lines*

• *Alejandro Serna, Lakeland Bus Lines*

• *Arthur (Art) Johnson, Martz Group*

• *Margaret Marut, Panorama Tours*

• *Lois Marks, Peter Pan Bus Lines*

• *Emma Edwards, Safety Bus*

• *Gina Grellet, Sands Casino Bethlehem*

• *Melvin Williams, Sheppard Bus Service*

• *Walt Deminski, Starr Transit Co.*

• *Richard Borkowski, Stout's Transportation*

• *Lee Weissburg, Translite Enterprises*

• *Benjamin Rosado, Vanderhoof Transportation*

• *Willis Manning, Werner Bus Lines*

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — *Anthony Tomasello* has joined **American Seating** as regional sales manager for the Northeast marketplace.

Tomasello has more than 10 years of sales management experience, including five in the transportation industry.

Before joining American Seating, he held national sales manager and senior sales manager roles with such companies as **Chestnut Ridge Foam Inc.**, **Pitney Bowes**, **Multiscope Document Solutions** and **Duo North America**.

Tomasello is a competitive tournament bass fisherman and is a member, and has served as president, of the Mariner Bassmasters of Pennsylvania, a chapter of the Pennsylvania B.A.S.S. Federation.

CORNWALL, Ontario — *Jeff Goldwasser* has joined Canadian vinyl manufacturer **Morbern Inc.** and **Schoepf Fabrics** of Germany.

Goldwasser joins Morbern as a sales agent for the mass transit mar-

ket and will lead the company's dealings with transit authorities.

He also was named as North American sales manager for **Schoepf Fabrics** as the company enters the North American motorcoach, transit and rail markets.

Goldwasser, who grew up in his family's bus company in New York, is vice president of the **Bus Association of New York** and is a member of the **American Bus Association Foundation** board.

COSTA MESA, Calif. — *John Busskohl* has been named western region senior account manager for **ABC Companies**.

Busskohl is based in ABC's Costa Mesa facility and is responsible for coach sales in northern California, Oregon and Washington.

His extensive background in the motorcoach industry includes operations, sales and relationship management. He began his career with **Arrow Stage Lines**, one of the founding companies of **Coach USA**.

"Having been involved in bus operations along with purchasing many buses throughout my career gives me a customer's perspective," Busskohl said. "With this background, I can provide a more consultative sales approach to help customers understand and obtain what is important to them."

He reports to *Bryan O'Connell*, senior vice president of ABC's western region.

"We are excited to welcome John to our team," O'Connell said. "He is an industry veteran with superior product knowledge and is focused on building and maintaining client relationships. He will be

a definite asset to his client base and to our ABC Team."

Busskohl has served on the **Gray Line Worldwide** board of directors and in 2017 was a vice chairman of **Spader Group 708**. He is also an active member of several industry organizations including **CBA**, **UMA** and **ABA**.

STEVENSVILLE, Md. — *Radu Pop* has joined heavy-duty vehicle lift company **Stertil-Koni** as business development manager.

In his new position, Pop works closely with the company's regional sales managers and top leadership to further advance fleet sales — notably truck and bus fleets — and simultaneously support the efforts of Stertil-Koni's national accounts team.

"Radu has an extensive background in vehicle lift sales and facility operations," said Stertil-Koni President *Jean DellAmore*. "What's more, he has the drive, dedication and talent to further help boost Stertil-Koni sales and customer support."

Pop has a decade of industry experience and an extensive knowledge of maintenance facility operations, technician safety and recommended practices across a wide variety of fleet types — from trucking and public works to major transit enterprises.

He is a member of the Technology and Maintenance Council of the **American Trucking Associations**, participating in task force conferences and reviewing recommended practices implemented at fleet maintenance facilities across the United States.

Deadly fatigue

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

mid-afternoon hours.

In addition to that bit of information, there is another little-known but well-documented accident danger time during the mid-morning hours. Crashes during this time can be sleep related, but also have been attributed to a sudden drop in blood sugar due to a poor breakfast, such as coffee and doughnuts, or none at all.

Sadly, in spite of new DOT HOS regulations and an increased focus on driver fatigue, there continues to be too many instances of

motorcoach drivers involved in fatigue- or sleep-related accidents during overnight trips. What can be done to eliminate this problem?

The National Safety Council advises not to drive between midnight and 5 a.m., and some bus operators are doing exactly that.

John Kruger, vice president of operations for Onondaga Coach Tours, and John Coakey, vice president of operations for Klein Transportation, both discourage groups from doing overnight trips and educate customers to the dangers of doing so.

They both say that the most misunderstood and often over-

looked factor when assigning a driver to an overnight trip is his or her complicated circadian rhythm or biological clock, which regulates sleep-wake cycles and cannot be reset or adjusted just because a driver goes to bed late in the day.

So Kruger encourages groups to modify their departure times to minimize their exposure to the deadly midnight-to-5 a.m. danger zone.

Coakey does the same in addition to giving the driver a five-day notice to acclimate as much as possible. The safety director of another large operator who asked that his name not be used puts a second driver on overnight trips of 10 hours or less, splitting the driving time every two hours or so to give an extra margin of safety. That still allows the economy of no overnight stops for the group while adding just a few dollars to the cost of trip.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine reports that it is difficult to sleep during normal waking hours since the biological sleep cycle is set for much later

and the body doesn't start producing melatonin until about 9 p.m.

And how do you know that your driver really went to sleep and didn't spend time with the group, watch TV or use a smartphone? Unless, like the astronauts, the driver wears a GPS/telemetry blood-pressure and heart-rate monitor that can send you an alarm.

Other factors preventing drivers from getting quality sleep is light. Normal room light, sunlight or blue light from the computer, smartphones, TV or power chargers can stop the production of sleep-producing melatonin.

Then there's that pesky blinking alarm clock red light next to the bed, which I cover up. And while the room may be fully darkened, there are the noises that many commercial drivers and pilots complain about on layovers, such as doors slamming and people laughing and talking loudly in the halls.

So you may want to include this subject in your training program and set some rules for your

billeted drivers:

• Go to bed at an appointed time and do not mix with the group.

• Avoid big meals just before going to bed.

• Eliminate all light, especially the blue light from computers, smartphones and power chargers.

• Don't watch TV in bed, as that also is a source of blue light that inhibits sleep.

In the meantime, take a close look at your company's overnight trip booking policies and be proactive. Educate your customers on the dangers of overnight trips. Would they pay an extra few dollars for the trip to get a loved one's life back?

Don't accept that booking if you have any doubts. Adopt some of the policies that are working for many others in our motorcoach family.

And finally, let us know how you are dealing with overnight trips and driver fatigue.

Pete Brenenstuhl is CEO of **Prodrive Safety** (www.prodrive-safety.com). He can be reached at prodrivesafety@gmail.com.



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