**Rogue operators in California are target of one-strike law**

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — California has adopted the toughest charter bus regulatory legislation ever put into law in the United States.

Two bills passed by the California legislature and signed into law last month by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger adopt a “one-strike policy” for charter bus and taxicab operators that violate operating and driving regulations.

Passage of the bills was advocated and sponsored by the California Bus Association, which took a hard-line stand against rogue operators and pushed for the laws to help weed out scummy charter companies.

Here’s what the new laws, Assembly Bills 636 and 951, do:

- Permanently (as in forever) revoke the authority of a charter bus company to operate if it is found to be running without the required state Public Utilities Commission permit, or if it knowingly employs a driver who does not have the required CDL with proper endorsement and medical certificate.
- Permanently prohibit a person who drives for a charter bus company without the required CDL endorsement and medical certificate from driving a bus of any kind.
- Prohibit the state Public Utilities Commission from issuing a new permit or certificate to operate if an officer, director or owner of the charter bus company seeking the permit was an officer, director or owner of a company that had authority to operate permanently revoked.
- Require an officer of the California Highway Patrol to impound a bus upon inspection if the charter bus company or its driver are found to be operating without the required permit.

**Study: Detection, suppression are needed to reduce coach fires, better shop practices advocated**

WASHINGTON D.C. — Although fires in motorcoaches usually draw heavy media attention, very few of them result in injury or death to passengers, a new federal report has found.

The study also revealed that coaches receiving out-of-service orders during roadside inspections are almost twice as likely to be involved in a fire later than buses that pass inspections.

“The magnitude of probabilities may be small, but the odds ratio is substantial and appears to be growing, as the out-of-service rates of fire-involved motorcoaches diverge from those of the general motorcoach population,” the study warns.

Matthew Daecher, president of Daecher Consulting Group, called the out-of-service finding the most significant in the study.

“Though the sample is relatively small, this somewhat confirms that proper and thorough maintenance has a significant effect on preventing fires, regardless of the presence of warning or suppression systems,” said Daecher.

Still, the study suggests that the severity of bus fires could be reduced by almost three-quarters with the use of electronic devices to detect and suppress fires; expanded inspection programs; and improved pre-trip and post-trip checks by drivers.

Those and other findings and conclusions are included in the extensive study, titled Motorcoach Fire Safety Analysis, which was developed for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration by the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center.

Results of the study and its conclusions are included in the extensive study, titled Motorcoach Fire Safety Analysis, which was developed for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration by the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center.

Continued on page 14

**Operators to gain access to driver database for first time**

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration announced it is launching a Driver Pre-Employment Screening Program, allowing commercial motor carriers to electronically access driver inspection and crash records as a part of the hiring process.

The program is expected to begin in December and marks the first time motorcoach operators have been allowed such access.

“Safety is our No. 1 priority at the Department of Transportation. This new initiative will help companies ensure the safest drivers are behind the wheel of commercial trucks and buses,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “Making this information more transparent will make our roads and highways safer for everyone.”

The FMCSA says that by using driver safety information during pre-employment screening, motor carriers will be able to better assess potential safety risks of a prospective driver-employee, and drivers will have additional opportunities to verify the data in their driving history and correct any discrepancies.

Commercial driver safety records are currently available to law enforcement personnel, and accessible to drivers through the Freedom of Information Act.

The new pre-employment screening program will make driver safety records “readily available to motor carriers regardless of state or jurisdiction.”

In accordance with federal privacy laws, drivers must first give written consent for their records to be electronically accessed.
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- Cummins engine
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- 56 passenger
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DENVER — The two-month-old “Get Motorcoachified” campaign has launched a consumer website designed to not only build awareness of the advantages of motorcoach travel but lead potential customers to companies participating in the industry-wide promotional effort.

GetMotorcoachified.com is an integral aspect of the campaign because it provides a direct link between consumers who see coaches wrapped in GetMotorcoachified graphics and operators whose buses display the wraps.

The campaign and its website were developed by the nonprofit Motorcoach Council of North America, and got off the ground with the help of several volunteer motorcoach operators, manufacturers, suppliers, industry associations and others who support the campaign’s mission of building public awareness about the benefits of motorcoach travel.

Fabulous Coach Lines of Brandon, Fla., worked with the council’s public relations and marketing coordinator, Heather Horton, to complete the web content and site’s ‘virtual tour’ image map.

Green Room International Productions of Athens, Ga. (www.griproductions.com) donated web development, photography, design and video production services required to complete the website, along with the Flash animation and informational videos.

“The council will utilize these robust interactive tools to virally disseminate campaign information to the traveling public to educate them about the comfort, convenience, practicality, value and environmental benefits of luxury motorcoach transportation, using the internet, YouTube and other social media websites,” said Horton.

Initially, the primary thrust of the council is to convince as many operators as possible to wrap one or more of their coaches in GetMotorcoachified graphics that convey pro-motorcoach-travel messages in bold lettering. (See Aug. 1 and Oct. 1 Bus & Motorcoach News.)

Earlier this summer, Canadian founding partner, Turbo Images, collaborated with Zeto Creative to enhance the campaign’s bus wrap designs to work seamlessly on a variety of bus makes and models, to upgrade the aesthetics, and to facilitate installation of the vinyl graphics.

Motor Coach Industries co-sponsored a webinar last month that attracted more than 50 operators to create awareness about the campaign, and host an interactive session to respond to operator questions and feedback.

Motorcoach safety seminar will focus on critical issues

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The 2009 version of the popular United Motorcoach Association Safety Management Seminar, featuring topics ranging from retrofitting seatbelts to what to expect during a USDOT/DOD compliance audit, will be early next month in Ashburn, Va., outside of Washington, D.C.

Among the featured elements at this year’s seminar are briefings by top-level safety officials from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance.

There also will be a National Transportation Safety Board crash investigations report, as well as an update on the federal government’s program of crash testing motorcoaches.

The seminar will be Dec. 2 and 3, and is designed for those individuals who manage and direct bus safety and security operations, as well as motorcoach company owners and managers.

The seminar has two tracks, one for experienced safety and operations executives, and the other for those who would benefit from having information about setting up or improving a coach company safety and risk management program.

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

“This year’s program features principles and philosophies of risk management, how-to ideas on the application of risk management principles, and samples of model policies, procedures and guidelines,” said Matt Daecher of Daecher Consulting Group, which partners with UMA to present the seminar.

“The seminar will present useful information for both new operators and safety professionals, as well as those who have been in business for years,” added Victor Parra, president and CEO of UMA.

Other highlights of this year’s program include:

• Driver highway and management: who’s high risk?
• Retrofitting seatbelts – risks, rewards and answers
• Auditing your training programs — common mistakes
• Contingency plan development for charters
• Physical and mental ability testing — essential job functions
• Facility safety for transportation operations
• Elements of risk and development of a program

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12
UMA joins chorus protesting big registration fee hike

WASHINGTON — Count the United Motorcoach Association among those groups who say that doubling Unified Carrier Registration Agreement fees is a rotten idea.

UMA has filed a statement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, protesting the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration plan to increase the fees by 122 percent next year.

“UMA respectfully suggests that the margins of the proposed increase far exceed what our members consider ‘reasonable,’” the association said in its filing.

Under the rules governing the Unified Carrier Registration Agreement, the system’s annual fees may be adjusted within a “reasonable” range if the revenue derived from the fees are either insufficient to provide the participating states with the revenues they are entitled to or exceed those revenues.

UMA contends an 122 percent increase in one year, especially a year when the economy and busineses are suffering, is not at all reasonable.

The motorcoach association also asserts that neither the FMCSA nor individual states are doing enough to expand collections under the UCRA or to find scofflaws that are not paying.

“A plan to increase compliance seems to escape participating states and (the) FMCSA only suggest that increased compliance might merit the need for such a tremendous increase in fees,” wrote UMA.

“Meanwhile, UMA can only conclude that FMCSA is rewarding states for poor performance, punishing compliant carriers and encouraging noncompliant carriers to remain so.”

UMA concludes that now is the time to develop “a more fair and effective method” to supplement states to carry out their safety enforcement efforts.

“UMA respectfully recommends the following:

1. Abandon any plans to increase UCRA fees in 2010.
2. Require states to increase collection enforcement and submit plans demonstrating increased enforcement.
3. Immediately solicit alternative proposals for methods that may prove more effective in supplementing states and replace Uniform Carrier Registration Agreement.
4. Based on increased compliance and public proposals, more ‘reasonable’ fees should be established for Jan. 1, 2011, implementation and published no later than July 1, 2010 should UCRA prove viable.”

REAL ID deadline is extended

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security has given states an additional six weeks to request an extension to implement toughened drivers’ licenses and identification card security standards mandated by the REAL ID Act of 2005.

Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano extended the deadline to give Congress time to consider alternative legislation, known as PASS ID, that would be less costly, burdensome and controversial to implement.

Fleets escape ‘greenhouse’ rule

WASHINGTON — The new federal rule covering greenhouse gas emissions reporting will not require commercial vehicle fleets to record and report carbon emissions data.

Under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency rule that goes into effect in January, an estimated 10,000 large emitters of greenhouse gases — primarily stationary sources — will be required to collect greenhouse gas data. (See Oct. 15 Bus & Motorcoach News.)

But bus and truck fleets are not included in the facilities covered by the rule.

The rule puts to rest, for the time being, concerns that commercial vehicle fleets would have to begin reporting greenhouse gas emissions. However, the climate change legislation being developed by Democrats in the Senate could change the rules. There are predictions that so-called mobile sources could be included in the climate change bill.

British bus operators propose plan, policies to cut emissions

LONDON — The United Kingdom’s largest bus and coach operators have warned the British government that it risks missing key carbon reduction targets by failing to maximize the potential of buses and coaches to help tackle climate change.

England’s largest ground passenger transportation companies united forces to unveil a plan for eliminating one billion car journeys during the next three years.

A poll published to coincide with the launch of the bus companies’ Greener Journeys campaign found that using public transport more often is seen by consumers as second only to recycling as the most realistic measure to help the environment.

The bus operators’ Greener Journeys campaign recommended a busload of policy initiatives designed to encourage modal shifting that would deliver 50 percent more savings in transport CO2 emissions than currently planned under existing government policies.

In their joint call for action, the bus and coach operators stressed that technological advances alone are not enough to achieve the carbon reductions required to tackle climate change, and modal shifting must be a key priority.

The One Billion Challenge was launched by senior bus and rail industry executives, including Sir Moir Lockhead, CEO of FirstGroup; Brian Souter, CEO of Stagecoach Group, and David Begg, the principal of Imperial College Business School and professor of economics.

The challenge issued by the executives says that if people switch from car to bus or coach for just one journey in 25 it would mean one billion fewer car trips on UK roads over the next three years.

The Greener Journeys campaign is calling for the government to:

• Set targets for local authorities to encourage modal shift
• Introduce a fairer tax regime for bus and coach passengers
• Adopt a bus scrappage scheme to drive investment in low-carbon buses
• Promote bus priority, park and ride and other measures to cut car commuting
• Encourage bus travel to reduce “school run” traffic

Supporters of Greener Journeys plan to lobby government and other stakeholders to support the plan.
Drivers’ appearance: Important to your, their future

By Dave Millhouser

Our boss was at his wit’s end. He’d accumulated a fine group of drivers for the summer season but we just didn’t LOOK the part.

No amount of driving skill could overcome the perception created by ratty blue jeans and T-shirts.

So, Joe mandated we all wear blue shirts, clip-on ties and name tags. Folks, this was the 1970s and blind obedience was not in the cards.

One rascal discovered you could get a discount on name tags — if they were all the same. The next time we were together, we sported ties clipped to our back pockets and all of us wore name tags emblazoned “ETHEL.”

Times have changed but one thing has remained constant: Drivers are the face of your company. Their appearance and demeanor may be the only thing your customers remember about a trip.

When life gives you lemons, make lemonade. Hard times have ended the driver shortage and created by ratty blue jeans and T-shirts.

Would you be happy flying in a 747 whose pilot was wearing cut-offs and flip flops? We’re not THAT different, lives and sophisticated equipment are at stake.

Part of the deal is personal grooming. Haircuts, bathing, shaving, jewelry and the like all have to be within boundaries that have been set — and understood.

By the way, that roaring in your ears isn’t tinnitus, that’s the laughter of people who know me. What the last few paragraphs prove is that, in real life, I’m still able to serve as a bad example.

It’s important that professional appearance be an accurate reflection of behavior. The trigger for this column was a Washington Post article about a Washington, D.C.-to-New York City bus trip. It was a horror story involving, but not limited to, a driver engaged in cell phone chatter, car nudging, tailgating, obscene gestures, littering and driving under the influence of a hamburger in his lap.

In my misspent youth I did many of those things, but not all at once, and NOT at the wheel of a loaded coach.

The Post article named the operator, and heads have rolled, but real damage was done to both the bus company and our industry.

Airlines correctly make the distinction between skills and demeanor. When pilots have accumulated enough seniority to become captain, they’re sent to the airline version of “finishing school,” where they learn how to look and act the role of Airline Captain.

Good coach drivers take pride in their driving, navigational and mechanical skills. The best know how to convey that pride to their passengers.

When you plan drivers’ meetings, consider having a component similar to the “Captains School” where you set guidelines, and discuss the appearance, behavior and demeanor that will best serve your company and customers. Role playing can useful (and fun).

Drivers will enjoy telling war stories, and learn from each other.

Read, then post, comments from customers. Tips (in the form of crisp greenbacks) are a powerful incentive for charter drivers to get this aspect right. Good line drivers take justifiable pride in their work, for the ones who don’t, refer back to paragraph seven.

Stress how important appearances are to your business, and their future. For a motorcoach driver, people skills are nearly as important to driving well.

In ye olden days we had a driver we called the Granola Kid. At mealtime he’d drop his passengers off at the restaurant entrance. Once they were inside, he set up his little Bunsen Burner and pot in the parking lot, then cooked some concoctions of nuts and twigs. He wasn’t so much a vegetarian as a nut case.

Before we got to point out to him that his behavior made his passengers squirrely (pun intended), he parked his bus near a forest, and disappeared. Hope he’s not working for you.

Dave Millhouser is a bus industry marketing consultant and freelance writer. Contact him at: dave_millhouser@hotmail.com.
Aging workforce = higher workers’ compensation costs

By Julie A. Croushore

The growing concern over a slow economic recovery is causing many older Americans to either delay retirement or return to the workforce after they retire to supplement their income.

Interestingly, AARP (formerly the American Association of Retired Persons) reports that passenger transportation is one of the leading industries employing these older workers. At the same time, the National Research Council points out that 54 percent of all U.S. bus drivers are aged 45 or older.

This trend creates both benefits and challenges for employers, with one of the challenges being the impact older employees can have on an operator’s workers’ compensation costs.

Senior employees are one of the transportation industry’s greatest assets. They bring vast experience and knowledge to the workforce, as well as maturity and professionalism needed in an industry revolving around customer service.

At the same time, older employees also present an added risk of injury as many older Americans suffer from obesity, arthritis and other chronic pre-existing medical conditions. At a recent conference of the National Council on Compensation Insurance it was revealed that the fatality rate among injured workers aged 65 or older is triple that of workers ages 35-44, and there is a 50 percent increase in days missed from work by those injured workers.

Employers cannot ignore these alarming statistics or the fact these risk factors can lead to increased workers’ compensation costs, and ultimately higher insurance premiums. Our aging workforce demands we take a pro-active approach to risk management.

A typical claim

As a workers’ compensation claims management professional, I’m frequently asked by employers: “Why do I have to pay for this?”

Take this typical claims scenario: John Smith, a 65-year-old veteran and retired heavy labor truck mechanic, re-enters the workforce as a part-time motorcoach driver. John has always loved to drive and sees this as a great opportunity to supplement his Social Security income.

He readily admits he has a bad back from an old military injury that has progressed as he has aged, but he’s a safe driver willing to take any available run.

Then, one day, he’s assisting a passenger with luggage when he faces back fusion surgery which will keep him off his feet for more than three months. He files a workers’ compensation claim with his employer.

Of course, the employer wants to know why he is responsible for the workers’ compensation claim.

WASHINGTON — A growing number of political observers say prospects for major action this year on the highway and transportation authorization bill and climate change legislation is dimming because Congress and the Obama administration are focused elsewhere.

There appears to be a growing consensus that it’s better to do one thing this year than to try to do more, as opposed to trying to do 10 issues and not get any of them right, say the political analysts.

Currently, of course, the focus is on health care all of the time, and then Congress must tackle the funding of the government.

Outlook dims for highway, climate bills

Reducing risk exposure

Although accidents will always happen, the majority of workers’ compensation claims are not accidental — they are preventable.

Many claims actually occur because the employee does not have the physical capacity to safely perform the job. This is especially true when employing older workers with pre-existing and chronic conditions.

The ADA and state fair employment acts prevent employers from questioning job candidates about prior injuries or disabilities. So, how do you determine if an individual can safely perform the job duties?

Here are some ways to assess potential employees, and help control your workers’ compensation claim losses:

• Engage a service or medical clinic to provide pre-employment physical examinations and/or pre-employment physical abilities testing.

• Invite the service’s medical director to tour your facility to gain a better understanding of the nature and duties of your various positions.

• Provide clear job descriptions to the physician who performs your fit-for-duty exams.

Know options up front

The trend to return to work has always loved to drive and sees this as a great opportunity to supplement his Social Security income.

How to contact us

To submit or report news, Letters to the Editor, articles, news releases or to report corrections:

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Testimonials

Mike Pouncey, Exhibitor
ITRANSPORT, INC.
As a first time exhibitor and sponsor at the 2009 Motorcoach Expo, we were thrilled with the sheer volume of motorcoach operators who attended the show. We had constant traffic to our booth with people who were interested in our products and services. Above all else, Motorcoach Expo is the premier motorcoach industry event for attracting the decision makers and buyers in the motorcoach industry. We will be exhibitors as well as sponsors of this event for years to come.

Mike Waters, Attendee
COACH AMERICA/FRANCISCAN LINES
Expo has always provided operators, large and small, the opportunity to see up close new vehicle equipment, supplies, and literally every item a bus operator will need to survive. It also gives us old timers the chance to see each other again and to meet new friends and colleagues through networking facilitated by UMA.

www.motorcoachexpo.com
Show Dates: February 24 – 26, 2010
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Call Scott Groves at 1-866-BUS-EXPO (287-3976) or email uma@cmgexpo.com to reserve your booth today!

Testimonials

Don Dinger, Attendee
GOTTA GO EXPRESS TRAILWAYS
UMA is the only show where my staff and I can learn what new things are happening in the industry and see our vendor partners at the same time.

Esther Morissette, Exhibitor
TURBO IMAGES
As an industry supplier, the most significant benefit of exhibiting at UMA is the unique opportunity to meet face-to-face with our active customers and potential ones. The cost of traveling across the country to meet each of them would actually be far greater than the cost of exhibiting at UMA itself! The second one but none the less is the industry exposure that this gathering offers compared to other industry related events.

Ronald Bast, Attendee
RITEWAY BUS SERVICE, INC.
The UMA Motorcoach Expo is the ideal venue to expand our network contacts as well as nurture existing relationships. The importance of maintaining these associations is essential.

Bob Greene, Exhibitor
REI
This is THE Show. If you are an operator in the industry, this show offers the education needed to succeed, as well as access to the vendors. As an exhibitor, you can’t afford not to be here.

Sharon Robinson, Exhibitor
MISSISSIPPI DIVISION OF TOURISM
My first experience with UMA Expo was in 2008 in San Francisco and I exhibited with my partners from Mississippi. We had a good show and my partners booked business at the Expo. They were excited and eager to participate in the 2009 Expo and we actually increased our booth space.

Audrey Bialas, Exhibitor
PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU
The UMA Motorcoach Expo provides us with the forum to extend our reach to some of the industry we don’t see anywhere else. It allows us to develop a pulse on current trends for the year. The networking opportunities really help build and cement the relationships which are so key to business growth.

Brenda Kissko, Exhibitor
MIDLAND, TEXAS CVB
My favorite part of UMA is the fact that they limit the number of DMO’s that attend so that we can get more one-on-one time with the operators.
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www.motorcoachexpo.com
I have attended the UMA Motorcoach Expo for the past 8 years. This is definitely the most exciting and rewarding trade show in the industry. Over the years, I have met great people and have made trusted friendship relationships. UMA has always been a very joyful and colorful show, and the key people that organize it are very professional in making our business easier to achieve our goals and succeed. Don’t miss the Las Vegas Expo, I was there the last time and it was great!!!!
Our coach sees the stalled vehicle ahead. Does yours?

Accidents happen, but they don’t have to.

Hear operators talk about the safety of their BCI Falcon 45 at www.bcibus.com
The pattern corresponds with the increased complexity of engines built to provide greater power and fuel efficiency for larger and heavier buses that were introduced in the 1990s and 2000s. This trend, according to the researchers, was the result of the engine design changes also due to efforts to meet new mandatory government emission standards.

The study also identified makes and models of coaches and engines that were involved in fires during the 13-year study period. Motor Coach Industries Inc., which has the most coaches on the road, topped the list with 490, followed by Van Hool with 109 and Prevost with 83. The MCI model 102DL3 had 186 fires to lead individual models. Coaches with Detroit Diesel engines recorded the most fires with 411, while Cummins had 50 and Caterpillar 8.

Reducing fires
To reduce the number of fires, the study delivered a host of recommendations to the need to develop more accurate fire data by improving reporting methods and promoting the importance of everyone in the industry adhering to them. The study also held that fire warning and suppression systems currently available for tire and turbocharger malfunctions could prevent 42 percent of all motorcoach fires, while engine-compartment detection and suppression systems could help reduce the risk of an additional 36 percent of them.

"If used together on every motorcoach, they might be able to prevent almost 80 percent of fires, especially when systems are used in combination.

The researchers pointed out that although it was not possible to determine the starting point in the remaining 21 percent of the fires, the study findings also noted that the age of a coach plays a role in fires. There was a pattern of few fires in older models, a slight increase beginning with 1997 models that continued with the 2003 models and a sharp drop with more recent models.

The first day begins at noon, and the second at 8 a.m. Each day concludes at roughly 4:15-4:30 p.m. There is a host hotel for attendees and shuttle transportation is provided.

To register, call UMA at (800) 424-8262 or go to www.uma.org and sign up online. The fee is $235 for UMA members, $375 for non-members. The seminar has sold out every year since it was started in 2004.

Motorcoachified
Motorcoaches are expected to use defensive driving skills, to slow down and get plenty of rest.

In addition, health screenings were provided, giving drivers an opportunity to have their blood pressure and blood sugar checked.

The Atlantic City Health Department provided operators information promoting healthier eating habits/lifestyle and emphasizing the importance of regular check-ups.

"The Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association has an ongoing commitment to providing these types of safety seminars and activities to help ensure the safety of motorcoach passengers," said association President Tom Dugan of Safety Bus Service in Pennsauken, N.J.

The seminar includes a day and a half of classroom presentations with some sessions running concurrently. The first day begins at noon, and the second at 8 a.m. Each day concludes at roughly 4:15-4:30 p.m. There is a host hotel for attendees and shuttle transportation is provided.

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Reducing fires
To reduce the number of fires, the study delivered a host of recommendations to the need to develop more accurate fire data by improving reporting methods and promoting the importance of everyone in the industry adhering to them. The study also held that fire warning and suppression systems currently available for tire and turbocharger malfunctions could prevent 42 percent of all motorcoach fires, while engine-compartment detection and suppression systems could help reduce the risk of an additional 36 percent of them.

"If used together on every motorcoach, they might be able to prevent almost 80 percent of fires, especially when systems are used in combination.

The researchers pointed out that although it was not possible to determine the starting point in the remaining 21 percent of the fires, the study findings also noted that the age of a coach plays a role in fires. There was a pattern of few fires in older models, a slight increase beginning with 1997 models that continued with the 2003 models and a sharp drop with more recent models.

The first day begins at noon, and the second at 8 a.m. Each day concludes at roughly 4:15-4:30 p.m. There is a host hotel for attendees and shuttle transportation is provided.

To register, call UMA at (800) 424-8262 or go to www.uma.org and sign up online. The fee is $235 for UMA members, $375 for non-members. The seminar has sold out every year since it was started in 2004.

The pattern corresponds with the increased complexity of engines built to provide greater power and fuel efficiency for larger and heavier buses that were introduced in the 1990s and 2000s. This trend, according to the researchers, was the result of the engine design changes also due to efforts to meet new mandatory government emission standards.

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Tough decision: Replacing an alternator

With winter approaching and the seasonal slowdown beginning in many parts of the country, coach company maintenance shops are cranking up their heavy servicing operations.

Among the checks technicians will be making is comprehensive electrical system testing. And that includes the heart of the system — the alternator.

When maintenance chiefs find that an alternator needs to be replaced, either because of failure or it’s nearing the end of its life cycle, they often face a difficult decision: Do they rebuild, replace with a new OEM model, or switch to a non-OEM alternator.

The factors to be considered in such a decision are many and complex. However, increased reliability should be the driving factor when consideration is being given to switching to a non-OEM alternator, notes Charles Paden of PennTex Industries, which makes a comprehensive line of replacement alternators.

The key features of a heavy-duty alternator design are the rating and number of diodes used, as well as the diode heat-sink design, which helps dissipate heat and reduce operating temperatures. This is critical in prolonging service life, especially in high-heat environments, says Paden.

If reducing life-cycle costs, while maximizing the service life of the charging system is a goal of the bus or coach operator, switching to an air-cooled, externally-regulated system should be given thoughtful consideration.

Alternators equipped with external regulators are an important design feature of heavy-duty electrical charging systems. An external regulator provides the strong benefit of increased performance and reliability, as well as reduced life-cycle costs.

This is especially true in many motorcoach applications, where the regulator is often located in an area away from the heat generated by the alternator and engine.

Today’s leading air-cooled replacement alternators are more efficient and provide additional amps. And some are designed specifically for motorcoach and transit bus applications.

The key benefits of these alternators are:

- Increased fuel economy because of improved alternator efficiency
- No oil leaks and hazardous waste because they are air cooled
- Reduced life-cycle costs
- Easy servicing with commonly available components
- External regulator, providing maximum service life

Motor Coach Canada says those attending will have a quality educational experience, plus ample networking opportunities. “We encourage all Québec members to send their maintenance staff, drivers, procurement staff and other industry professionals to attend the Trans-Expo,” said the association.

Trans-Expo is managed by the Canadian Urban Transit Association.

A Campbell, Canada, will be Nov. 10 in Place Bonaventure, Montreal.

The one-day event will run from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

The exposition will feature more than 100 exhibitors, including at least 15 new-model buses and motorcoaches.

U.S. operators say Trans-Expo is this month in Montreal

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association has established a presence on Facebook, the popular social networking website. The UMA Facebook page can be found by using the web link below, or by going to the UMA.org website and clicking on the link. Individuals can also become a UMA Facebook “fan” at UMA.org.

Earlier this year, Facebook became the world’s most popular social networking site. A Facebook page provides an organization like UMA with a variety of tools and mechanisms for communicating back and forth with its “fans,” people who are interested in the association and interested in other people who have an interest in the organization.

A Facebook page also allows users to share photographs and videos, as well as exchange messages.

Businesses on Facebook often can benefit from referrals from their fans.

The web link to UMA on Facebook is: www.facebook.com/home.php#pages/United-Motorcoach-Association/187318334097/ref=t. Or, go to UMA.org and look for the direct link.
Josh and Donna Pane, to craft the board members and its lobbyists, California Bus Association, its sponsored AB 951.

The new laws were prompted by a coach crash in early October of last year that killed 10 people, including the bus owner, and injured 40 others.

The crash investigation found that neither the bus nor the driver should have been on the road. The bus had been declared non-operational five months earlier and the driver didn’t have a passenger endorsement.

Many of those killed on the bus were from the Sacramento area and represented by State Assemblyman David Jones, who sponsored Assembly Bill 636 and co-sponsored AB 951. Jones worked closely with the California Bus Association, its board members and its lobbyists, Josh and Donna Pane, to craft the legislation and get it through both houses of the legislature.

According to the California Bus Association, the operator of the coach that crashed in Colusa County, Calif., was one of many “fly-by-night” charter bus companies in the state that run unlicensed and other legal requirements, posing a threat to public safety.

Last year, the California Public Utilities Commission and partner agencies issued 36 misdemeanor warnings, during the course of only 10 investigations, to charter bus companies for operating without a valid permit.

Here’s a list of offenses that now can get a charter bus company’s operating authority permanently revoked or bar a company from receiving a permit or certification from the California Public Utilities Commission:

- Operate a bus without having been issued a permit or certificate from the commission
- Operate a bus with a permit that was suspended by the commission
- Commit three or more liability insurance violations within a reported crashes, and motor carrier
- Census data.

In appearing in Las Vegas last month, FMCSA Acting Administrator Rose McMurray said the program “is something industry driver convicted of gross vehicular manslaughter

Watts, 53, was taking 41 mostly elderly Hmong and Mien immigrants to the Colusa Casino Resort on Oct. 5, 2008, when the bus he was driving left a rural road and rolled over. Three survivors testified at his trial that Watts appeared to doze off at the wheel.

The jury took only three hours deliberating before returning the guilty verdict.

Watts faces up to 76 years in jail.

“I believe this is the first case in California of gross vehicular manslaughter based strictly on sleep deprivation,” said Poyner. “There was no alcohol, no drugs, no medication in his system, it was simply exhaustion.”

The crash was the impetus for far-reaching charter-bus safety legislation adopted by California lawmakers. (See related article on Page 1.)

Given that drivers need to consent to allowing access to their records, McMurray said, carriers would need to weigh their possible refusal in the hiring process.

“If a driver does not permit companies to access his driving record, it should be a red flag that perhaps you need to question if you really want this person driving for your company,” she said.

Currently, operators must obtain drivers’ permission to ask previous employers about their history, so asking for consent to look at the federal electronic records will add to the process.

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High-tech system leads to recovery of stolen Prevost coach

LAVAL, Quebec — Ahhhhh, the wonders of modern-day motorcoach electronics.

A scoundrel stole a 2009 Prevost H3-45 from Autocar Chartrand of Laval but was foiled by Prevost’s web-based telematics system known as Liaison.

The thief apparently got inside the coach, which was parked at Autocar Chartrand’s facilities, through the roof hatch. Explained Eric Chartrand, president of the charter and school bus operation: “One of my drivers reported for work but couldn’t find his vehicle. He notified the dispatcher, who attempted to contact the vehicle using Liaison….The driver and dispatcher were stunned to learn the vehicle was on the road — in Ontario.

They contacted provincial police in Ontario, who apprehended the miscreant as he was attempting to remove Chartrand’s name from the coach. The bus was eventually returned to Quebec undamaged.

The Liaison system, used to track the coach, is an advanced fleet management option available on Prevosts. The technology provides a continuous connection to vehicles anywhere in the U.S. and Canada, using a network of low-earth-orbit satellites.

Special antennas on the bus pick up satellite and GPS signals, and digital communications are sent from the coach to a private network, then to dispatchers who access Liaison information via the internet.

In addition to being able to view a vehicle’s location at all times, the system also monitors coach and driver performance.

NTA convention gets new format

RENO, Nev. — When the annual convention of the National Tour Association opens here in two weeks, it will have a new format.

The NTA says it developed the revamped format for its Nov. 14-18 convention in response to member feedback, to better suit how members do business, and to give them more value with a streamlined schedule.

One key change was to adapt the signature Tour & Travel Exchange model to the convention’s Destination Pavilion, where tour operators are able to buy the way they package — by destination.

The result is a rescheduled Destination Pavilion where destinations are arranged geographically, so tour operators can more easily develop product. The prescheduled business appointments between the operators and DMOs will be conducted in this regional format.

There also is open shopping time in the Destination Pavilion where the suppliers are encouraged to work with their destinations so operators can leave with complete itineraries.

For the prescheduled business appointments between operators and suppliers, delegates will have the familiarity of NTA’s traditional Tour & Travel Exchange where the suppliers visit the tour operators in their booths for the appointments.

The current economic environment also has been considered in creating the convention schedule. NTA says tour operators requested more flexibility in their convention scheduling. The revised format enables them to meet with NTA partners that align best with their product development needs, while still having time to attend seminars and sightseeing tours.

The customizable and more streamlined format also gives members the option to attend fewer days.

In addition, co-locating with the World Religious Travel Association gives members access to an additional market at the same convention, including hundreds of buyers and sellers of faith-based product from around the world.

For more information, go to www.NTAonline.com.
The new Volvo 9700 is the safest coach we have ever built. We would be able to fill this entire page with details of equipment and characteristics that contribute to high safety. Such as our ESP electronic stability program. Instead, we intend to focus on just a few important new features that we are alone among bus manufacturers in offering. Front Impact Protection is one example, Knee Impact Protection is another. Both considerably reduce the risk of the driver being injured in a frontal collision. What is more, the Volvo 9700 is equipped with the Front Underrun Protection System. It's there to protect the occupants in an oncoming passenger car if it is unlucky enough to collide with the coach. Welcome aboard.