

Adopted: 7/17/90

Log# H-552H



## National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

### Safety Recommendation

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Date: August 22, 1990

In reply refer to: H-90-90

Mr. George Davis, President  
National Association of State Directors  
of Pupil Transportation Services  
New York State Department of Education  
Room 3059 - CEC  
Albany, NY 12230

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About 7:34 a.m., central daylight time, on Thursday, September 21, 1989, a westbound school bus with 81 students operated by the Mission Consolidated Independent School District, Mission, Texas, and a northbound delivery truck operated by the Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, McAllen, Texas, collided at Bryan Road and Farm-to-Market Road Number 676 (FM 676) in Alton, Texas. Nineteen students died at the accident scene, and two died later in the hospital. The 21 fatalities were the result of drowning or complications related to the submersion. Furthermore, 3 students sustained serious injuries, 46 others sustained minor injuries, and 11 students were not injured.<sup>1</sup>

Because of time constraints, students will often be responsible for rescuing themselves and fellow passengers before help arrives from bystanders and public safety officials. Therefore, comprehensive guidance is needed to train school bus passengers to develop a personal escape plan and to train school busdrivers and public safety officials in emergency egress and the performance of rescues from a school bus. The final product should be a comprehensive guide that pupil transportation officials and emergency responders can use to implement training and drills.

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<sup>1</sup>For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--"Collision between Mission Consolidated Independent School District School Bus and Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Inc., Tractor-Semitrailer, Intersection of Bryan Road and Texas Farm-to-Market Road Number 676, in Alton, Texas, September 21, 1989" (NTSB/HAR-90-02).

As a minimum the guide should include specific objectives for pupil transportation officials to train passengers in making an emergency exit from a school bus that has been involved in an accident resulting from any of the following situations: the school bus remains on its wheels or is on its side or roof; all emergency exit doors may be used for evacuation or only some of the emergency exits may be used; fire, smoke, or toxic fumes are present; and the school bus is completely submerged on its side or roof or upright. Also, passengers should be trained to use each type of emergency exit. Alternate means of escape should also be considered in case any of the designated emergency exits are blocked or disabled. A key component in this guide should be a section dealing with training each passenger to develop a personal escape plan for use on a school bus.

The guide should also contain information for emergency responders, including police and rescue personnel, to deal with the school bus accident situations mentioned above. These responders should have a rescue plan to deal with each type of school bus normally used by the various school systems in their jurisdiction. They should be familiar with all emergency exits as well as means of assisting passengers from the school bus if the emergency exits are not functioning. Also, they should be trained in getting to school bus wreckage under any difficult situations that would be found in their response area, for example, a bus route along waterways, bridges, or a ravine. Their participation in planning the guide is essential. The guide should also include recommendations for the frequency of providing periodic passenger exit drills and training for emergency responders to ensure that they are kept current on the appropriate escape and rescue procedures.

Further, the guide should reflect any updated information concerning emergency egress. It should involve contributions from students, pupil transportation officials, and school bus manufacturers. This guide should be developed and distributed nationally to public and private schools as well as to the private sectors that use school bus type vehicles to transport children to and from school and to and from other activities.

The Safety Board believes that because of its familiarity with pupil transportation, the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) is in a position to provide key leadership in developing and distributing the guide. Further, the Safety Board believes that NASDPTS should convene a national task force in cooperation with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to prepare the comprehensive school bus emergency evacuation-rescue guide. The task force should be comprised of representatives from schools, State education-pupil transportation agencies, police, fire, and rescue departments. The Safety Board believes that representatives from the Parent Teachers Association, NASDPTS, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs Association, the National Association of State Emergency Medical Service Directors, the National Council of State Emergency Medical Service Coordinators, the NHTSA, and the International Association of Fire Chiefs should be involved with the task force. Among the items the task force should consider would be the final publication and distribution of the guide.


Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services:

Cooperate with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to convene a national task force to prepare a comprehensive school bus emergency evacuation-rescue guide. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-90-90)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-90-74 through -78 and reiterated H-89-5 to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; H-90-79 through -80 to the Texas Department of Public Safety; H-90-81 to the Texas Education Agency; H-90-82 through -83 to the Hidalgo County; H-90-84 through -85 to the City of Alton; H-90-86 to the Mission Consolidated Independent School District; H-90-87 to the Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc.; and H-90-88 through -89 to the Valley Coca-Cola Bottling Co., Inc.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility "to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any action taken as a result of its safety recommendations. Therefore, it would appreciate a response to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation H-90-90 in your reply.

KOLSTAD, Chairman, COUGHLIN, Vice Chairman, and LAUBER and BURNETT, Members, concurred in this recommendation.

  
By: James L. Kolstad  
Chairman