

## Toys R Us Mascot Teaches Bus Safety

On Sept. 11, 2004, the Liverpool School Bus Safety Team attended the "Back to School Safety Fair" held by Toys R Us in Clay, Onondaga County.

A group of Liverpool bus drivers attended the event, bringing with them "Barney," a transit style robotic bus. Also at the event was an ambulance, fire truck, fire rescue truck, D.A.R.E. sheriff, and of course, Jeffrey the Giraffe - the official Toys R Us representative. He came on the school bus to look around but had a little trouble, as he was too tall. So he poked his head out of the emergency roof hatch.

Students were taught to "check before you step" when getting off the bus - a crucial method used to guard against vehicles passing a bus on the right hand side. They were then asked to take 10 GIANT STEPS

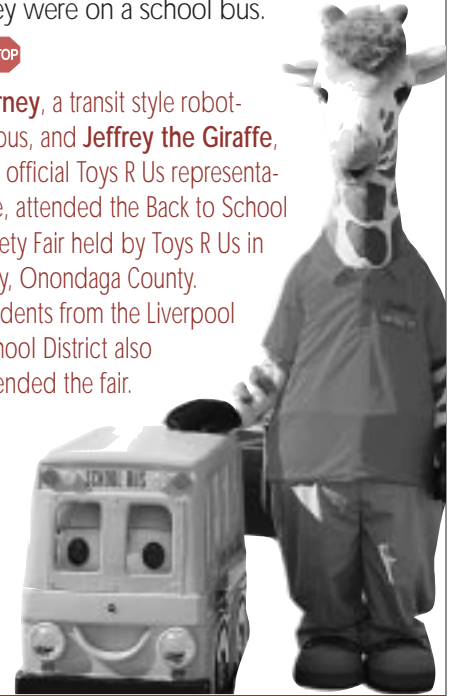
down the side of the road where, "I can see the driver and the driver can see me." From there, students were instructed to wait for the drivers universal crossing signal to begin crossing, and then stop in the road when they were even with the second headlight on the bus. Next, they were told to peek around the left side of the bus to make sure no one is passing the on that side, check to the right and make sure all traffic is still stopped. Students were told that if they hear the horn blow it means there is danger and to go back to where they came from.

Students were also shown the emergency exits, doors, windows and roof hatches, as well as how to open them. Several parents were also present at the event and remarked at how much school

bus safety had changed since last time they were on a school bus.



Barney, a transit style robotic bus, and Jeffrey the Giraffe, the official Toys R Us representative, attended the Back to School Safety Fair held by Toys R Us in Clay, Onondaga County. Students from the Liverpool School District also attended the fair.



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# safely speaking

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**NYS Education Department Newsletter  
for School Bus Driver Instructors**



**Dennison Cottrell** of the DOT Passenger and Freight Safety Division kicked off the 18th annual School Bus and Passenger Carrier Safety Conference on Oct. 25th at the Prime Hotel in Saratoga Springs. More than 400 people attended the three day conference that covered a range of themes with speakers from several state and federal agencies, private companies and non-profit agencies.

## 18th Annual DOT Safety Conference held in Saratoga Springs

Dennison Cottrell, director of the state Department of Transportation Passenger and Freight Safety Division, was “enthusiastic as heck” on Oct. 25, the day the state Department of Transportation’s 18th annual School Bus and Passenger Carrier Safety Conference kicked off.

“It’s going to be a busy time. I hope you enjoy it,” Cottrell said. “I’m just proud and pleased to be working with such a fine group of people.”

Over 400 people were registered for the conference, which was held at the Prime Hotel in Saratoga Springs from Oct. 25-27. The conference brought together transportation supervisors, SBDIs, and MIs, representatives from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), state government, New York City Transit (NYCT), New York Association of Pupil Transportation (NYAPT), several private companies, and many more state, federal, and private organizations.

“This represents a partnership between government and industry that we enjoy here in New York State,” Cottrell said. “As we look at the safety issues we face, it

Assemblywoman **Amy R. Paulin** of the 88th Assembly District spoke during the DOT school bus and passenger carrier safety conference recently held in Saratoga Springs. Paulin has been working to make automatic fire suppression systems required on school buses statewide. The systems, she said, would stop an engine fire before it even started.



takes many people to put the whole together.”

There were as many themes to the conference as there were organizations.

They included:

**DRIVER HIRING AND TRAINING** (see page...). These sessions focused on the basics of who to bring into your organization, the standards that exist, and how to make sure your drivers are qualified and informed.

**VEHICLE EMISSIONS** (see page...). These sessions outlined the new regulations that will be coming in the next few years, as well as how to make positive changes

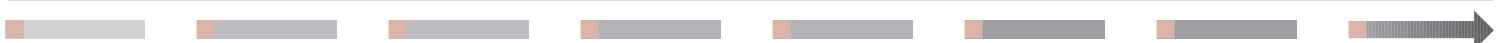
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A fireman carries a student to safety during the mass casualty incident drill held in the Warwick Central School District this October. The drill simulated a car hitting a bus broadside, causing it to roll over. This triggered a response from the local fire department, police department, ambulance corps and hospital. School officials said the drill was a way for the drivers, parents, students, emergency personnel and school employees to prepare for the worst.



## Driver training and hiring: What history has taught us

A look to how we got here, and where we are going

Before the infamous “Congers Accident” on March 25, 1972 in which five students were killed in Congers, NY, almost anyone could drive a school bus, said Paul Mori of the Huntington Coach Corporation. Mori spoke during the state Department of Transportation’s School Bus and Passenger Safety conference in Saratoga Springs this past October on the importance of driver training, and how to make it more effective.

The accident, which occurred when the school bus collided with an oncoming train, is something that the State Education Department, Department of Motor Vehicles, and Department of Transportation have never forgotten, Mori said.

“The driver was a slipshod driver who didn’t have the training,” Mori said, adding that the he was not like any of the drivers currently on the road. At that time, he said, any training that was offered was not chronicled, mandatory, or systematic.

However, after the accident, new bus regulations were put in place, as were training regulations that continue to be updated to this day.

“We’re required to be out there monitoring our drivers,” Mori said. “These are things that make our school bus drivers better.”

Milestones in the area of training and regulations include:

- 1973 - Driver training required
- 1977 - basic course curriculum
- 1978 - SBDIs trained
- 1979 - advanced course
- 1984 - MI program
- 1987 - pre-service curriculum
- 1988 - new SBDI curriculum
- 1988 - SBDI professional development seminar

1998 - new basic course

1999 - new advanced course

### How to keep your best employees

When you train a good employee, you want to keep him or her in your department.

Mori said there are several things a school transportation department can do to make sure it is hiring and keeping its best drivers.

The first of those things, he said, is taking into consideration drivers who are aging and determining what factors may impair an aging person’s ability to be a safe and effective driver. Also, he said, sometimes new drivers are easier to train than veteran drivers.

“There is a reluctance of senior drivers to take new training,” he said.

Identify your best drivers, Mori said, and make sure that those who are conducting trainings aren’t only your veteran drivers. Sometimes, he said, your newer drivers possess the traits of a good trainer.

When assessing your training process, Mori said to make sure to remove poor trainers, as well as keep an adequate driver-to-trainer ratio.

And of course, make sure to give a consistent message to your drivers.



Paul Mori of the Huntington Coach Corporation spoke at October’s DOT School Bus and Passenger Safety conference on hiring good bus drivers and training them to be even bet-

ter. Mori also outlined the history of training in the school bus industry and the significant strides that have been made in the last thirty years.

“We have to lead by example,” he said. “It’s being consistent with our messages.”

### Factors working against us

Mori listed a group of factors that can work against a transportation department if they are not adequately dealt with. They include:

- ▶ Hours of service
- ▶ Age
- ▶ Language
- ▶ Employment in transportation-related industries
- ▶ Full-time vs. part-time
- ▶ Salaries and benefits
- ▶ Cost of living

“Most drivers give a plus to the xtra copy

### DOT Safety Conference...

(continued from page 1)

today that could affect the health of the children transported across the state.

**BUS FIRES** (see page...). This session covered what causes them, how to avoid them, , and what kinds of plans to have in place to avoid catastrophe in the case of a fire.

**SECURITY.** How to act in the post-Sept. 11th world, and what trans-

portation departments can do to be alert at all times.

**VEHICLE INSPECTIONS.** These sessions covered the ins and outs of how to prepare and pass a DOT safety inspection.

Of course, each theme centered on safety.

“Our work in safety is never done; it’s a challenge” Cottrell said. “Working together I think, we’ll be very successful.” 



# Reduce Diesel Emissions for Safer, Cleaner Air

New regulations, mandates are on the way statewide in an attempt to reduce the amount of harmful chemicals entering the atmosphere

Within the next three years, changes will take place across that state that will significantly reduce harmful diesel emissions and make the air our children breath safer.

Mike Moltzen from the Environmental Protection Agency's Region 2, spoke on this topic during the state Department of Transportation's annual School Bus and Passenger Carrier Safety conference in Saratoga in October. Moltzen outlined the changes about to take place, and described ways school districts can begin to reduce harmful emissions today.

Diesel emissions contain 40 hazardous chemicals, particulate matter, and nitrogen oxides, Moltzen said. Eighteen percent of these pollutants nationwide come from some form of transportation, most of which are diesel vehicles.

## Changes on the horizon

In June, 2006, the new ultra low sulfur diesel (ULSD) will make up 95 percent of the U.S. highway diesel supply, Moltzen said. This will result in a 90 percent reduction in nitrogen oxides and particulate matter by 2007.

These new regulations will reduce emergency room visits by 2,400 a year, and asthma attacks by 360,000 a year, he said.

Currently ULSD is used in New York City and in Buffalo. Gordon Corr of New York City Transit (NYCT) and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, who also spoke at the conference, said NYCT has used ULSD for

the last four years and so far has experienced no problems.

Both Corr and Moltzen said ULSD can be used in conjunction with a diesel particulate filter, which blocks harmful matter from entering the atmosphere. While using ULSD alone results in a 20 to 50 percent reduction in harmful emissions, Corr said that using ULSD and a particulate filter reduces emissions by 80 to 95 percent.

ULSD is also fully compatible with standard fuel and can be mixed in storage tanks, Corr said, so there is no need to drain tanks when switching between fuels.

## What you can do

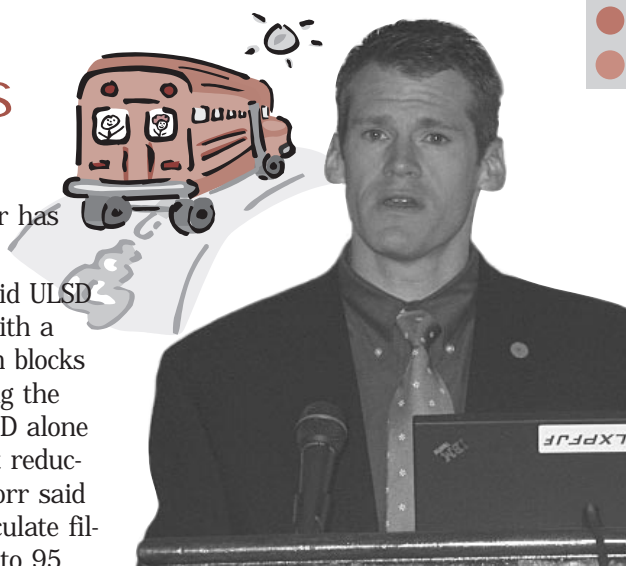
Even though changes are set to take place in the next few years, it could be a long time before every bus utilizes any or all of the new technology. Moltzen pointed out that buses currently on the road will not be required to make the improvements and could run for another 20 years after the new standards are implemented.

However there are things that transportation departments can do to make their bus fleets cleaner and safer. These steps include installing retrofitting technology such as diesel oxidation catalysts and diesel particulate filters; reducing school bus idling; retiring older vehicles early; and making sure the appropriate engine maintenance is done on time.

## Funding programs available

Moltzen pointed out there is substantial funding out there for transportation departments who volunteer to follow some of the above steps.

One program that offers help is Clean School Bus USA, which works to retrofit buses with the proper tech-



**Mike Moltzen** from the EPA Region 2 spoke at the DOT's annual School Bus and Passenger Carrier Safety conference on the newest in technology and regulations dealing with diesel emissions. Moltzen also outlines how school districts can receive funding to start working toward a cleaner environment today.

## Diesel Emissions Contain:

- ↓ 40 hazardous chemicals
- ↓ Particulate Matter  
(causes deep lung penetration)
- ↓ Nitrogen Oxides (smog)

**“One hour of idling burns one gallon of diesel fuel.”**

nology, retire old buses and reduce school bus idling.

For more information, visit <http://www.cleanbusesforkids.com>.

Funding is also available through the EPA. In spring 2005, the agency expects to announce the availability of several million dollars.

## Reducing School Bus Idling

In July, 2003, the EPA partnered with the New York Association of Pupil Transportation, in an effort to reduce school bus idling by 50 percent. Although significant strides have been made in this area statewide,

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# School Bus Fires: Always a possibility

New York state has yet to suffer a fatality because of a bus fire, but they are not be ignored

According to Bob Crescenzo of the Lancer Insurance Company, bus fires – all though not common – have the potential to devastate communities.

Crescenzo, whose company insures all types of transportation vehicles, spoke during the state Department of Transportation's School Bus and Passenger Carrier Safety conference in October where he described bus fires as expensive and dramatic.

## Crescenzo outlined some common causes of bus fires and how to prevent them:

**CAUSE:** Dirty engines. Grease will accumulate on the block, which through wear and heat will ignite over time.

**PREVENTION:** Steam clean engines, during pre-trip and post-trip inspections check for leaking fluids and have drivers report leaks to maintenance.

**CAUSE:** Worn out wiring. Frayed wire or insulation can ignite from a spark or during ignition with fuel or residue.

**PREVENTION:** Regular, preventative maintenance, look for fuel line cracks and leaks during pre-and post-trip checks.

**CAUSE:** Electrical problems, wiring in bus, wiring in VCRs, DVDs, etc, when installed after purchase especially if additional generator is added.

**PREVENTION:** Heed manufacturer's maintenance schedule, no installa-

tion or repairs by unqualified persons.

**CAUSE:** Tire combustion.

**PREVENTION:** Check tire pressure often, driver should use a tire knocker during inspections.

**CAUSE:** Manufacturer's defects, especially related to electrical system heaters and fuel lines.

**PREVENTION:** Read and act on all manufacturer's notices.

**CAUSE:** Using improper parts.

**PREVENTION:** Check all parts with the manufacturers. Don't use non-recommended replacement parts especially for the exhaust and tail pipes.

**CAUSE:** Smoking on or near the bus.

**PREVENTION:** Make "no smoking" announcements. Announce proper disposal procedures, remember that the driver is in charge and must take control of any situation involving smoking.

## Steps to bus fire preparation:

- ◆ Draft a fire management protocol
- ◆ Test your fire evacuation plan
- ◆ Have your engine checked frequently
- ◆ Do not overheat
- ◆ Do not leave flammable material lying around
- ◆ Do not smoke on the bus

## What to do in the case of a fire:

\*Always do a pre-boarding announcement about emergency evacuation situation

- ◆ Move bus to the safest spot



**Bob Crescenzo** of the Lancer Insurance Company said although bus fires are not common, they are among the most expensive and devastating fires that can occur. He outlined some common causes of bus fires and how to prevent them, as well as steps a school district can take to avoid a fire.

- ◆ Evacuate passengers safely and quickly
- ◆ Call for assistance
- ◆ Use extinguisher once passengers are safely off the bus

## Check that fire extinguisher

According to Crescenzo, federal DOT vehicle fire extinguisher recommendations are outdated. Rather than a 5-pound extinguisher, bus drivers should carry a 20-pound

A: B:C dry chemical extinguisher on their bus, he said.

"Five pound extinguishers are almost useless in the case of a bus fire," he said.

Crescenzo also pointed out that school districts should institute a regular driver training program for fire prevention that includes how to use a fire extinguisher.

"The best time to learn how to use  
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**School Bus Fires...**

(continued from page 4)

a fire extinguisher is not during a fire," he said.

**Assemblywoman shows support for automatic fire suppression systems**

For the last two years, Assemblywoman Amy R. Paulin of the 88th Assembly district has been working to get automatic fire suppression systems on school buses across the state.

"School bus and paratransit vehicle fires occur with an alarming frequency in this country," Paulin said during the DOT Motor Carrier Safety Conference. "These fires can spread quickly, engulfing the entire bus within minutes."

According to Paulin, an engine-mounted automatic fire suppression system can extinguish flames within the engine compartment, preventing a fire from spreading into the passenger compartment.

The cost of installing a fire suppression system is small, Paulin said, when compared to replacing an \$80,000 school bus, and especially when compared to the potential loss of life.

Paulin outlined two recent school bus fires in New York state.

The first was on Sept. 9, 2003, when the driver of a school bus carrying 11 children to Lakeville Elementary School noticed smoke coming from under the hood and a loss of power. The driver, according to Paulin, immediately stopped the vehicle and helped to evacuate the children onto another school bus that was following behind them. The fire, she said, had begun in the engine compartment, quickly engulfed the vehicle in flames, and was eventually extinguished by

the fire department.

A consulting engineer who inspected the vehicle determined the fire was caused by an electrical malfunction within the main wiring harness of the vehicle's engine compartment., Paulin said.

The second fire occurred on Jan. 20, 2004 when a Baldwinsville Central School District bus caught on fire while headed to school to pick up students for dismissal. Luckily, she said, no students were on the 66-passenger bus at the time, and the driver evacuated safely. Within 12 minutes the fire - which Paulin said was caused by an electrical short in the engine compartment - spread to the passenger seats and fully engulfed the vehicle.

"Had children been on the bus at the time of the incident, the result could have been tragic," Paulin said. For this reason, she said, the state should take the steps to require fire suppression systems in all or most school buses.


"While preventative maintenance, regular inspections and emergency preparedness of bus drivers and students are all critically important, it is equally important that New York State provide drivers and students with the safest bus technology available," Paulin said. "For roughly the same cost as a new vehicle, our drivers and children can be protected from rapidly spreading engine fires by the installation of engine-mounted automatic fire suppression systems in school buses and paratransit vehicles."

According to Paulin, in the last 14 years, transit bus systems in all 50 states have installed automatic engine compartment fire suppression sys-

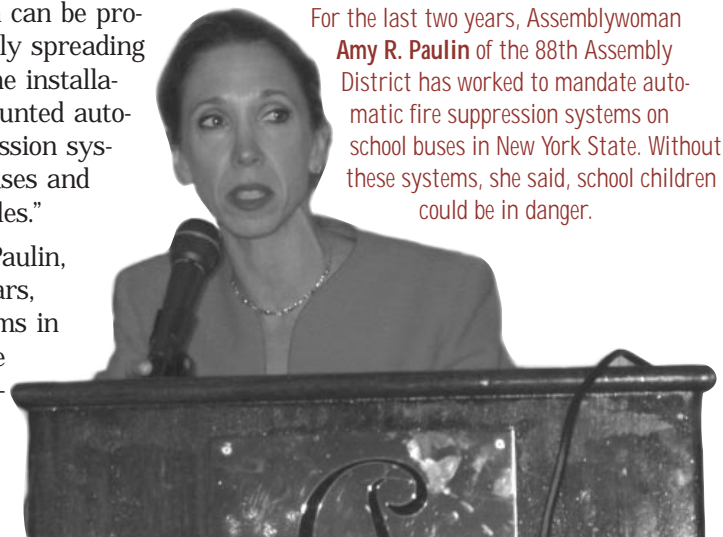
**"School bus and paratransit vehicle fires occur with an alarming frequency in this country. These fires can spread quickly, engulfing the entire bus within minutes."**

**- Assemblywoman Amy R. Paulin**

tems in either all or part of their bus fleets. Over the last three years, 27 states have mandated the installation of automatic fire suppression devices in some or all of their school buses or paratransit buses through state legislation or regulation. These mandates, she said, were imposed by the state departments of transportation, motor vehicles, education or the state police.

"These states understand the enormous potential for tragedy that accompanies any school bus fire," Paulin said. "New York should not wait until tragedy strikes before it follows the lead of 27 other states and requires the installation of engine-mounted automatic fire suppression devices in school buses and paratransit buses." 

For the last two years, Assemblywoman **Amy R. Paulin** of the 88th Assembly District has worked to mandate automatic fire suppression systems on school buses in New York State. Without these systems, she said, school children could be in danger.





## SCHOOL BUS DRILL: The Movie

The 2004 New York State School Bus Safety Drill Competition winner offers tips on bus safety during an emergency, as well as getting on and off the school bus.

The 2004 New York State School Bus Safety Drill Competition winning video opens with students filing onto a school bus while Lori Woodward of the Freeman Bus Corporation in Watertown reminds each one to use the handrail.

This is just one of the simple reminders that Woodward and her partner Madeline Eves offer students during the nearly 15-minute long award-winning video.

When all students are safely aboard their buses, the two women reviewed the “riding rules.”

Woodward stands in the front of the bus to display certain emergency functions, while Eves stands in the back to demonstrate how to use the rear emergency door and roof hatch.

“First of all,” Woodward says, “stay in your seat, sit on the seat with your back against the back, feet out of the aisle, book bags out of the aisle.”

Woodward points out that the seats are designed to prevent injuries in the event of an accident, and therefore students need to stay in them properly.

Holding the bus rules sheet up in front of the students, Woodward tells them to keep their hands to themselves, talk quietly, be good to each other and listen to the driver.

“Rules will help make the ride to school safer,” she said.

Next comes a seatbelt demonstration. Seatbelts are not required by the district, but Woodward points out that students should know how they work.

“They work just like in a car,” she says as she demonstrates how to buckle the belt. “They should be worn low and tight.”

Woodward then moves onto emergency equipment, pointing out the first aid kit in the front of the bus as well as the fire extinguisher. She then demonstrates how to use the extinguisher.

At this point the video begins to alternate shots of Woodward standing in the front of the bus with shots of her at the driver’s seat surrounded by the children. In both positions she demonstrates how to pull the parking break in the event the driver is not able to stop the bus, and shows them how to use the radio.

In the event of an emergency, Woodward tells the students that they should first make sure the bus is stopped, turn the key once to the left to turn the bus off, and then turn it one more time to restore power to the bus. Once power is restored, she tells the students, they will be able to use the radio.

If the light on the radio is not on, she says, that means the key is not in the right position.

Once on the radio, she tells the students they should tell the dispatcher three things:



- ▶ The bus number, which is found in the front of the bus.
- ▶ The route number, also in the front of the bus.
- ▶ Their location.

If you don’t know where you are, Woodward says, use a landmark like a building or business you are near.

Now its time to move to the back of the bus and the emergency doors.

“The first door to use in the case of an emergency is the passenger door,” Woodward says, pointing out the switch near the driver’s seat that is clearly marked “door.”

Then, pointing to the rear of the bus she says that the rear emergency door is the next logical exit.

Eves takes over at this point, saying that it is important for the students to be quiet during an evacuation, but adds that students should only evacuate the bus if there is a risk of another collision, fire, excessive water, or if the bus is stuck on the railroad tracks. All personal items should be left on the bus. These things are replaceable Eves says, but YOU are not.

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### Bus Safety Tips for students from **LORI WOODWARD and MADELINE EVES of Watertown:**

- ⊗ Arrive at the bus stop five to seven minutes early.
- ⊗ Wait until the driver has stopped the bus and open the doors before stepping off the sidewalk.
- ⊗ Use the handrail when getting on and off the bus.
- ⊗ When getting off the bus, make sure to keep personal items close to your body.
- ⊗ If you drop something or forget something on the bus, don’t go after it unless you have the driver’s attention.
- ⊗ Look to both sides before stepping off the bus.
- ⊗ Before crossing the street, walk out 10 steps in front of the bus and wait until the driver gives a signal that it is safe to cross.

## School bus drills...

(continued from page 6)

Eves shows the students how to use the roof hatch, telling them that if the bus was immersed in water this would be the best exit to use.

When you get off of the bus, Eves says, walk 100 feet from the bus, stay in a group and stay quiet.

Now that the rules and the process have been laid out for the students, Eves begins to walk them through a drill using the rear emergency exit.


She tells the children to pretend there is a fire in the front of the bus. Let two older children out first to act as spotters, and then evacuate from front to back, one at a time, she tells the students.

Once the drill is over, Woodward gives the students some more tips for staying safe on and around the bus.

In the morning, she said, arrive at the bus stop five to seven minutes early. This way you won't end up chasing the bus. Then, when the driver pulls up, wait until the bus is stopped and the doors open, and make sure to use the handrail when getting on the bus.

When getting off the bus, make sure to not only use the handrail, Woodward said, but also make sure to keep your belongings tight to your body so nothing gets caught in the handrail or the door.

Look to both sides before stepping off the bus, and then go directly to the sidewalk, she says. If you drop something or forget something on the bus, don't go after it unless you have the driver's attention. If you can't get the driver's attention, Woodward said, you'll have to wait until later to get it.

Woodward ends the video by walking the group of students across the street in front of the bus, walking out 10 steps in front, and then waiting for the driver to give the signal that it is safe to cross. 

## Emerging issues in special education transportation

Speaking on the topic, "What's news is special education transportation," attorney and consultant Peggy Burns of Lafayette, Co. was a featured speaker at July's NAPT conference.

When dealing with a special-needs student on the school bus, and trying to decide how to best serve that student and get him or her to school safely, there is one word Peggy Burns recommends transportation supervisors use - SANITY.

### Situation.

Before diving headfirst into a problem-solving endeavor, Burns recommends collecting the facts.

- What do you know?
- Is there already an aide on the bus?
- What exactly is the child's behavior like?
- Does the student have trouble boarding or unloading from the bus?

### Ask Questions.

- What do you need to know?
- And who do you need to talk to about what should happen next?

### Needs.

- Assume you still have needs, Burns recommends, even after you have asked all of your questions.
- What are those needs?
- How are you going to satisfy them?

### Identify options.

- This, Burns said, could be the most important part.
- What is your range of options?
- How will you address your needs?
- "Some people forget there's never one right answer," she said.
- Think and test.
- Test all of your options against

Attorney and consultant **Peggy Burns** of Lafayette, Co. was a featured speaker at July's NAPT conference in Albany. She spoke on the topic, "What's news is special education transportation," outlining how to deal with special-needs students on the school bus, and how to get those students to school safely.



everything else you know.

- What are the pros and cons of each one?

And finally - **Yes!**

Now you are done and your decision is made. No matter what happens next, you can say what process you used to come to your final decision.

"You can say, 'I believe I was reasonable in making my decision,'" Burns said. "It gets you home free in 95 percent of the situations. "

Of course, by situations she means a parent or doctor who is challenging the decision you, as the transportation supervisor, have made in terms of how a special-needs child will get to school. The challenge may even be in the form of a due process court hearing.

The supervisor, Burns said, needs to keep in mind two acronyms - LRE, and FAPE.

LRE, or least restrictive environment, means a child should be put into a transportation situation that is most like what is available to non-disabled students. FAPE, or free appropriate public education, means that as the transportation supervisor you need to understand your role in the education discussions about that particular special-needs child.

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# Planning for a mass casualty incident

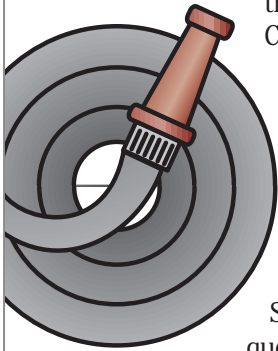
## What if?

What if the school bus went off the road and into a ravine? What if a logging truck hit the back of the bus forcing it on its side?

## What if?

This is the question Deb Stevens, a master instructor and transportation supervisor in the Sandy Creek Central School District, asked a room full of NYAPT conference attendees this July.

Eight years ago a student asked Stevens the same question - and



that's when she set out to develop a school bus mass casualty incident drill, or MCI.

"In reality, somewhere, sometime there will be an accident," she said, showing photos of buses on their sides with cracked windshields and mirrors. "They didn't start the morning out thinking there was going to be an accident," she said of the drivers of those buses.

## What is an MCI? Why is it important?

An MCI is an incident where the immediate needs outweigh the immediately available resources.

For this reason, Stevens said it is important that the local fire departments and ambulance cores are included in the drill. It is important

for a transportation department to have a relationship with the local emergency response personnel, who in turn should also have an opportunity to practice responding to such an accident.

Emergency personnel, Stevens said, need to be comfortable with the layout of a school bus - especially one that is turned on its side.

"If people can focus and plan, they are calm," Stevens said. "People without a plan only add to a problem. Preparedness can make the difference between a close call and a catastrophe."

## Planning..

Steven's first drill with the Sandy Creek district took more than nine months to plan. Since then she has



Sandy Creek Central School District Transportation Supervisor **Deb Stevens** led the planning and implementation of a mass casualty incident (MCI) drill at her home district, and since then has helped other

school districts conduct similar drills. She describes an MCI as an incident where the immediate needs outweigh the immediately available resources. (To the right) This past October, the Warwick Valley Central School District held its own MCI drill. Although it may seem real, each photograph shows part of the simulation and the effort school and emergency personnel, students and parents put into the drill.



## “In reality, somewhere, sometime there will be an accident.”

worked with other districts across the state to plan similar drills, such as the Warwick Valley Central School District, which performed an MCI drill this past October (See page ...).

In the Sandy Creek drill, the bus was hit from behind by a logging truck, causing it to flip on its side. Some of the children were able to get out of the bus themselves, but emergency personnel had to remove the windshield in order to bring in a stretcher.

Students pretended to have a range of injuries from a bruised elbow to massive head injuries. Some students even pretended to die. There were hysterical parents screaming and crying, and a delirious student who wandered off.

“It tests your preparedness when

every second counts,” Stevens said. “It tests your ability to communicate and to prepare for the unthinkable.”

### The Steps...

To organize an MCI in your district, first talk to district administrators and make sure they are interested.

Next, reach out to parents to get them involved in the planning process, and decide on where you want to hold the drill. If you want to hold the drill off school grounds, make sure to contact the property owner as soon as possible.

Now its time to start setting up the committees.

Committee members will decide the scenario for the drill, set up the players, coordinate a timeline, identify hazards in the area, and how those

hazards are most likely to play into a bus accident.

**Are you going to use a regular bus?**

**Maybe a special needs bus?**

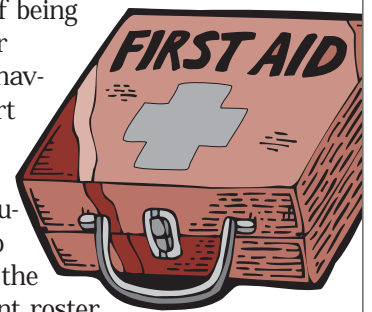
**Will the bus roll onto its side?**

**Will there be a fire?**

**What sorts of injuries are sustained?**

To simulate real-life possibilities, you may want participants to play the role of being parents or someone having a heart attack.

Also, include students who aren't on the bus student roster.



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## Mass casualty incident...

(continued from page 9)

Stevens recommended that several subcommittees be formed, such as a school district committee, a parent committee, a student committee, a comfort and refreshment committee, a prop committee and a media committee.

For safety reasons, all fluids should be emptied from the bus before staging a mock MCI, but everything else that would normally be found on a regular or special needs bus should remain.

Students, Stevens said, will each play a different role and will pretend to have sustained certain kinds of injuries. The idea, she said, is to simulate a range of injuries from serious to minor. Students should wear make-up, she said, and be instructed on how to act so as to appear truly injured. This way, emergency personnel can practice identifying different injuries, getting students out of the bus, and getting the most severely injured to the hospital as quickly as possible.

Then, before the actual drill takes place, there should be practice drills held in tabletop form so each part of the team is comfortable with his or her role in the drill.

## Steps to planning an MCI

1. Get the OK
2. Form committee(s)
3. Conduct meetings
4. Conduct practice drills
5. Hold the full scale drill
6. Evaluate the drill/process

## MCI: The Real Thing

This past October, the transportation department at the Warwick Valley Central School District in Orange County implemented its first mass casualty incident drill, which transportation supervisor Bob Zeller called an “absolute success.”

“It gave district transportation personnel a unique opportunity to learn emergency service procedures and to refine skills for tracking injured students and notifying parents,” Zeller said. “A bus rolled over is probably the biggest nightmare for a district or a parent.”

The mock accident simulated a car hitting a bus broad side, which caused the bus to roll over. The experience was designed to develop and test the school and community response personnel who would be called upon in the event of a real-life bus accident.

Held in conjunction with the Warwick Fire Department, Police Department, Ambulance Corps, and local hospital. Zeller said the MCI drill brought together personnel from all corners of the community to work together for a common goal and show each other what each department’s needs would be in this type of event.

“It was a positive move in the direction of the school district and emergency services to coordinate an effort to ensure a common goal,” Zeller said.

There were 21 students involved in the drill who simulated having a range of injuries. Part of the drill was tracking the students and keeping open the lines of communication between parents. Within one hour and 16 minutes of the initial “accident,” Zeller said an information center was set up at the bus garage along with the superintendent putting together a crisis intervention team.

The kids, Zeller said, were given an awakening of what can happen on the school bus. The same was true for the drivers who came to watch the drill.

“The drivers made comments that their first instinct was to get sick at the site of seeing the bus they drive every day on its side,” Zeller said.

## Reduce Diesel emissions...

(continued from page 3)

Moltzen said there are several things school districts can do everyday.

When a school district adopts a resolution to reduce idling, air will become safer to breathe and the district can reduce fuel costs.


“One hour of idling,” Moltzen said, “burns one gallon of diesel fuel.”

When attempting to reduce idling, Moltzen said, communication is key, so make sure drivers are aware of the effort. Drivers, he said, need to be trained and the goals need to be enforced.

In addition to adopting a formal

written policy, school districts can also:

- ▶ Signs to remind drivers to turn their engines off
- ▶ Parking buses diagonally rather than bumper to bumper
- ▶ Giving drivers a place to wait inside so they don’t have to keep their buses running just to stay warm.

Although the goal is to reduce idling, Moltzen said, there are times when idling is necessary however, Moltzen said, such as when the temperature is below 20 degrees or during emergencies. 



# Mr. Wiggles Rides the School Bus

## A seeing-eye dog gets onsite training in the Goshen CSD

The children on bus route No.69 in the Goshen Central School District had a special visitor this October. His name is Mr. Wiggles.

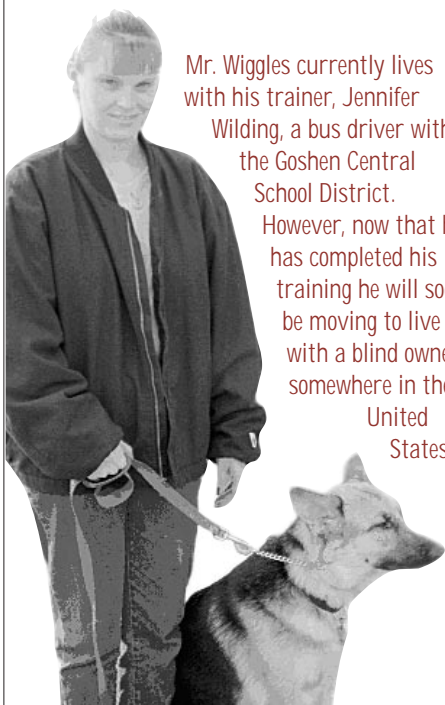
Mr. Wiggles, a shepherd, is a specially trained seeing-eye dog, trained to go with blind children or adults anywhere they travel. They go to supermarkets, malls, restaurants — even on school buses.

Jennifer Wilding, a bus driver with the Goshen Central School District, volunteers to train seeing-eye dogs. Mr. Wiggles lives with Wilding, her husband, and children who act as a sort of “foster family” for the dog during his training. Now that he has completed his training, he’s getting some extra time in by riding with Wilding and her students on the bus.

Goshen Superintendent of Schools, Roy Reese, enthusiastically approved this experience, subject to the approval of the parents of the students riding on Wilding’s bus.

“This could be a wonderful experience for our children,” he said.

And it has been.



Mr. Wiggles currently lives with his trainer, Jennifer Wilding, a bus driver with the Goshen Central School District. However, now that he has completed his training he will soon be moving to live with a blind owner somewhere in the United States.

While riding on the bus, Mr. Wiggles scrunches himself entirely under the bus seat behind the driver. Kids love to pet him and talk to him. However, he will not move unless Wilding gives him the proper command.

And the students sure did love having some extra company on their school bus.

“He’s so cute! If I were a blind student I would feel very safe with him on the bus,” third grader Stacy Galasso said.


For fourth grader Taylor Ouellette, Mr. Wiggles was a friendly face. “Mr. Wiggles is always calm and full of love,” he said.

It takes from 13 to 17 months to train a seeing-eye dog, according to Wilding. During this time the dog lives with the trainer’s family. Only very gentle dogs such as shepherds, labradors, and golden retrievers are chosen and specially bred to be service animals. These dogs are trained in verbal communication for blind owners, and trained in sign language for deaf owners. They will stop at curbs and stairs, and they will delib-



Mr. Wiggles, a newly trained seeing-eye dog, rides the bus to school this October with children in the Goshen Central School District. Mr. Wiggles is trained to scrunch himself entirely under the bus seat behind the driver while the bus is in motion.

erately bump into their owner whenever they perceive danger such as low-lying tree branches. Some even can open ordinary doors or pull wheelchairs.

Soon Mr. Wiggles will be assigned to a blind owner, somewhere in the United States. If it’s a child who rides the bus, he’ll already be a veteran school bus monitor. He can even pass the physical performance test. 

## We want to hear from you

Have a story to tell, a comment to make or a question to ask?

You don’t have to write it, you don’t have to research it, you just have to tell us about it. Call, e-mail, fax or write to Safely Speaking any time you want to share something with our readers.

- ▶ The phone number is (518) 775-5624.
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Our e-mail address is [alanchan@gw.neric.org](mailto:alanchan@gw.neric.org) and/or mailing address is:

Safely Speaking  
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Johnstown, New York 12095



## special education transportation

### from page 7

When deciding how a child should get to and from school, ask yourself, can the student function on the regular bus like anybody else? And if not, what single things can I change that might make the regular bus more acceptable?

“Inch away from the way it looks for everybody else until you get to a transportation system that will meet the student’s individual needs,” Burns said.

Of course, since the introduction of LRE, drivers of regular buses now have all kinds of students on their buses. Drivers need to be trained how to deal their varying needs, and what to do in the case of a problem. In turn, all of the student on the bus should be able to communicate with the driver.

#### Pull-out:

When deciding how a child should get to and from school, ask yourself, can the student function on the regular bus like anybody else? And if not, what single things can I change that might make the regular bus more acceptable?

## Driver training and hiring: What history has taught us from page 2

job, but it’s the other things that get them,” Mori said, “such as salaries and benefits.”

### As the future unfolds

As we look to the future, Mori said we all must learn new techniques for training school bus drivers, continue to retain quality school bus drivers, and of course, continue to make safety our first priority.

“School buses are safe,” Mori said. “We can make them safer by making sure we have the safest drivers out there. “

#### Pull-out

“We’re required to be out there monitoring our drivers. These are things that make our school bus drivers better.”