

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: March 22, 1979

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Forwarded to:

Honorable Joan Claybrook  
Administrator  
National Highway Traffic Safety  
Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20590

} SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-79-10 and -11

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About 10:00 a.m., April 11, 1978, a "schoolbus" type bus, occupied by 56 boys and 2 adults, was southbound on I-75 near Tifton, Georgia, en route to Disney World, Florida, from Ypsilanti, Michigan. 1/ The bus was operated by the Ypsilanti Boys Club. As the bus exited I-75 at a safety rest area, it went off the road while negotiating a right curve on the exit lane, overturned, and struck a tree. Three passengers were killed and the driver and 25 passengers were injured.

A post-crash examination of the bus revealed the following deficiencies:

1. Foot brake pedal travel, measured with the engine running, was 6 1/4 inches, 2 1/4 inches beyond the 4-inch manufacturer's recommended maximum.

The brake lining to brakedrum clearance at the front wheels was .030 inch, at the right rear wheel it was .16 inch, and at the left rear wheel it was .125 inch. The maximum clearance suggested by the manufacturer is .040 to .045 inch.

2. The parking brake was out of adjustment and when tested provided no braking torque.

3. The right rear spring had three fractured leaves, leaves three, four, and five.

1/ For more information read Highway Accident Report - Overturn of a Ypsilanti, Michigan, Boys Club Bus, I-75, Near Tifton, Georgia, April 11, 1978. (NTSB-HAR-79-2.)

4. Tire air pressure was: Left front tire -- 36 psi, right front -- 34 psi., left rear tires -- 42 and 46 psi, and the right rears -- 52 and 64 psi. The tire pressure recommended for these tires was 75 psi for the front tires and 70 psi for the dual rear tires.

5. The accelerator return spring was missing from the carburetor and was found in the engine compartment with one end fractured.

The Boys Club did not have any procedure or schedule for servicing the bus and no preventive maintenance was conducted. The director stated that the bus was taken in for repairs "when we realize something is wrong."

Since the State of Michigan did not require that the bus be inspected, the responsibility for its mechanical condition rested solely with the driver and the Director of the Boys Club. Neither person maintained this bus properly, as evidenced by the lack of maintenance records, lack of a maintenance program, and a failure to recognize the most apparent discrepancies, such as the excessive brake pedal travel, inoperative parking brake, improper tire inflation, and broken spring leaves.

The 24-year-old driver was employed by the Ypsilanti Boy's Club in 1975 as a Unit Director; her duties included driving a schoolbus. She held a valid Michigan State chauffeur's license that authorized her to drive this type vehicle; there were no restrictions.

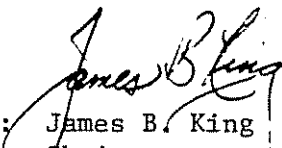
The driver had received no formal busdriver training. She was taught to drive the bus by another Boys Club employee. Although other employees occasionally drove the bus, this driver had been the principal driver for the past 2 years and shared the bus maintenance responsibility with the director.

To assist individuals or groups involved in nonregulated passenger transportation, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

Request that the individual States identify individuals or groups in the State that transport persons on a nonscheduled, not-for-hire basis, with group- or institution-owned vehicles that have a seating capacity of 10 or more persons and encourage the States to disseminate material to these groups on vehicle maintenance.  
(Class II, Priority Action) (H-79-10)

Request that each State identify individuals or groups that transport persons on a not-for-hire basis, with vehicles that seat 10 or more persons and to disseminate information about the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Schoolbus Driver Instructional Program and the National Safety Council's Defensive Driving Course to these individuals and groups.  
(Class II, Priority Action) (H-79-11)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and HOGUE, Members, concurred in the above recommendations.

  
By: James B. King  
Chairman