MOTORCOACH SAFETY –
FOR OVER 40-YEARS THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORATION HAS FAILED
TO IMPLEMENT LIFE-SAVING MOTORCOACH SAFETY

Oct. 27, 2009: National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) holds a public hearing on the Sherman, TX motorcoach crash that occurred on August 8, 2008 and that killed 17 and injured 40.

Oct. 10, 2009: Motorcoach carrying 54 American Fork High School band students crashes outside McCammon, ID. The Band instructor grabbed the wheel when she saw the driver slumped forward and the motorcoach veering off the road. She is killed in the crash and dozens of students are injured.

Apr. 21, 2009: NTSB releases its accident report on a motorcoach crash in Mexican Hat, UT that occurred on January 6, 2008 and that killed 9 and injured 43. The NTSB cites the failure of the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to develop and promulgate motorcoach safety standards as a contributor to the severity of the crash. The Board also makes an unprecedented, mid-year change in its annual Most Wanted Transportation Safety to deem two unfulfilled NHTSA regulatory actions listed as a tentative Acceptable Responses (Yellow) to Unacceptable Responses (Red). These comprise unacceptable failures of NHTSA to increase occupant protection in motorcoach crashes and to decrease motorcoach crashes by using sophisticated crash avoidance technologies.

Mar. 9, 2009: Motorcoach Enhanced Safety Act of 2009 is introduced in the Senate (S. 554) by Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and in the House (H.R. 1396) by Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) and Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA).

Mar. 5, 2009: Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance holds 2-day "Bus Safety Summit" and outlines 8 priority areas for enhancing passenger carrier transportation that include an increased focus on new entrants requiring training and minimum standards; the dangers of frequent motorcoach fires; state-mandated annual bus inspection programs; and electronic on-board recorders to monitor bus driver hours of service.

Jan. 30, 2009: Motorcoach carrying Chinese tourists overturns on U.S. 93 highway on its way to Las Vegas, killing 7, injuring 10.

Oct. 5, 2008: Motorcoach heading from Sacramento to a rural Northern California casino flips and rolls into a ditch, killing 8, and injuring more than 30 others in Colusa County, CA.

Sept. 18, 2008: U.S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation, Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety, and Security holds hearing to review the safety of over-the-road buses and the effectiveness of current Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) regulations governing bus safety.

Sept. 16, 2008: NTSB releases accident report on a truck-tractor semitrailer rollover and motorcoach collision near Osseo, WI that occurred on October 16, 2005 and that killed 5 and injured 35.

Aug. 22, 2008: NTSB releases accident brief on a motorcoach that ran-off-the-road and rolled over near Turrell, AR that occurred on October 9, 2004 and that killed 15 and seriously injured 13.

Aug. 8, 2008: Motorcoach carrying 55 Vietnamese-American pilgrims crashes after blowing a tire, skidding off of highway, and hitting guardrail in Sherman, TX, killing 17, injuring 40. Among other findings, NTSB investigators determined that the motorcoach was operating with remanufactured front steer axle tires, a violation of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

July 31, 2008: Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) introduces the Motorcoach Enhanced Safety Act of 2008 (H.R. 6747).

July 8, 2008: NTSB releases accident report on a motorcoach carrying the Bluffton University baseball team that crashed through an overpass bridge wall, fell onto Interstate 75 and landed on its side in Atlanta, GA that occurred on March 2, 2007 and that killed 7 and injured 21.

Nov. 8, 2007: Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) introduce the Motorcoach Enhanced Safety Act of 2007 (S. 2326).

June 27, 2007: NTSB issues safety recommendations based on investigation of a motorcoach fire on Interstate 45 during Hurricane Rita evacuation near Wilmer, TX that occurred on September 23, 2005 and that killed 23. NTSB recommends that:

- FMCSA establish a process to continuously gather and evaluate information on the causes, frequency, and severity of bus and motorcoach fires and conduct ongoing analysis of fire data to measure the effectiveness of the fire prevention and mitigation techniques identified and instituted as a result of the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center fire safety analysis study, NTSB Recommendation (NTSB Safety Recommendation (NTSB Rec.) H-07-01).
- NHTSA evaluate current emergency evacuation designs of motorcoaches and buses by conducting simulation studies and evacuation drills that take into account, at a minimum, acceptable egress times for various post accident environments, including fire and smoke; unavailable exit situations; and the current above-ground height and design of window exits to be used in emergencies by all potential vehicle occupants (NTSB Rec. H-07-08).

Nov. 21. 2006: NTSB releases accident report on a motorcoach collision with the Alexandria Avenue bridge overpass on George Washington Memorial Parkway in Alexandria, VA that occurred on November 14, 2004 and that injured 11.

Feb. 15, 2006: NTSB issues the following safety recommendations:

- To the 50 States and the District of Columbia, when incorporating the information on commercial motor vehicle automatic slack adjusters from the new edition of the Commercial Driver License Manual produced by American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, include a statement that the manual adjustment of automatic slack adjusters is dangerous because it gives the vehicle operator a false sense of security about the effectiveness of the braking system (NTSB Rec. H-06-03).
- To the District of Columbia and the 24 States that have commercial vehicle inspection programs, include in [State's] commercial motor vehicle inspector training courses a module on automatic slack adjusters that emphasizes that manually adjusting automatic slack adjusters is dangerous and should not be done, except during installation or in an emergency to move the vehicle to a repair facility, because manual adjustment of this brake component (1) fails to address the true reason why the brakes are not maintaining adjustment, giving the operator a false sense of security about the effectiveness of the brakes, which are likely to go out of adjustment again soon, and (2) causes abnormal wear to the internal adjusting mechanism for most automatic slack adjusters, which may lead to failure of this brake component (NTSB Rec. H-06-05).

July 12, 2005: NTSB releases accident report on a motorcoach that crossed over the median and collided with a sports utility vehicle in Hewitt, TX that occurred on February 14, 2003 and killed 7 and injured dozens.

Apr. 27, 2005: NTSB issues safety recommendations to NHTSA based on investigation of a motorcoach that ran off the road in Tallulah, LA that occurred on October 13, 2003 and killed 8 and injured 7. The

NTSB recommends that the agency develop performance standards for passenger seat anchorages in motorcoaches (NTSB Rec. H-05-01).

Aug. 3, 2004: NTSB releases accident report on a motorcoach that ran off the road in Victor, NY that occurred on June 23, 2002 that killed 5 and injured 41.

Aug. 4, 2003: NTSB issues safety recommendations to NHTSA stating that the agency should develop long-term performance requirements for tire pressure monitoring systems, adopt more stringent detection standards than 25 or 30 percent below manufacturer-recommended levels, since pressures at those levels can have an adverse effect on the handling of vehicles, such as 12- and 15-passenger vans (NTSB Rec. H-03-17).

Feb. 26, 2003: NTSB releases accident report on the collision of a motorcoach and a truck tractor-semitrailer in Loraine, TX that occurred on June 9, 2002 and killed 3 and seriously injured 6.

Dec. 17, 2002: NTSB releases accident brief on a motorcoach that ran off the road near Canon City, CO that occurred on December 21, 1999 and that killed 3 and seriously injured 33.

Sept. 18, 2002: NTSB releases accident brief on a single-vehicle motorcoach rollover near Pleasant View, TN that occurred on August 19, 2001 that killed 46 and injured 9.

Sept. 17, 2001: NTSB releases accident brief on a motorcoach that loss control and overturned on New Mexico State Route 475 that occurred on March 2, 1999 and that killed 2 and injured 35.

Sept. 10, 2001: NTSB issues safety recommendations to FMCSA based on investigation of a motorcoach that ran off the road near New Orleans, LA that occurred on May 9, 1999 and that killed 22 and seriously injured 15. The NTSB recommends that the agency develop a comprehensive medical oversight program that contains the following elements:

- Individuals performing medical examinations for drivers are qualified to do so and are educated about occupational issues for drivers (NTSB Rec. H-01-17).
- A tracking mechanism is established that ensures that every prior application by an individual for medical certification is recorded and reviewed (NTSB Rec. H-01-18).
- Medical certification regulations are updated periodically to permit trained examiners to clearly determine whether drivers with common medical conditions should be issued a medical certificate (NTSB Rec. H-01-19).
- Individuals performing examinations have specific guidance and a readily identifiable source of information for questions on such examinations (NTSB Rec. H-01-20).
- The review process prevents, or identifies and corrects, the inappropriate issuance of medical certification (NTSB Rec. H-01-21).
- Enforcement authorities can identify invalid medical certification during safety inspections and routine stops (NTSB Rec. H-01-22).
- Mechanisms for reporting medical conditions to the medical certification and reviewing authority and for evaluating these conditions between medical certification exams are in place; individuals, health care providers, and employers are aware of these mechanisms (NTSB Rec. H-01-24).

Jan. 5, 2000: NTSB releases accident report on a Greyhound motorcoach that ran off the road in Burt Cabins, PA that occurred on June 20, 1998 that killed 17 and injured 18.

Nov. 2, 1999: NTSB issues safety recommendations to NHTSA that the agency take the following actions:

- In 2 years, develop performance standards for motorcoach occupant protection systems that account for frontal impact collisions, side impact collisions, rear impact collisions, and rollovers (NTSB Rec. H-99-47) (MW).
- Once pertinent standards have been developed for motorcoach occupant protection systems, require newly manufactured motorcoaches to have an occupant crash protection system that meets the newly developed performance standards and retains passengers, including those in

child safety restraint systems, within the seating compartment throughout the accident sequence for all accident scenarios (NTSB Rec. H-99-48).

- Expand your research on current advanced glazing to include its applicability to motorcoach occupant ejection prevention, and revise window glazing requirements for newly manufactured motorcoaches based on the results of this research (NTSB Rec. H-99-49).
- In 2 years, develop performance standards for motorcoach roof strength that provide maximum survival space for all seating positions and that take into account current typical motorcoach window dimensions (NTSB Rec. H-99-50) (MW).
- Once performance standards have been developed for motorcoach roof strength, require newly manufactured motorcoaches to meet those standards (NTSB Rec. H-99-51).
- Develop and implement, in cooperation with other government agencies and industry, standards for on-board recording of bus crash data that address, at a minimum, parameters to be recorded, data sampling rates, duration of recording, interface configurations, data storage format, incorporation of fleet management tools, fluid immersion survivability, impact shock survivability, crush and penetration survivability, fire survivability, independent power supply, and ability to accommodate future requirements and technological advances (NTSB Rec. H-99-54).

Sept. 21, 1999: NTSB releases a comprehensive, detailed evaluation of the multiple safety deficiencies of motorcoaches in providing adequate occupant protection and issues specific recommendations for regulatory safety actions to be taken by NHTSA and FHWA, as well as recommendations that should be implemented by the motorcoach industry and by state and local governments.

Aug. 31, 1999: NTSB holds a public hearing to focus on advanced safety technology for trucks and buses in Nashville, TN.

Apr. 14, 1999: NTSB holds a public hearing to review truck and bus safety in Washington, D.C.

Feb. 26, 1999: NTSB issues safety recommendations to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) that the agency change the safety fitness rating methodology so that adverse vehicle or driver performance-based data, and not both, are sufficient to result in an overall unsatisfactory rating for the carrier (NTSB Rec. H-99-06).

Feb. 11, 1999: NTSB releases a special investigative report on two motorcoach crashes that leads to several major recommendations to NHTSA, FHWA, and motorcoach industry associations to improve operator management and hours of service to reduce driver fatigue, including avoidance of inverted, non-diurnal working hours and improve bus window emergency exit performance.

Aug. 5, 1998: NTSB issues safety recommendations stating that the American Trucking Associations, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, & the Motor Freight Carrier Association should work together with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the NHTSA, to encourage the development and use of simulator-based training for commercial operators (NTSB Rec. H-98-19).

Apr. 4, 1990: NTSB issues safety recommendations to FHWA that the agency take the following actions:

- Establish and fund a program to train instructors to provide drug recognition expert training to federal agency inspectors/investigators, police, and other public service personnel with commercial truck and truck driver oversight responsibilities (NTSB Rec. H-90-23).
- Require automated/tamper-proof on-board recording devices such as tachographs or computerized logs to identity commercial truck drivers who exceed hours of service regulations (NTSB Rec. H-90-28).

Sept. 28, 1989: NTSB issues safety recommendations to FHWA based on investigation of a motorcoach that went out of control and rolled onto its side in Nashville, TN that occurred on November 19, 1988 and that injured 39. The NTSB recommends that the agency revise Section 391.25 of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSR) to specify the qualifications of the individuals

conducting the reviews of commercial drivers' performance records, required annually of motor carriers (NTSB Rec. H-89-32).

June 15, 1988: NTSB issues safety recommendations to FHWA that the agency revise Section 391 of the FMCSR to require a motor carrier to verify the authenticity of a medical examiner's certificate if the certificate has been prepared by a physician who has not been selected by the motor carrier to perform the examination. Information concerning the fact that verification was made should be retained as part of the driver's qualification file (NTSB Rec. H-88-24).

Aug. 3, 1987: NTSB issues safety recommendations to DOT based on investigation of a motorcoach that went out of control, hit a rock, slid on its side, rolled over and came to rest upright in the West Walk River in Walker, CA that occurred on May 30, 1986 and that killed 21, injured 20. NTSB recommends that the agency increase the number of Office of Motor Carrier Safety (OMCS) agents to enable OMCS to perform an adequate safety audit of all interstate motor carriers and to perform timely follow-up compliance reviews of those carriers that receive a less than satisfactory rating (NTSB Rec. H-87-38).

Mar. 24, 1981: NTSB issues safety recommendations to the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety (BMCS) based on investigation of a motorcoach that failed to negotiate a curve, ran off the highway into a drainage channel, impacted a berm at a concrete culvert and vaulted down a steep embankment in Jasper, AR that occurred on June 5, 1980 that killed 20 and injured 13. The NTSB recommends that the agency give appropriate consideration to the identification of violations and enforcement of the FMCSRs pertaining to hours of service of drivers, maintenance of vehicles, and other carrier safety matters in developing the annual BMCS work schedule (NTSB Rec. H-81-15)

May 30, 1975: NTSB issues safety recommendations to FHWA based on investigation of a collision between a motorcoach, tractor-trailer, and a private car on the New Jersey Turnpike that occurred on October 19, 1973 and killing 9 and injured 11. The NTSB recommends that the agency, upon completion of the research dealing with the development of a commercial driver training course, distribute such training course information to all professional commercial driver training schools (NTSB Rec. H-75-09).

Dec. 18, 1968: NTSB issues safety recommendations to the Federal Highway Administrator to expedite the proceeding initiated under Part I1 of the Interstate Commerce Act, docket Ex Parte No. MC-69, dated May 27, 1966, “to inquire into the operations of motor carriers of passengers in order to determine whether it is necessary or desirable to adopt regulations and establish standards which would require carriers to install, provide, and maintain seat belts for the use of passengers and drivers” (NTSB Rec. H-68-18).