

Operators urge regulators to tackle fatigue, not hours rules

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — An effective program to manage driver fatigue and better enforcement of existing regulations — not changes to the current hours-of-service rules — are key to reducing or eliminating bus accidents, federal safety officials were told during a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration listening

session here in late October.

The session, conducted during the annual California Bus Association Convention and Trade Show, was one of a series of such forums the FMCSA is conducting as it considers revisions to motorcoach hours-of-service rules.

The agency is examining the rules in the wake of eight bus crash-

es that caused 28 deaths last year, said William Paden, the FMCSA western field administrator.

“When so many deaths occur, it is time to evaluate our safety priorities,” Paden said. “We are committed to an environment in which motorcoach drivers are rested, alert and focused on safety while on the job. This is part of a process.”

Many of the more than a dozen speakers who addressed the panel said the current hours-of-service rules are appropriate, necessary and workable.

They suggested that a fatigue management program could better prevent major accidents because it would address the differences among drivers, driving situations

and bus operations.

“Changing hours of service suggests the possibility that one size fits all,” said Victor Parra, president and CEO of the United Motorcoach Association.

“(T)hat’s not the case. All drivers are different. They have different capacities, different needs, and

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Superstorm Sandy batters industry

Myriad challenges confront operators

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Once the power came back on, the phones started working again and the road clearing began in earnest in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, bus and motorcoach operators were left wondering how deep and long lasting the business and physical damage would be.

Some were hurt more than others as a result of the powerful storm that made landfall Oct. 29 near here and at its peak left 8.5 million people without power, particularly those in New Jersey and New York.

The casinos here were closed for most of a week.

Fortunately, several factors mitigated the damage for many bus and motorcoach companies.

A few found business they hadn’t foreseen.



Like many of its motorcoach operator clients, Lancer Insurance of Long Beach, N.Y., also was hit by Superstorm Sandy, taking about a foot of water inside its offices, and having its electricity knocked out for days.

Others, through diligent and creative efforts, were able to resume partial or full commuter, shuttle or line-run services within a week.

And many operators were able to pick up revenue by helping evacuate senior centers, supplement devastated transit systems, and shuttle recovery workers.

Ken Presley, chief operating officer and vice president of industry relations for the United Motorcoach Association, said a Connecticut operator told him his Sandy cancellations were a blessing because he picked up relief work that paid substantially more than his regular work.

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Make a list, check it twice before traveling to Ontario

ETOBICOKE, Ontario U.S.-based charter operators sending motorcoaches into Ontario are being advised to pay more attention to the province’s insurance and registration regulations.

Ontario, which stretches along nearly a third of the U.S. border with Canada, has the highest passenger liability insurance requirement among Canadian provinces — \$8 million (Canadian) for full-size motorcoaches.

Due to the continuing strong exchange value of the Canadian dollar, U.S. carriers with the typical \$5 million (U.S.) policies are no longer considered in compliance.

U.S.-based insurance companies have been advising their motorcoach operator clients that send buses into Canada that Ontario may be cracking down on regulatory enforcement, but Dave Carroll of the Ontario Motor Coach Association believes the basis for

the issue is the exchange rate.

“I am not seeing any stepped-up enforcement of the regulations. What I think may be happening is, when a carrier files the insurance certificate with Ontario Highway Transport, if it is coming in at \$5 million (U.S.) they are sending it back,” said Carroll, director of safety and maintenance for the Ontario association.

“For many years the American dollar was strong enough that it offset the \$3-million difference. Now that the dollars are at par, the insurance companies are being advised of the need for increased coverage.”

As recently as April 2009, one U.S. dollar exchanged at \$1.29 (Canadian). Eight years ago, the U.S. dollar reached a decade high in value at \$1.38 (Canadian).

As of November this year, the currencies differed by a fraction of a penny, with a U.S. dollar

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Will some in motorcoach industry see potential in ‘pot’ votes?

DENVER — Now that “party buses” can be found nearly everywhere on the fringes of the bus and motorcoach industry, can “pot buses” be far behind?

With voters in Colorado and Washington approving ballot measures that make recreational use of marijuana legal, there are reports

that pot users in other states are already planning “pot-cations.”

Party bus operators in Portland, Ore., for example, easily could gin up their buses and run up Interstate 5 to Olympia, Tacoma or Seattle, Wash., for, dare we say it, a high time.

There’s bound to be potential demand in Oregon for such trips be-

cause a measure to legalize recreational use of marijuana also was on the November ballot in the Beaver State but failed to win approval.

The two winning state votes came despite the fact marijuana is still illegal under federal law. Federal agents can still bust users, sellers and growers.

Federal prosecutors can bring them to trial and send them to prison. Now, wouldn’t that be a buzz kill?

The open question is what the Obama administration, which opposed the ballot measures, will do.

As a practical matter, federal officials currently defer to state

and local authorities to make the vast majority of marijuana busts. In the wake of the votes, the U.S. Justice Department would only say it’s reviewing the initiatives.

Seventeen states and the District of Columbia have medical marijuana laws, but prior to

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Driver convicted criminally in fatal Virginia I-95 crash

BOWLING GREEN, Va. — The driver in a high-profile motorcoach crash that killed four people and injured 49 others last year has been convicted of involuntary manslaughter.

Kin Yiu Cheung was convicted on the four counts of manslaughter brought against him. He will be sentenced Jan. 23, and could get up to up to 40 years in prison.

Several survivors of the May 31, 2011, crash on Interstate 95 near Doswell, Va., told a judge of their harrowing early-morning ride, describing how they swerved from side to side and changed speeds erratically before careening off the highway.

The witnesses said the erratic driving occurred for up to an hour as Cheung drank coffee and Red Bull energy drinks. Finally, they said, he nodded off at the wheel and lost control of the Sky Express coach. That set off panic inside the coach. LiDenne Cromartie testified she was helping others out of the overturned bus when she encountered Cheung. "He said, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I feel asleep,'" Cromartie said.

Caroline County Circuit Judge Joseph Ellis told Cheung his conduct was "so gross and wanton," he had no choice but to find him guilty. Cheung, who listened to the trial through an interpreter, was taken to jail to await sentencing.

Defense attorney Taylor Stone noted that Cheung told investigators he had slept from about noon until 6 p.m. on May 31, before starting the trip from Greensboro, N.C., to New York City at about 11 p.m.

He argued that while Cheung acknowledged falling asleep at the wheel, the crash was a "horrendous accident" and not a case of criminal negligence.

Virginia Commonwealth Attorney Tony Spencer, however, said it was clear from the testimony Cheung knew for at least an hour he was having trouble staying alert.

Pointing at the defendant, Spencer said: "That man had a legal duty of care to those passengers, and that's a factor in this case."

Stone called no witnesses, and Cheung did not testify.

Last week, prosecutors dropped four manslaughter counts against

Diesel fuel prices trend lower

Despite spot price increases in areas of the East Coast, the average nationwide price for diesel fuel continues to be on a downward slide.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the national average price of diesel has dropped to roughly \$4 a gallon. In mid-October it was \$4.15 a gallon.

A year ago, the U.S. average price of diesel fuel was \$3.88.

In the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy, however, prices increased marginally for diesel in the New England and Central Atlantic areas.

Across the nation, the largest drop in the price of diesel has been in California. The average price per gallon has dipped to around \$4.20 in the Golden State, but the California price remains the highest in the U.S.

bus dispatcher Zhao Jian Chen. The dispatcher was charged after prosecutors said he told Cheung to press on after Cheung had told Chen he was too tired to drive.

But an individual came forward corroborating Chen's story that he never forced Cheung to get behind the wheel.

The price of gasoline has joined diesel on the down slope.

Average gasoline prices nationally have fallen to under \$3.50 per gallon. The cheapest gasoline in the nation can be found in the Gulf Coast, according to the energy agency, where the average price per gallon is around \$3.25. In some places, its around \$3 per gallon.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Energy has lowered its projections for crude oil prices for the fourth quarter of this year and expects diesel fuel to average \$4 per gallon for the quarter.

The agency also is predicting crude oil to remain about the same in 2013, and diesel prices to be slightly lower. The agency expects on-highway diesel fuel retail prices to average \$3.83 per gallon in 2013.

The agency forecasts gasoline to average \$3.44 per gallon in 2013.

Cheung said he believed he would be fired if he did not drive.

The witness corroborating Chen's account made prosecution highly problematic. There was no one to corroborate Cheung's story.

In July, the National Transportation Safety Board said driver fatigue and other factors likely

DEF prices elevated

Brighton, Mich. — The average price of U.S. diesel exhaust fluid rose 4 cents during October, to an average of \$2.80 per gallon, reports DEF Tracker.

The October price is the second-highest average pump price for diesel exhaust fluid during the past 12 months, behind June at \$2.88 per gallon.

The report also notes that bulk DEF dispensing facilities at truck stops continued to grow with 77 new locations coming on line during October 2012.

DEF Tracker is a monthly subscription service giving diesel exhaust fluid price references for full truckload and less than truckload bulk deliveries, tote refills and packaged products, and pump prices in every U.S. state and Canadian province.

caused the crash. The board found Cheung had limited opportunities for quality sleep in the days leading up to the accident, and that ineffective federal oversight allowed Sky Express to operate despite various safety violations. (See Sept. 1 and Nov. 15 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

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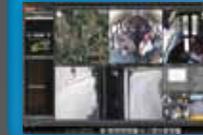
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THE DOCKET

Baltimore-area school buses get hundreds of speed tickets

BALTIMORE — Automated speed cameras, installed around area schools three years ago to catch dangerous drivers and make the streets safer for children, have caught hundreds of school buses speeding near the schools they serve, often with children aboard, a *Baltimore Sun* analysis has found.

Privately owned school buses have received at least 800 automated speed citations in Baltimore City, while city-owned buses have accumulated more than 50, the newspaper reported.

And Baltimore County public school buses have triggered speed cameras more than 100 times over the past two years.

The \$40 tickets are issued only to vehicles recorded driving at least 12 mph over the speed limit.

More than two dozen school buses were clocked 20 mph or

more over the limit in the city, including one that hit 74 mph one afternoon in February near the Poly-Western High School campus.

Protecting school children was a key justification when the Maryland General Assembly voted three years ago to allow speed cameras statewide.

In addition to highway work zones, the devices are permitted in designated school zones, defined in the law as being within a half-mile of a school.

Officials at both the city and the county school systems say it is unacceptable for buses to speed.

Using partial speed camera data provided by City Hall, *The Sun* identified 122 citations that were issued to privately owned buses that have each gotten five or more tickets.

School district officials

Kansas Turnpike toll rates to increase Feb. 1

TOPEKA, Kan. — Running the Kansas Turnpike will become more expensive starting Feb. 1.

Cash and K-Tag rates for commercial vehicles will increase an average of 5 percent, while cars and light trucks will go up an average of 10 percent.

The Kansas Turnpike Authority

hasn't yet set final tolls. When the rates are fixed, the new fares will be posted on the KTA website.

A release from the turnpike authority said the money will support capital needs, including ongoing deck replacements for some of the roadway's 348 bridges.

The Kansas Legislature created the KTA in 1953 and authorized it to privately finance building the state turnpike. The 236-mile toll road stretches from Oklahoma to Kansas City. It connects the three largest cities in Kansas: Wichita, Topeka and Kansas City.

Maine Turnpike tolls move measurably higher

PORTLAND, Maine — Toll rates have gone up on the 109-mile-long Maine Turnpike.

A full-length cash trip from York to Augusta for a three-axle motorcoach (Class 3) has in-

creased to \$21 from \$15. The E-Z Pass toll is \$19.35.

The toll rate for passenger cars increased to \$7 from \$5.

During the next five years, the Maine turnpike authority plans to

spend \$113 million for bridge repairs and rehabilitation, and provide \$82 million for paving and interchange upgrades.

The last toll increase on the roadway was in February 2009.

checked their records and found that 96 of the violations occurred with children on board.

Barber Transportation Inc. buses got 24 of those tickets.

Company representative Veronica Robinson expressed surprise at the numbers, saying Barber moni-

tors tickets its drivers receive.

"Anything that goes beyond two, they're reprimanded and they lose their [bus] run," she told *The Sun*. The most that any driver has gotten was four, she said, and "he's no longer working here."

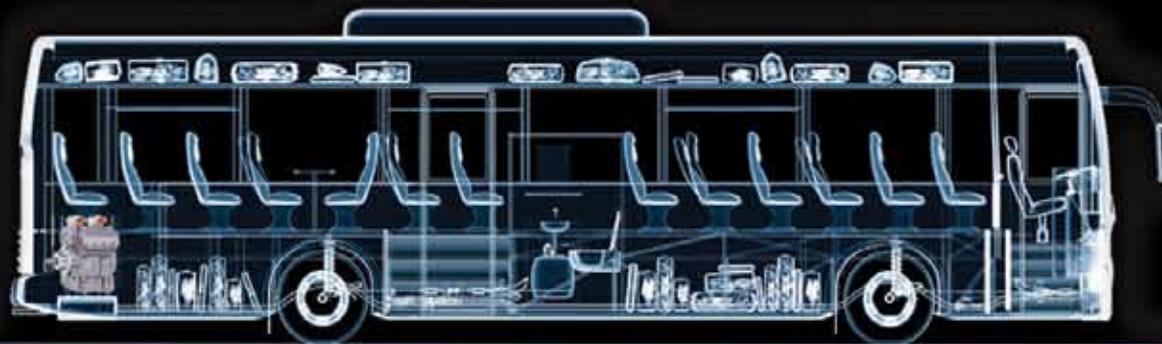
A Barber bus that has gotten

15 citations, at least eight while students were aboard, is a "spare bus and is driven by numerous drivers," Robinson said.

On Jan. 13, a camera detected that bus going 57 mph in a 25 mph zone not far from Yorkwood Elementary School.

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I-69 extension in SW Indiana opening soon

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — The first three sections of newly constructed Interstate 69 were to be officially opened in Indiana during the third week of November.

The three sections add 67 miles of roadway that stretch from northeast of Evansville, connecting with I-64, to near the Crane (Ind.) Naval Surface Warfare Center, and connect with U.S. 231.

Construction costs for the projects have totaled approximately \$600 million so far.

Officials say the state's 75-year Indiana Toll Road lease to private operators for \$3.8 billion helped pay for most of the new highway.

The highway eventually is supposed to run from the state's southwest corner to Indianapolis.

The next section — a 27-mile stretch from Crane to just south of Bloomington — is scheduled to open in late 2014.

However, it faces opposition from environmental groups, who say the area harbors populations of the endangered Indiana bat.

Washington state chain law in effect

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Washington state law requires commercial vehicles heavier than 10,000 pounds GVWR to carry sufficient tire chains.

Washington State Patrol troopers reportedly are strictly enforcing the requirement.

Officers conducted a special chain-emphasis patrol in early November to ensure drivers were carrying the appropriate number of chains, including spares.

Failing to carry chains will cost drivers \$124.

When highway advisories call for chains, drivers who don't chain up will face a \$500 penalty.

On specific segments of the following roadways all vehicles over 10,000 pounds must carry sufficient tire chains to meet the requirements from November to April 1 or at other times when chains are required for such vehicles: I-90, I-82, SR-97, SR-2, SR-12, SR-410, SR-20, SR-155, SR-970, SR-14 and SR-542.

Approved chains need at least two side chains, to which are attached sufficient cross chains of hardened metal so that at least one cross chain is in contact with the road surface at all times. Plastic chains are not allowed.

Major bridge project on I-70 in St. Louis area begins

ST. CHARLES, Mo. — The Missouri DOT is urging commercial vehicles to use I-270 and Mo. 370 as an alternate route to the Interstate 70 bridge over the Missouri River between St. Louis and St. Charles.

MoDOT is replacing the westbound I-70 Blanchette Bridge over the Missouri River at mile marker

230. During construction, all traffic will share the eastbound bridge, with three, narrow lanes — 10 to 11 feet wide — running in each direction. A 45-mph speed limit is set for the work zone.

The westbound bridge will remain closed until Fall 2013.

Commercial vehicle drivers that use I-270 and Mo. 370 as an alternate will add five miles to their trip, but with expected I-70 congestion and a 45-mph work zone speed limit, using — Route 370 is expected to be a quicker option.

• Eastbound: I-70 to Mo. 370 East to I-270 South to I-70 East

• Westbound: I-70 to I-270 North to Mo. 370 West to I-70 West Small fender-benders in the restricted work zone are expected to result in hour-long delays.

The westbound I-70 bridge over the Missouri River was built in the late 1950s. To learn more, go to www.modot.org/blanchettebridge.



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On to Ontario

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exchanging at .9973 cents (Canadian).

Liability insurance minimums for other Canadian provinces and territories range from \$5 million (Canadian) in British Columbia, to \$200,000 (Canadian) on Prince Edward Island, according to Motor Coach Canada, the national trade association.

Other requirements

Operators based in the U.S., with buses seating 10 or more passengers that travel into Ontario, also are required to hold a Commercial Vehicle Operator Registration from the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

The application fee for the registration is \$250 (Canadian) and annual renewal costs \$50 (Canadian). U.S. carriers entering without the registration have been charged and fined \$325 (Canadian), said Carroll.

Another requirement is an Ontario Public Vehicle Extra-Provincial Operating License, which is issued by the Ontario Highway Transport Board and allows transportation of passengers for hire. The fee is \$300 (Canadian) for temporary authority, which can be issued immediately. A permanent license, which may require six to seven weeks for processing, is \$500 (Canadian).

Reciprocity ranges

According to Motor Coach Canada, Ontario recognizes bus registrations of most states south of the Canadian border. It holds reciprocity agreements with all states ex-

cept California, Colorado, Idaho, Iowa, Montana, Nevada and Wyoming.

Reciprocity for Texas-based buses is limited to those operated by scholastic, religious or charitable organizations.

"Ontario recognizes the home jurisdiction plate for most states as long as those states treat Ontario charter-and-tour buses in a reciprocal manner," Carroll said.

"Operators from states that do not offer that privilege would have to purchase a trip permit or alternatively register with the International Registration Plan, which will in turn allocate registration fees on a prorated basis to each state or province based on prorated distance traveled."

Ten-day Ontario trip permits from non-reciprocal states cost \$75 (Canadian).

Carroll said he has not heard of any U.S. charter or tour buses being barred at the Ontario border due to paperwork issues. "These usually will be dealt with after the fact through correspondence or an audit."

No driver DWIs

The most common border issue putting brakes on U.S. coaches is the driver's immigration status, he said. "Sometimes the driver is inadmissible due to a criminal record. A DWI (driving while intoxicated) conviction is the one we hear of most often. In Canada that is considered a felony on your record. Canadian officials assess crime according to Canadian laws. They look at the nature of the offense, how long ago it occurred and whether any sentences were imposed."

Banned drivers could be eligible for reha-

bilitation after a period of time has passed, Carroll said, "but the application process can take 12 months. The best policy for operators is to ensure drivers on trips to Canada have no criminal record or, if they do, ensure the driver has required documentation to show a pardon or rehabilitation status."

Ontario's regulations should not be viewed as deal-breakers for U.S. coach operators considering trips into the province, said Carroll.

"It often is an annoyance. There is some paperwork and minimal fees, but not to the extent to make international travel unattractive. It is the same for Canadian operators going into the U.S."

He noted that Canadian coach drivers entering the U.S. must be enrolled in a random drug and alcohol testing pool, which is not required for their employment in Canada.

"Operators with a good compliance culture will make every effort to make sure things are in order so the crossing goes as smoothly as possible."

Important market

Michael Neustadt of Coach Tours in Brookfield, Conn., was alerted to the Ontario insurance issue by his insurance carrier. He has been contacting other coach operators to make them aware of the issue.

His coaches enter Canada "a few times a month," he said. "It is a significant amount of business for us. Toronto and Niagara Falls are big destinations."

Doing business in Canada is complicated by varying provincial laws, he said.

"Each province has different requirements in terms of insurance and the certificates you must hold. If operators going to a province don't know what the requirements are, they should ask. If you have an accident (in Ontario) and don't have the correct certificates and adequate insurance, you might be fined."

A handful of recent news-making tour bus accidents could heighten public safety awareness and prompt sterner responses from regulators, Neustadt said.

"Everyone in the states and Canada is looking at stricter enforcement of regulations and new regulations. It would behoove everyone in the motorcoach business to do everything correctly. There has not been strong enforcement previously, but a minor transgression could turn a tragic accident into a crime."

Here are the websites for Ontario registration and license applications:

- Ontario Highway Transport Board, Public Vehicle Extra-Provincial Operating License: www.ohtb.gov.on.ca/eng/forms/public.pdf.

- Ontario Ministry of Transportation, Commercial Vehicle Operator Registration: www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/trucks/cvor/forms.shtml.

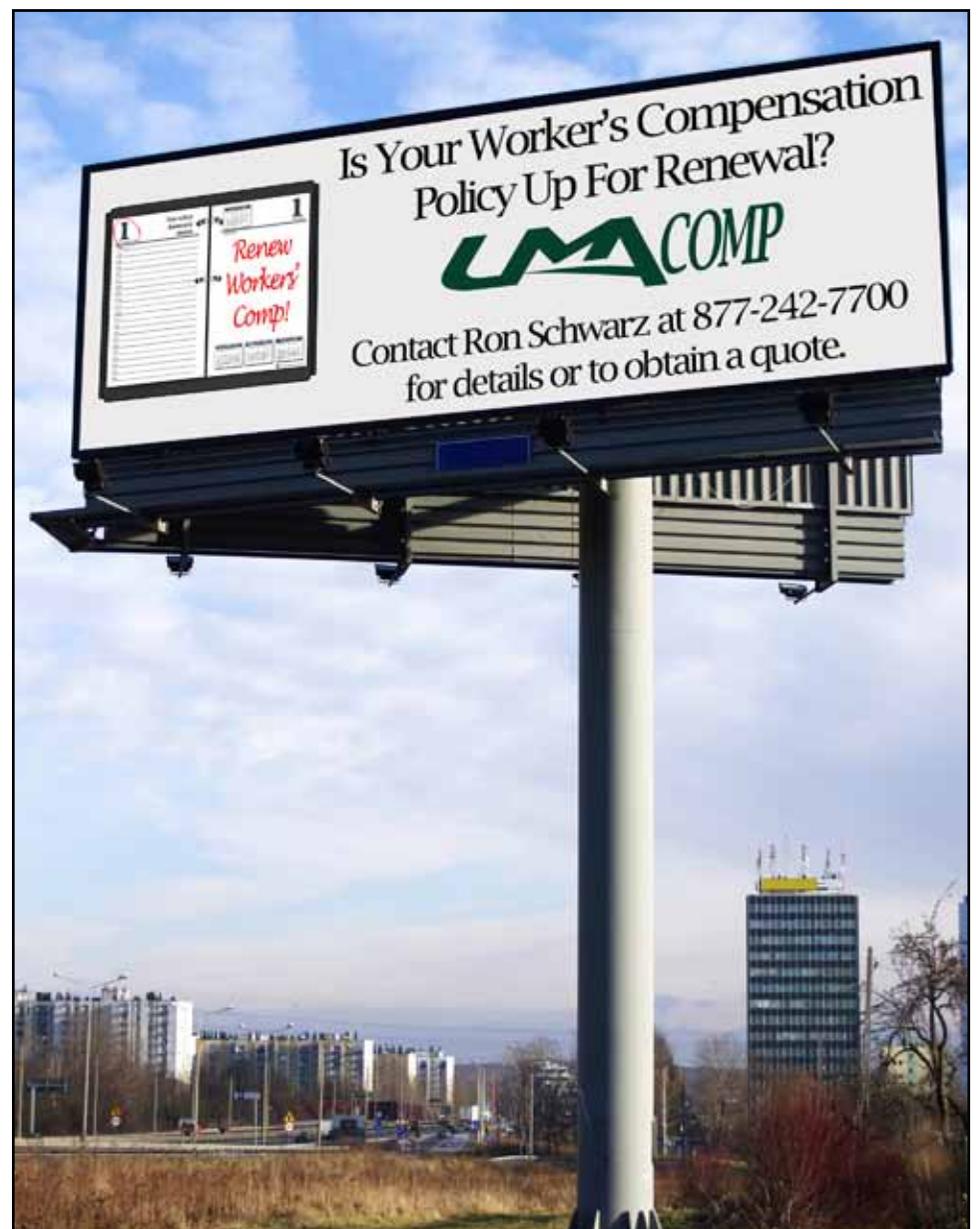
- Motor Coach Canada has included a summary of Canadian provincial and territorial carrier requirements in a publication called *Tour and Travel Canada: 2013 Canadian Tour Planner and Operator Guide*. Find the summary on pages 6-8 at www.nxt-book.com/nxtbooks/naylor/MTRG0012/#/0.

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There ARE ways to reduce the risk of bus fires



Robert Crescenzo

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — Despite the availability of fire-suppression systems, bus fires continue to be a serious problem for the bus and motorcoach industry, says a leading insurance industry expert.

But, adds Robert Crescenzo of Lancer Insurance Co., operators can take steps to prevent them and their potentially devastating consequences.

According to Crescenzo, Lancer Insurance has processed more than 120 claims for fires on charter-and-tour buses during the past five years.

While those claims represent only about 1 percent of the claims handled by the company, they accounted for about 6 percent of total claim costs, making them among the most expensive to settle, he said.

The average cost of a bus fire claim is about \$80,000, and Lancer has spent about \$32 million for such claims since 1997.

“We’ve all been fortunate that there have been very few physical injuries during our bus fire claims. I would urge you to recognize that is pure luck,” he said.

“I think that’s a pretty sobering comment coming from an insurance person who would like to talk about numbers and statistics.”

Crescenzo made his remarks at the 39th annual California Bus Association Convention and Trade Show here.

So, what causes bus fires, and what can operators do to prevent or deal with them? Here’s advice from Crescenzo:

No. 1, purchase and maintain coach tire-pressure monitoring and fire-suppression systems.

Research indicates that 60 percent of bus fires are engine compartment based; 20 percent are wheel well or tire based; 20 percent are electrical or other.

“If you know that 60 to 80 percent of fires could be managed by suppression systems, that is a potential answer to protecting your asset, protecting your claim expenses and for the industry, protecting the costs of these vehicle fires, which is very high,” he said.

Improve routine maintenance programs. That includes “checking wiring, inspecting fuel lines and hoses, cleaning engines regularly, following all maintenance recommendations and recalls, watching for under-inflated tires, training drivers on pre-trip inspections.

“Knowing that your maintenance issues often relate to engine compartment electrical fires, that is the key element to managing bus fires, particularly if you don’t have fire-suppression systems....

Something as simple as a fuel line going over a hot part of the engine can start a fire.”

Train drivers on evacuation procedures and fire extinguisher use: “The time for the driver to figure out what do to is not when the bus is burning. The bus will

burn in anywhere from five to 10 minutes.”

Conduct training sessions with local fire department officials and first responders on bus operations. “I have done a significant amount of first responder and firefighter training around bus fire issues.

“You have a group of firefighters, and I say to them: ‘Open the bus door.’ They have no idea. ‘Show me the battery electrical area.’

“Not only is it positive and educational, there is an opportunity for relationship building with your first responders, rescue folks and fire

departments. They will in turn train your drivers on other aspects of fire safety that isn’t specific to vehicles.”

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Justice Department attorney explains ins and outs of ADA

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — Motorcoach operators who purchase new, accessible buses would be wise to get it in writing that the vehicle complies with Americans with Disabilities Act standards.

That's advice from David Knight, an attorney in the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division who specializes in disability rights.

"The requirement that the vehicle be accessible falls on you, the operator, not the manufacturer," said Knight. "So, you ought to build into your purchase agreement that if for some reason it's not accessible, there's some sort of recourse."

What operators need to know about buying accessible buses was just one of many ADA-related topics Knight addressed at the annual California Bus Association Convention and Trade Show here last month.

He also offered operators guidelines on how to run their buses so they can avoid fines like the \$55,000 penalties his department recently meted out to Tornado Bus Company and megabus.com for ADA violations.

The Justice Department enforces motorcoach industry ADA requirements.

A few highlights

Who is covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act?

The law, which was passed in 1990 and began to apply to the motorcoach industry in 1998, not only protects passengers with mobility impairments, but also those with hearing, vision and cognitive impairments, and covers passengers without regard to citizenship.

"Someone visiting from another country who uses a wheelchair has the right to use your system," said Knight.

What are the accessible bus

requirements?

"It's all in the federal regulations. ... It's not just having a lift," he said, but a myriad of other features, such as the height, location, "cross-sectional diameter" and "knuckle clearances" of handrails.

He suggested operators work with each other and with their trade organizations to pool resources and make sure the buses they buy meet ADA standards.

The Federal Transit Authority is currently compiling a guide with an easy-to-use checklist that may help private operators ensure the buses they purchase are compliant, he added. It is due out early next year.

Equivalent service

What is equivalent service?

"It's schedules, fares, hours of service. If I call SuperShuttle and they say, 'We'll be there in 20 minutes,' and I say, 'I use a wheelchair,' and they say, 'It'll be 40 minutes,' that's not equivalent.

What about lift maintenance?

"All those lifts, you have to have a system of regular and frequent maintenance checks. If you're not sure what that is, a lot of city systems do it daily.

"Something the city systems have learned to do is when they are in the preventive maintenance stage of cycling the lift, they cycle the lift with a 600-pound wheelbarrow on it to make sure it will operate with a wheelchair passenger on it as opposed to just with an empty load. Some will have the driver stand on it. You want to make sure it will operate out in the field."

What happens if a lift or other accessibility equipment breaks down?

"If it's discovered to be inoperable. ... you should take it out of service before the next trip to be repaired. If you don't have a spare, you can keep it in service for up to



David Knight

'You may not refuse to transport passengers because their chairs cannot be satisfactorily restrained.'

five days. And then you have to take it out regardless.

"Even if it means you have to cancel a trip. You need to have maintenance staff ready to fix things onsite, not just running a vehicle inaccessibly."

What about passengers in the event of a breakdown?

"You also need to take reasonable steps to accommodate the person with a disability who otherwise would use a feature when it breaks. Send a back up vehicle if you can, whatever works in that case. You can have temporary or isolated interruptions in your service, we understand that, but there needs to be some system. You'd want to show people, if you were asked, here's how we make sure that this has as little impact as possible on our operations."

Defining wheelchairs

The law says "common wheelchairs" must be transported. What are "common wheelchairs?"

"Common wheelchairs are defined in the regulations. Six-hundred pounds is one of the big thresholds, with the passenger in it. You have to be sure your vehicle lift can operate to that point."

Who else can use the lift?

"You also have to allow standees to use your lift on request. This makes vehicle operators uncomfortable in a motorcoach because the lift goes so high off the ground. They're not comfortable placing

someone with a walker on lift that goes five, six, seven feet up. You do need to do that.

"How is that person going to make it up the stairs if he (or she) relies on a walker and can't climb stairs? So make sure your operators know that it includes non-wheelchair persons with disabilities."

What if passengers using wheelchairs won't tell you their weight and you think they exceed the weight limit?

"All I can say is if they are 900 pounds...and you won't transport them and they file a complaint with my office, my office would investigate, and it turns out they are 900 pounds, then you didn't violate the ADA because you weren't required to transport them."

What if a wheelchair cannot be secured?

"You may not refuse to transport passengers because their chairs cannot be satisfactorily restrained. I'll say it again: You cannot refuse to transport someone because you can't secure them. You tried and failed, you still have to go. It's an imposition on you and the manufacturers to make sure the securement systems are as flexible as possible."

Service animals

What qualifies as a service animal?

"There is no certification for service animals. It is simply what someone states to be a service ani-

mal. You shouldn't ask what their disability is but you can ask if their animal has been trained to perform a task. A seeing-eye dog assists someone with vision assistance. Maybe a dog assists someone with balance."

What about comfort animals? "A comfort animal, often called an emotional support animal, is an animal that just makes you happier to have. 'I carry this bunny because it just makes me feel better.'

"Those animals are sometimes permitted in the airline context. It's a different law. ... But if an animal is not trained to do anything, just exist, it is not an animal you are required to transport."

Staff training

What about staff training under the ADA?

"You have to train your staff to proficiency. Not just your operators, but your dispatchers, people who are working in reservations. ... And you're supposed to provide refresher training to maintain proficiency."

Knight said that operators can obtain copies of a pamphlet spelling out drivers' responsibilities in regards to the ADA and passengers from Easter Seals Project Action's website at www.projectaction.org.

What are the rules about reservations?

"You're never required to transport someone with a disability if it displaces someone else. So, if your bus is already full, you don't need to bump someone.

"If your wheelchair securement space takes up six ambulatory seats and you only have three seats left, you are not required. No additional service is required. You just have to treat them equally and give everyone equal access to your service.

"You should provide equivalent reservation services."

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Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 228

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ADA training scheduled by three state associations

ATLANTA — Open Doors Organization and the United Motorcoach Association have teamed up with three state motorcoach associations to offer Americans with Disabilities Act training for bus and motorcoach operators.

The training program is designed to help companies meet the ADA requirements that apply to bus operators and help them provide the best possible service to passengers with disabilities, including older travelers.

The full-day training sessions cover ADA basics, disability awareness, and service on the coach, and are designed for all company personnel, including drivers.

The training also addresses ADA requirements that impact company policies and procedures for management and sales staff.

The training locations and dates are: Orlando, Nov. 30; Memphis, Dec. 3; Nashville, Dec. 4; Knoxville, Dec. 10; and Atlanta, Dec. 17.

The Orlando session will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday, Nov. 30, at the Holiday Inn Main Gate East and is sponsored by the Florida Motorcoach Association.

For information, contact Linda Morris, association executive director, by email at mmmlinda@embarqmail.com, or call (434) 376-1150.

The sessions in the three Tennessee cities all will be from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and are sponsored by the Tennessee Motor Coach Association.

The Memphis seminar will be Monday, Dec. 3, at the Memphis Marriott East; the Nashville session will be Tuesday, Dec. 4, at the Radisson Opryland Hotel, and the Knoxville seminar will be Monday, Dec. 10, at the Holiday Inn World's Fair Park.

For information, contact Deborah Neese, executive director of the Tennessee Motor Coach Association by email at Debbie@tmca.net, or call (423) 288-8622.

The Atlanta session will be Monday, Dec. 17, at Stone Mountain Park and is sponsored by the Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association.

Contact Linda Morris, Georgia association executive director, by email at: mmmlinda@embarqmail.com, or call (434) 376-1150.

At a minimum, the Tennessee Motor Coach Association recommends that company supervisors or trainers attend the sessions so they may have the knowledge to train others who cannot attend the classes, as well as future new hires.

The training focused on drivers will be in the morning and the training aimed at office personnel will be in the afternoon.

For its programs, the Tennessee Motor Coach Association is charging a flat fee of \$150 per company, and companies can bring as many employees as they would like to the class. Study materials and certificates of attendance will be given for company files.

The Tennessee association is

making the training available to operators that are not members.

"Everyone knows when there is a newsworthy event it affects everyone in the industry — whether they are a member or not," said Neese.

"So, if we can help others along the way then that's great, and the Tennessee Motor Coach Asso-

ciation is always looking for more members."

Neese also noted that providing the training to everyone is consistent with the association's mission to improve the industry.

Questions concerning costs and policies for the Florida and Georgia sessions should be direct-

ed to Linda Morris.

The Florida, Tennessee and Georgia sessions will be conducted by Open Doors Organization, which created the ADA training program specifically for motorcoach operators at the request of the UMA.

For more information, go to www.opendoorsnfp.org.

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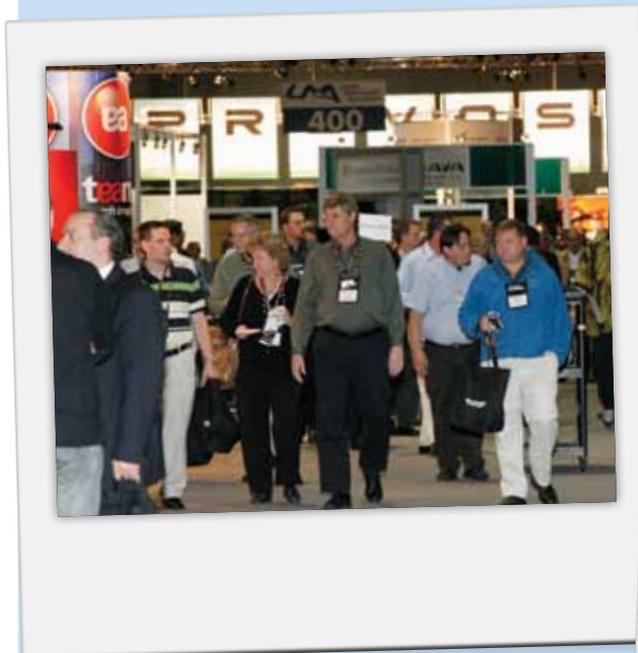
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N.C. transit picks contractor

GREENSBORO, N.C. — The Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation moved closer to getting a new private provider for its regional bus service after the previous operator, Coach America, went bankrupt.

PART's board approved a resolution to award a \$2.8 million contract to National Express Transit, one of three companies that submitted bids to run the transit system.

PART Express provides bus service to Greensboro, Winston-Salem and High Point, N.C. It has 42 vehicles in its fleet.

The agency had to scramble earlier this year when Coach America, which had operated the bus service, went into bankruptcy. It reached an agreement with Ho-

rizon Coach Lines to provide bus service temporarily while the agency went out with bids for a more long-term solution.

Five companies expressed interest in providing the service, and three of those companies, including Horizon, submitted bids, said Scott Rhine, PART's program manager.

Horizon submitted a bid of \$3.4 million, and another company, Applebus of Cleveland, Mo., a suburb of Kansas City, offered a bid of \$3.27 million.

Rhine said the staff also looked at providing bus service in-house. That could provide a cost savings of up to \$300,000 a year, but the risks were high, he said.

The next step is to have a contract signed and in place by Dec. 1.

Calendar

NOVEMBER 2012

29-Dec. 1 Motor Coach Canada Connections West, Grande Rockies Resort, Canmore, Alberta. Info: www.motorcoachcanada.com or email laura@motorcoachcanada.com.

30-Dec. 1 Minnesota Charter Bus Operators Association Annual Meeting, Minneapolis. Info: email mike@reichertbus.com.

DECEMBER 2012

4-5 9th annual United Motorcoach Association Safety Management Seminar, NTSB Training Center, Ashburn, Va. Info: (800) 424-8262.

Listening session

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

we need to recognize that."

He said National Transportation Safety Board investigations of recent crashes pointed to the need for better strategies for managing driver fatigue.

"What they're saying is that changing the hours of service could not have changed the outcomes. The issue is fatigue," he said.

An effective fatigue-management program should contain guidance for managing the transition from daytime to nighttime driving shifts, and for dealing with driving during the late-night and early-morning hours, according to several operators who spoke at the session.

Darlene Cochran of Pacific Coast Sightseeing Tours in Anaheim, said her company has looked into requiring two drivers on services that occur during the "very vulnerable hours" of midnight and 4 a.m. But such an approach could only work if mandated for all operators, she said.

"But it isn't a mandatory thing," she said. "So if I price the trip out, and add in the extra...costs for that second driver for that midnight-to-

4-a.m., and nobody else in town does it, I can assure you, you don't have to worry about me having that accident because my bus isn't going to be doing the trip.

"It's going to be the one who can run without complying."

Speaker after speaker said they supported better enforcement of existing rules and called for a crackdown on unsafe operators.

"You're in a room with some of the top operators in California," said Bob Dockerty of American Star Trailways. "We have brought our services up to a high level... We're very cautious. We put it on the line every day.

"But we've got a lot of renegades running in California. The (California Highway Patrol) can't get to them. The DOT can't get to them.

"So, (inspectors) come to our location where they can find us in a physical place and inspect us. But nobody wants to chase the ones down who are causing the problems."

Paden of the FMCSA said that federal officials are aware that operators are frustrated about enforcement and are working with state partners to resolve the issues.

"We have listened to you, and we've encouraged them to change

and try to address that," he said.

"We work for you... We recognize that you're the customer, and there's a balance there between regulation and allowing commerce to proceed economically so you can make a living, and that we can do both at the same time," he said.

The first listening session was in Grapevine, Texas, in January.

A subcommittee of the Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee will deliberate the hours rules during a public session the week of Dec. 2 in Alexandria, Va.

Currently, hours-of-service rules for motorcoach drivers allow up to 10 hours of driving, following 8 consecutive hours off duty. Driving is prohibited after the operator has accumulated 15 hours of on-duty time, following 8 consecutive hours off duty (15-hour rule).

Under the requirements, a driver is subject to a 60-hour limit based on a seven-day period, or a 70-hour limit on an eight-day period. The rules have not changed substantially since the mid 1930s.



Victor Parra

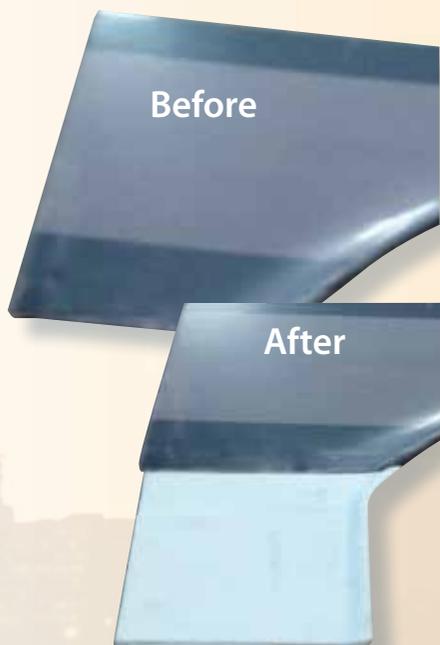
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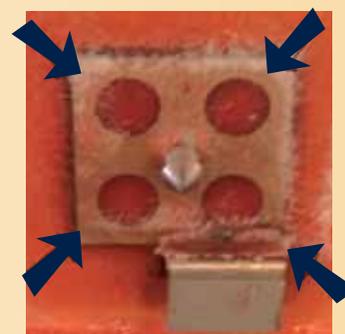
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Big truckers are a much bigger crash risk, study finds

MORRIS, Minn. — A new study has found that severely obese truck drivers are more likely to crash in the first two years of driving on a job.

The findings, published in the scientific journal *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, are expected to fuel the ongoing debate over the best way to screen commercial drivers for medical conditions that pose a risk on the road.

With its long hours, sedentary nature, and often stressful conditions, truck driving has never been considered conducive to good health.

Previous studies have shown that truck drivers generally don't get enough sleep, and they're more likely than the general population to smoke, be overweight, and suffer from sleep disorders.

For more than a decade, behavioral economist and former truck driver Stephen Burks of the University of Minnesota, Morris, has been working with trucking company Schneider National to identify factors that contribute to truck driver health and safety.

Burks and his team have studied drivers' cognitive abilities, tolerance for risk and loss, and even their ability to plan.

Two years ago, the team turned

its attention to a simple but readily available bit of data: drivers' height and weight.

The researchers asked 744 new drivers, who trained with Schneider National in 2005 and 2006, for their height and weight, and then calculated the body mass index (BMI) for each. A BMI greater than 25 is considered overweight, and greater than 30 is obese.

Then the researchers kept tabs on the rookie drivers over the next

2 years or until they ended their employment with the company, noting every accident they had during that period.

"That's when the data stood up and shouted at us," said Jon Anderson, a biostatistician at the University of Minnesota, Morris, who co-authored the study.

"We found really clear evidence that the highest-BMI drivers are at higher risk of having an accident."

North Carolina Motorcoach Association board for 30 consecutive years. He is a long-time director of the **United Motorcoach Association** and a member of the **North Carolina Transportation Hall Of Fame**.

The new vice president of the North Carolina association is **Mellonee Owenby** of **Christian Tours** and **Burke International Tours** in Newton. Owenby served as president of the association in 2004-05.

Reappointed secretary-treasurer was **David Brown** of **Holiday Companies** in Randleman. Brown also has served a term as president, in 1996.

The immediate past president of the association is **Ray Robbins**

During their first two years on the road, drivers with a BMI higher than 35 ("severely obese") were 43 to 55 percent more likely to crash than were drivers with a normal BMI, the team reported *Accident Analysis & Prevention*.

Drivers who are overweight or obese, but not severely, did not appear to be at higher risk, and the study does not indicate why.

The relationship held even when the researchers corrected for

number of miles on the road, geographic location, age, and other crash risk factors.

The increased risk may be due to sleep apnea, a sleep disorder strongly associated with obesity that can cause potentially dangerous daytime drowsiness, Burks says.

But he emphasizes that other factors — limited agility, for example, or fatigue that's associated with obesity but not due to sleep apnea — may be responsible.

Nevertheless, the study's findings fan the flames of the sleep apnea-related controversy, says Kurt Hegmann, a physician who directs the University of Utah Rocky Mountain Center for Occupational and Environmental Health in Salt Lake City and was not involved in the study.

Federal regulators have been debating whether to require all commercial drivers above a certain BMI to be screened for sleep apnea, and what that BMI should be. This study suggests screening should start at a BMI of 35, Hegmann says.

"This is a valuable study; it shows there's enough information to warrant screening," he says. "It sure looks like there's risk here and that we probably should be doing something about it."

People

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — Members of the **North Carolina Motorcoach Association** know a good thing when they see it, so they've elected **Ralph Young** the group's president for the sixth time.

Young, who is chairman emeritus of **Young Transportation** in Asheville, a company founded by his father 73 years ago, previously served five stints as president of the association.

He was elected president in 1963, nearly 50 years ago, and elected again in 1973, 1988, 1995 and 2003, meaning he has served during six different decades.

Young also has served on the

of **H & R Tours** in Boonville.

Two new operator directors were elected to the board, **Marcus Ardrey** of **Evans Tours** in Charlotte and **Bruce Bechard** of **Southern Express** in Durham.

Appointed to the board as an associate representative was **Jim Harris** of **Carolina Bus and Motorcoach Parts**, and **Cardinal Coach Tours** of Warsaw. Harris is a former president of the association. He no longer operates his charter business.



Ralph Young

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Results at Greyhound Lines set pace at First Group

ABERDEEN, Scotland — As expected, the first half of fiscal 2013 was a difficult period for First Group plc, the largest bus operator in North America and the largest rail operator in the United Kingdom.

The parent company of Greyhound Lines, First Student, First Transit, plus large rail and bus operations in the UK, reported a 2.6 percent increase in revenue from continuing operations for the six months ended Sept. 30.

But the company's statutory operating profit was down more than 57 percent from a year ago, and its basic earnings per share were down 91 percent.

Those numbers, plus uncertainty over British rail franchises, resulted in First Group saying it was leaving its dividend unchanged.

Several First Group business units reported lackluster, but anticipated, results, including the U.K. bus and rail operations, First Transit and First Student.

Amidst the bland was Greyhound Lines, which, by comparison, was a star performer.

Despite a drop in revenue, Greyhound produced a higher operating profit and the best margins of any First Group business unit.

Revenue at Greyhound for the six months ended Sept. 30 was \$532.6 million, down from \$556.6 million for the same six months in 2011.

Greyhound revenue is sensitive to gasoline prices. When the price of gasoline slides lower, as it did last summer, Greyhound revenue drops. The slow economic recovery also has depressed company revenue.

Operating profit at Greyhound was \$52.5 million for the six months ended Sept. 30, versus \$49.4 million a year earlier.

Greyhound's operating margin improved to 9.9 percent for the six

months of this year, compared to 8.9 percent a year ago.

First Group fairly trumpeted the Greyhound results.

"As a result of the actions we have taken over recent years, Greyhound is now a transformed business," said First Group in announcing the numbers.

"From a more flexible and agile operating model, with greater operating leverage, the business is better placed to mitigate the impact that the sluggish economic environment and lower fuel prices had on summer trading."

First Group said Greyhound Express, the direct and limited-

stop Greyhound service launched 22 months ago, continues to be a strong performer.

Greyhound Express is now offered in roughly 70 markets across North America.

Greyhound also has expanded BoltBus service into the Pacific Northwest, and its Crucero USA subsidiary, which serves the Hispanic market, has launched its first direct, non-stop services in Southern California.

Forty-three new coaches were added to the Greyhound fleet during the first half of the fiscal year, and refurbishment of more than 120 vehicles was completed dur-

ing the period.

Capital spending by Greyhound during the first half of fiscal 2013 totaled \$39.6 million, down slightly from roughly \$41 million a year ago.

Operations of Greyhound Canada continue to be streamlined, improving profitability.

For First Group's other U.S. operations, First Student had revenue of \$1.02 billion during the six months ended Sept. 30, down 3 percent from \$1.1 billion a year earlier.

Operating profit at First Student, the nation's largest private school bus contractor, was \$10.8 million, versus \$9 million a year ago.

First Group said it has made "good progress" in addressing performance and strengthening operations at First Student and "the business is now set on the path to recovery."

First Transit, which manages public transit systems, continued to deliver "steady performance."

Revenue increased to \$627.8 million, essentially unchanged from a year ago.

Operating profit was \$45.5 million this year, compared to \$44.1 million during last year's first half. The 2012 operating margin improved to 7.2 percent.

Refurbishing program reaches 400 buses

NAPPANEE, Ind. — The massive Greyhound refurbishing program launched by ABC Companies here just over two years ago has delivered its 400th rebuilt coach.

ABC said the Greyhound Fleet Revitalization Program is designed to enhance the trip experience for passengers by giving Greyhound MCI-model coaches an extensive facelift and mechanical rehabbing.

ABC set up a dedicated refurbishment center here to recondition

the coaches from bumper-to-bumper. The first of the redone Greyhounds rolled out of the facility in September 2010. (See Oct. 15, 2010 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Each bus passes through 25 work stations during the process, which takes roughly 45 days. Enhancements to the coaches include Wi-Fi, 110-volt outlets, LED lighting, leatherette passenger seating, added legroom, wheelchair lifts, and new paint scheme.

The mechanical upgrades in-

clude rebuilt engines, transmissions, axles, bearings and A/C compressors.

"The fleet revitalization program allows us to take the workhorse of our fleet and upgrade it to like-new condition, with more comfortable seating and modern amenities on an environmentally friendly vehicle," said Greyhound COO Bill Blankenship.

A workforce of more than 100 deliver an average of 19 revitalized coaches monthly.

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Helping drivers cope with new motorcoach technology

By Dave Millhouser

"When you come to a fork in the road, take it" are the immortal words of Major League Baseball Hall of Famer Yogi Berra.

For years we've assumed the quote was a joke, but we may be approaching the fork.

In yesteryears, coach safety was almost 100 percent dependant on the driver.

Sure, a mechanic could crank the slack adjuster backwards on the brakes of a bus about to depart down a steep driveway (a story for another day), but only rarely was a mechanical failure the cause of a crash.

Highly trained drivers were key to preventing accidents, often overcoming mechanical problems with their skill.

A dazzling variety of new safety technology has become available over the years, and we're seeing more of it installed on coaches as either standard equipment or options.

Some is mandated and some ordered by operators out of ethical concern, or in response to market demands. All add cost and complexity to the bus.

In addition to making life simpler for drivers, technology such as automatic transmissions and power steering has reduced the skill necessary to operate a coach.

They made it possible to hire folks who didn't know how to shift gears, or gauge a turn. Modern engines and brakes are so powerful drivers don't have to be as skilled to make lane changes or handle grades.

With the advent of technologies such as electronic stability control, antilock brakes and adaptive cruise control, the coach now has the ability to resist driver inputs that might create mischief. These, along with lane departure warning, event recorders, tire monitoring, fire suppression, proximity sensors and other emerging technologies, have the potential to be real tools for improving safety.

On the other hand, there is always the prospect of unintended consequences.

It's not like we're at a point where we can choose between superior driver training or increased dependence on safety technology.

We're at the fork, and we need to go both ways.

We need to continue to stress

training and driver supervision because, in the end, safety will always be in their hands. We can't slip into letting them lean on gizmos.

It will always be important to know what is actually behind the coach, regardless of what the backup proximity sensors are indicating.

And, we need to maintain the new stuff. Safety will become increasingly dependant on your shop.

Once drivers are accustomed to these tools, they're going to become, to some extent, dependant on them. If they don't work correctly, two things are likely to happen.

First, there will be accidents.

Second, there will be lawyers. I'm not sure which is worse.

There will be litigious ugliness if there is an accident and it becomes apparent that a piece of safety equipment wasn't working. You can count on the driver's lawyer to point that out.

It behooves us to make sure that, to the greatest extent possible, these things are functioning correctly when the coach is dispatched. They need to be an important part of preventative maintenance.

Training becomes more (not less) important. Drivers still need to

know how to manually do all the things critical to safety, but they also must understand how all these new tools work.

A coach that develops a failure in antilock brakes can still be driven safely, but differently. You're not going to replace a bus mid-charter because the adaptive cruise control burps.

Who needs the midnight call from a driver who thinks their coach is losing power -- when, in fact, the automatic stability control has taken away driver control of the throttle as punishment for cornering too fast?

Part of training should include explaining how these things work, which ones are crucial, and how you want a driver to handle a system failure.

If the backup camera kicks the bucket, it's still possible to actually walk around the coach or have someone assist the driver in backing up. But, when an automatic slack adjuster fails, it needs to be fixed before continuing the trek. You get it.

Management ought to develop policies outlining how specific technical hiccups are handled. Some require the bus come to an immediate

halt, some are insignificant, most are somewhere in between.

When do you want the driver to call in as opposed to forging

ahead? These things all need to be understood before problems arise.

Properly maintained, these technologies, utilized by savvy drivers, are going to save lives and money. If we don't explain and maintain them, lawyers and regulators are going to kill us.

We're going to have to invest in both maintenance and driver training. The payoff will be fewer accidents and all the emotional and financial costs that come with them.

Yogi clearly was referring to dependence on GPS technology when he said: "You've got to be very careful if you don't know where you are going because you might not get there."

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



Dave Millhouser

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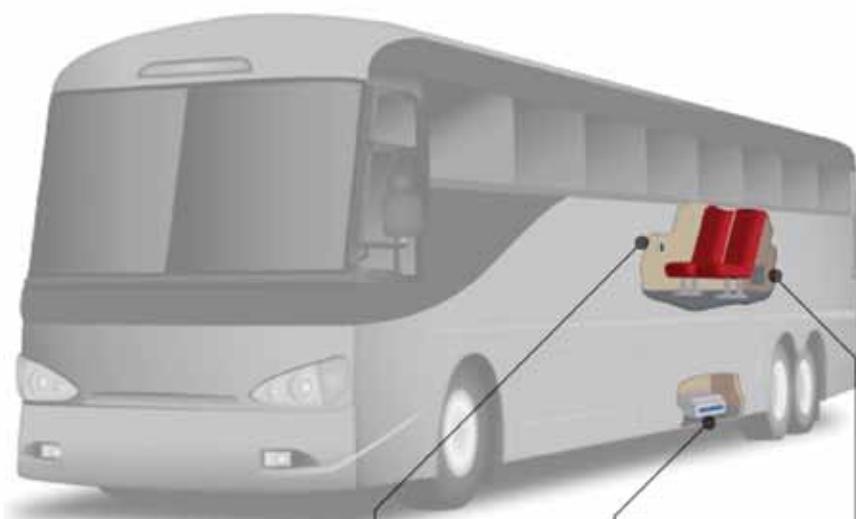
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Industry rebounds

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Long-term impact?

But the damage for many operators was pronounced and real, and will undoubtedly linger.

One operator worried that customer demand — not related to recovery — will be reduced for some time. Residents will be focused on rebuilding their homes and lives instead of taking pleasure trips.

“It looks pretty bad, said Thomas McCarney, owner of McCarney Tours, which is based at Wading River on the north side of New York’s Long Island.

“For a lot of these people, it’s going to be a long time before they recover, and it could affect the industry to a degree for a while anyway.”

His charter-and-tour business lost at least two-dozen jobs in the first week after the storm but began seeing business pick up on the weekend.

Presley said “if there are sustained cancellations and schools start canceling charter trips, some guys (operators) might not be able to survive that. Hopefully things will get back up and running and get back to normal.”

Techno vulnerability

Logistics presented perhaps the biggest overall challenge to operators, and reminded one and all of the industry’s dependence on and vulnerability to contemporary technology.

Because of power failures, blown-down cell phone towers, and busy phone circuits, operators found it difficult or impossible to communicate with passengers, potential customers and with each other.

They couldn’t make phone calls, send emails, watch the news, get regular mail, do banking, talk with customers and coordinate with others.

Websites couldn’t be accessed or updated. Some operators had to relocate and in at least one case, move into the owner’s home.

Even a week after the storm hit, Andrea Malamut, executive director of the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Operators Association, still had not been able to contact some coastal operators and could not assess how they were doing or if they needed help.

The gasoline impact

While diesel fuel shortages popped up in some areas, the biggest problem was the shortage of gasoline and long lines to get it. That made it hard for employees to

get to work.

Godfrey LeBron, vice president of Paradise Travel in Hicksville, N.Y. which also is on Long Island, was scheduled to take a group of investment bankers to White Plains, N.Y., on Nov. 5, after the storm subsided.

But the trip was canceled because the bankers couldn’t get gasoline to get to the bus.

LeBron also is president of the Bus Association of New York.

“And, let’s face it, you are not going to go to work and leave your family stranded if they are sitting there in the dark and the cold,” he said.

But, by the end of week one, there was hope.

Tim Stout, owner of Stout’s Transportation Service in Ewing, N.J., said that after the storm had passed through he couldn’t run buses to Atlantic City, but “some of our customers asked to go to other casinos. We are taking some up to the other casinos in Bethlehem, Pa.”

McCarney lost about 25 jobs during the week following Sandy but was getting business by the weekend, hauling people to football games, shopping trips and a sight-and-sound show and meal. “It feels like something is getting back to normal, or at least starting to,” he said.

Week’s work lost

Most of the major sources of business for private bus and motorcoach operators were impacted in the hardest hit areas during the first week and into the second following the storm.

Schools and destinations were closed and LeBron said essentially the 52-week year had become a 51-week or 50-week year for many businesses.

The annual New York City marathon — scheduled for Nov. 4 — was cancelled because of Sandy. It typically draws about 50,000 runners from throughout the world and provides major revenue for tourist-related businesses, including motorcoach operators.

Said LeBron: “While I’m a runner and certainly agree it should have been canceled; that was a tremendous loss of business revenue to the bus industry because so many buses are used to do the marathon.

“This time of year, you worry about the effects and what is going to happen to the holiday season that is so powerful.”

Schedules blown away

One of the biggest, easily identifiable losses was the charter-and-scheduled trips to the 12 casinos in Atlantic City that attract 30 million visitors annually.

About three-fourths of the city was flooded. But thanks, in part, to an \$18 million bulkhead completed earlier this year, most of the casinos were not harmed, according to *Bloomberg Businessweek*. Casinos began re-opening late Friday, Nov. 2.

John Yelencsics, an owner of Raritan Valley Bus Service in Edison, N.J., was one of many companies canceling trips to Atlantic City in the week following the storm.

But, by that Saturday, he planned to resume some trips to the gaming Mecca. “It’s funny but we have customers. Now they want to get out of the house,” he said.

But even as companies were able to resume service, some operators worried about access to customers.

Mark Waterhouse, owner of Classic Tours in Manchester, N.J., pointed out that some prime locations for casino visitors, such as senior residential centers, were without power.

His company had a transit contract into Seaside Heights, N.J., and other destinations, that ended up being ground zero for the storm. So, several days after the storm had died down, he still had 40 drivers sitting at home waiting for business.

“Even the groups going on distance trips, the foliage tours and things like that, now they are canceling because they have to stay home and repair their homes,” Waterhouse said.

Commuter services also took a hit because people who normally ride coaches to jobs in the New York City area weren’t going to work, said Scott Henry, owner of Martz Trailways.

The eastern Pennsylvania-based company provides service in such storm-impacted areas as Pennsylvania; Washington, D.C.; Virginia, and New York City.

Five days after the storm, he estimated his business had hit only 40 percent of the typical 58 daily routes he operated before the deluge.

“Ridership is way down because — for some people — their businesses aren’t even open yet. So, we expect it to be slow for a while,” he said.

Henry was able to resume some service after a week but at a reduced level. Atlantic City routes resumed Nov. 10.

Buses/water don’t mix

In addition to the loss of business, some operators are likely to have physical damage, such as vehicles submerged in corrosive salt water, said Randy O’Neill, senior vice president of Lancer Insurance, a major bus and motorcoach indus-

try insurer based in Long Beach, N.Y.

A week after the storm, claims were starting to trickle in.

“Obviously, with the coastal damage in New York and New Jersey, we are not getting any reports from those areas because they are still without power, without phones,” he said.

Fortunately, because residents and companies had plenty of warning about the severity of Sandy, many were able to move their vehicles to higher ground, he said.

“As you move inland, a lot of the water was river water or lake water. Any body of water that existed overflowed. In those instances, the further you get from the seashore, those vehicles are in better shape than the ones that took the saltwater hit,” O’Neill said.

Even Lancer was directly impacted by the super storm.

The company’s main building suffered damage with about a foot of water inside, and was without power for more than a week.

The company had to relocate about 150 employees to a smaller claims office 35 minutes away.

Business gains

One bright spot was that some companies were able to pick up evacuation and relief work. But operators who got that business realized it would be short-lived. And some of it was heart-rending.

Addressing the situation for many New York operators, LeBron said: “In the short term, it (Sandy) is going to put a kink in it (business). But bear in mind there is going to be a lot of work right now moving emergency workers around. It is kind of what you lose on one side, you will pick up on another.”

That assumes, of course, a company was able to contact those who needed help.

Waterhouse said while his company was ready and able to help, initially he couldn’t reach those who needed it because his and their phones were down. And too few had access to each other’s cell phone numbers.

“The irony is that until we had our phone system up after two days, we were unable to reach out to the people who might need our buses,” he said.

Archie Cauley, owner of Cauley Coach Inc. in Saint Albans, N.Y., was thrilled to land a month-long job driving hospital workers to different locations in New York and New Jersey. Buses were being used by the hospitals because it was so difficult for workers to drive their personal vehicles.

His small 28-year-old charter company, which has three buses, saw all of its business stop in the

week Sandy hit. The office was without power for the week, too.

He said the new job would more than make up for his loss.

Eddie Vanderhoof, owner of E. Vanderhoof & Sons in West Orange, N.J., got a contract to shuttle linemen to locations in New Jersey, taking them to and from work sites and hotels twice a day. The workers had come from all over the country.

He estimates there were about 200 to 300 workers at each of six work sites.

“This is my third year of doing it. Every year there is a storm,” he said.

But streets were difficult to navigate. “Lines are down and poles are down. Just getting back and forth to the shop is a task,” he said.

The evacuation component

Another source of revenue was senior living centers that had to evacuate their residents.

Stout transported about 500 senior center residents living in the shore areas and then returned them home after the storm. “We have never transported that many people before,” Stout said.

He is also president of the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association.

Early in the storm, LeBron got a call to help evacuate senior citizens from an assisted-living facility in a mandatory evacuation area in West Babylon, N.Y. He couldn’t reach any of his employees so he had to do the job himself, moving about 100 people, including 70 residents. The residents were moved to three other centers that had no power.

“What broke my heart was watching one gentleman under hospice care who had to be taken out in an ambulance,” he said.

Another source of jobs were local, state and federal governmental agencies.

The Federal Transit Administration announced it was working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to secure as many as 350 buses to be used across New Jersey to help commuters reach Manhattan and surrounding areas until rail service could be restored.

Dave Benedict, owner of David Tours & Travel, based in Philadelphia, has a contract to help FEMA. He is affiliated with a FEMA task force in Philadelphia, one of 28 in the nation, and he is obligated to send buses wherever they are needed.

After Sandy, two of his more than 50 vehicles were dispatched to Long Island.

Some operators said that

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Industry rebounds

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committing to help out can be problematic because it takes away from normal business.

Benedict said in a normal year, his company would be in its busiest time of year, with the tourist season still ongoing and college sports underway.

“You have to serve the clientele you are already committed to,” he said.

LeBron agreed and said that while shuttling people brings in money, “it’s not exactly what makes you happy because at the end of the day, it is still going to pull away from discretionary income. And that is the business that we are in.”

Challenges aplenty

While communications was a struggle for just about everyone, getting fuel was an issue for some. Power outages not only meant no access to the Internet, email or news but it also stopped gasoline pumps from working.

Wireless devices, whether phones or computers, often were lifelines.

“You realize how much you

rely on technology, with the servers going out,” LeBron said.

After Waterhouse was told his Classic Tours main building would be without power for at least two weeks, he moved operations to his home. Office phones were routed to personal cell phones.

“Cell phone service is very spotty. Everybody’s primary phones are down, and I assume they lost some cell phone towers as well. If you waited long enough, you could get through on a cell phone. But apparently the cell phone circuits were very, very busy as well,” Waterhouse said.

Making things worse, many customers were without power or phone service. They also were unable to call or to be reached easily.

Stout said that “with the phones down for a while before we had the generators going, we had to contact every customer and ask them to reconfirm every trip. That was time consuming. Without the Internet, we could not send or receive emails.”

Lancer’s move to the smaller claims office included putting its 150 employees on shifts and switching claims and other calls to an office in Ohio.

Employees struggle

Thomas JeBran, president of Trans-Bridge Lines in Bethlehem, Pa., said. “I talked to a guy (employee) today. He has no power, no communication and doesn’t know when he will get it.”

Trans-Bridge attempted to resume normal service Monday after Sandy hit but within days had to discontinue some Wall Street routes because “our ridership has been substantially lower than usual.”

When the little community of Delaware Water Gap in northeastern Pennsylvania lost power and the ability to pump water, Martz Lines bought and donated a generator to run the water.

“It’s a good thing for the community, and I needed water to wash my buses,” said Scott Henry.

Gasoline lines

Diesel shortages appeared to be spotty but not a major problem. Some pipelines were shut down. Larger operators had their own tanks and said their suppliers assured them they could keep getting fuel.

Also, with so many tours and trips cancelled, the need for fuel was reduced.

But gasoline was a major headache because customers and employees had to spend hours in line just to get it or couldn’t get it.

Bob Mann of Bob Mann Tours in Spring Valley, N.Y., said there were cases where drivers could not get gasoline to get to work and companies were unable to get diesel.

He said the 20-some motorcoach companies he works with had secured diesel. Only one was shut down because of rain-damaged buses.

Stout’s was one of several companies that arranged car or van pools or shuttle service to help employees who were having trouble getting gas to get to work.

Prep time

Several operators said they were fortunate to have had advance warning about Sandy, which started as a well-publicized hurricane. They had time to shut off computers, move vehicles to higher ground, and print out customer lists.

“One thing about hurricanes, as opposed to other natural disasters, was this was not a surprise for several days,” said O’Neill of Lancer.

The insurance company directed all its computer operations and

phone service to offices in Ohio with minimal disruption to customers.

Waterhouse said before the storm hit, employees at Classic Tours backed up all computer data onto an external hard drive. Stout’s Transportation printed out hard copies of customer lists and driver orders for two weeks out.

Sandy was much more destructive than Hurricane Irene, which struck the East Coast in August, 2011. But in a few cases Irene helped companies prepare.

Irene inspired Martz Lines to install a generator on a roof of one of its buildings to operate computers in case of an emergency. It kicked on during Sandy.

And the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association had worked with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and New Jersey Transit to develop procedures and protocols to reach bus and motorcoach companies throughout the state.

“If a company in the affected area can’t help, one in a nearby area could,” she said.

“We began a dialogue for just this type of situation,” Malamut said. “So we were proactive rather than reactive.”

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Ballot measures of industry interest (mostly) win approval

General election voters generally approved ballot measures of interest to the motorcoach industry.

In Michigan, voters took a big step toward clearing the way for a new U.S.-Canada bridge crossing.

In Massachusetts, voters said yes to "Right to Repair" for all vehicles.

In Arkansas, voters approved raising a statewide tax to pay for new roadways.

In Maryland, voters decided to add table games to its casinos and allow a new gambling facility to

open in Price George's County, just outside of Washington, D.C.

In Rhode Island, measures approved by voters will permit slots parlors in Lincoln and Newport to expand into full casinos.

But in Oregon, which has casinos operated by Indian tribes, voters rejected privately-owned gambling operations.

Three more states, Alabama, Montana and Wyoming, approved measures to prevent individuals and/or businesses from being compelled to participate in a health-care

system, a main component of President Obama's health-care law.

In Florida, voters rejected that idea.

Similar measures won approval in 2010 in Arizona, Missouri, Oklahoma and Ohio but are being litigated.

In Alabama, voters endorsed secret ballots for union elections.

Similar measures were approved in 2010 in Arizona, South Carolina, South Dakota and Utah.

In Arizona and Oklahoma, voters agreed to limit property tax increases.

In Washington state, voters made it harder to raise taxes by requiring a two-thirds vote from legislators to enact new taxes.

The bridge ballot initiative rejected by voters in Michigan would have mandated there be another vote on a new bridge crossing between Detroit and Canada.

The measure, which was put on the ballot in September, was defeated by about a 60 percent to 40 percent margin.

The existing 83-year-old Ambassador Bridge is owned by Manuel Moroun, who spent more than \$30 million lobbying for the ballot measure that would have required a separate vote authorizing a new crossing. (See Oct. 15 *Bus & Mo-*

torcoach News.)

Michigan and Canada signed an agreement in June to construct a long-awaited second bridge between Detroit and Windsor, Ontario.

That deal included \$550 million in Canadian funds to cover Michigan's share of the \$950 million project. Canada would recoup the costs by charging tolls.

A new crossing is backed by automakers and by Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder, a Republican.

In Arkansas, voters approved a constitutional amendment for a 10-year, one-half percent sales tax increase to finance a \$1.8 billion bond issue to build a four-lane highway system connecting all corners of the state. (See Nov. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News.*)

The highway proposal was referred to the ballot by the legislature in 2011, and was supported by Gov. Mike Beebe, a Democrat.

When the Massachusetts state legislature passed the nation's first right-to-repair law earlier this year, it excluded vehicles over 10,000 pounds.

But state voters overwhelmingly approved a different version of the law, which includes all motor vehicles sold in the state.

However, there's still a chance state lawmakers could change that

as they reconcile differences between the ballot measure and the deal reached with automakers previously.

For vehicles manufactured from 2002 through model year 2014, the law as approved by voters requires a manufacturer of motor vehicles sold in Massachusetts to make available for purchase, by vehicle owners and in-state independent repair facilities, the same diagnostic and repair information and tools that the manufacturer makes available through an electronic system to its dealers and in-state authorized repair facilities for no more than fair market value and on terms that do not unfairly favor dealers and authorized repair facilities.

Starting with model year 2015, it prohibits any motor vehicle manufacturer from selling or leasing a new motor vehicle without allowing the owner to have this information and the manufacturer would have to provide access to the information through a standardized, universal non-proprietary vehicle interface, using a standard applied in federal emissions-control regulations.

To learn more about the ballot measure, go to www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/ele12/ballot_questions_12/quest_1.htm.



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Pot party buses?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

approval of the Colorado and Washington measures, no states allowed it for recreational use.

The legalization votes have raised a host of questions, some of which could impact motorcoach operators in ways other than potentially transporting pot users.

Here are questions about Colorado's Amendment 64 researched by *USA Today*.

Will employers scrap drug testing?

Amendment 64 states that legalization of marijuana is not intended to require an employer to permit the use of marijuana in the workplace, nor is it to lead employers to have policies restricting employees' marijuana use.

But, the gorilla in the room is an employer's ability to restrict a worker's use while not on the job.

"Eventually, someone is going to file a lawsuit saying they were terminated for off-duty use of marijuana," said staff attorney Curtis Graves of the Mountain States Employers Council. "And it's difficult to know how that will turn out."

But the fact that marijuana is still illegal under federal law "is helpful to employers," he said.

For now, Graves recommends

businesses proceed cautiously and not "do anything different than they have."

Is the new Colorado measure being phased in? How?

The law mandates that the state adopt a regulatory framework by July 2013 to allow for businesses that sell marijuana for recreation. The first state-approved marijuana stores could be open by about January 2014.

These dates are subject to possible injunction from the federal government because of the state's contradiction with federal law making marijuana illegal.

Q. How much marijuana can an individual have under Amendment 64?

A. Anyone older than 21 legally could possess less than an ounce. The law also allows an individual to grow six marijuana plants, three of which could be flowering at a time in a private, enclosed and secure facility — which could be a home or apartment.

The one-ounce limit applies to possession anywhere outside the facility.

People would be allowed to "keep the remaining harvest, which will end up being more than an ounce," said Denver lawyer Sean McAllister, who helped frame the Amendment 64 language.

Q. Do you have to be a Colorado resident to legally possess marijuana?

A. No.

"It is absolutely not tied to residency at all," McAllister said.

But much like with alcohol and fireworks, the laws of neighboring states apply as soon as a person crosses the state line. When and if the marijuana stores open to the public, tourists would have just as much a right to buy pot as residents.

Q. What does it mean for Colorado to be the first of two states to legalize marijuana?

A. Drug-awareness advocacy groups are bracing for a surge in marijuana use. Researcher Dawn Nannini of TEAM Fort Collins said studies repeatedly have shown that legalization decreases the perception of harm, which leads to increased access and use.

"It's our role now to prepare the community and especially young people for what we expect the consequences will be," she said.

Q. So, the new laws "regulate marijuana like alcohol." Will the state have marijuana lounges or bars?

A. Public use is prohibited but that might not stop a business — perhaps a hotel, restaurant or lounge — from opening a place for marijuana use.

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CAT C-13 410HP, ZF Astronic, New paint/or included in price, west coast/southern unit, \$2,000 off with coupon. VIN #63370. **Was \$207,000 Now only \$175,000!**



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Volvo D13, Volvo I-Shift, Low mileage, aluminum wheels, warranty in effect on engine/transmission. VIN #40338. **Only \$297,500!**



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DD S60 12.7L, ZF Astronic, Recently discounted, \$2,000 off selected pre-owned J4500 with coupon. VIN #62496. **Was \$180,000 Now only \$150,000!**



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