TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NOTE

No. T-05-13

Department of Education
John L. Winn, Commissioner

School Business Services

School Transportation Management Section

Contact:
Julie Wammack

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SC 205-9795

DATE: **March 30, 2005**

TO: **School District Transportation Directors**

FROM: **Charlie Hood, Director, School Transportation**

SUBJECT: **Safety Reminders**

Because access to educational programs is critical to each student's success, the School Transportation Management Section applauds school districts and charter schools for safely transporting eligible students to and from school each day. School buses remain the safest mode of travel for students. According to the National Academy of Sciences, students transported by school buses comprise less than two percent of the students killed in traffic crashes each year during normal school travel hours in the United States. Sadly, however, five students have been killed this school year in Florida at or near bus stops, and a sixth student was killed when her bus collided with another vehicle. Investigations are not completed on these crashes, but all appeared to involve extremely unusual circumstances. Nevertheless, we believe it is important to review the circumstances of these crashes, as many of you have already done, to see if there are any lessons that can be learned.

In October 2004 there was a student struck and killed by a vehicle after she disembarked from her bus and attempted to cross a six-lane highway on her way home. In November 2004 a student was killed and her bus driver seriously injured when their school bus apparently ran a stop sign and collided with another vehicle. Also in November 2004 a student was killed when her book bag was apparently caught in the door of her bus, and she was dragged and run over by the rear wheels. In January 2005 two more students were killed at or near bus stops. The first student was killed when an approaching private car, whose driver may have experienced an epileptic seizure, careened into him and into a subdivision wall, narrowly missing other students. Another student was killed at a school bus stop inside an apartment complex by a pickup truck driver who ran over a concrete parking barrier and a curb after she apparently hit her accelerator rather than her brake pedal. In February 2005 a student was struck and killed by a private vehicle as she attempted to cross a multi-lane highway after she had been dropped off by a substitute school bus driver on the wrong side of the road.

All of us in Florida's student transportation community know that school buses remain the safest vehicles on the road, and we know that our school bus drivers meet stringent employment

qualifications and training requirements to prepare them to drive our students safely to and from school. We want to emphasize the importance of school bus operators remaining vigilant and consistently adhering to the training and safety practices they have been taught. It appears from preliminary reports that two of the six recent fatalities were caused primarily by school bus operator error, but they all remind us of the importance of our jobs and our responsibility to be constantly attentive to keeping children safe.

To help you in your training and awareness efforts, we have attached a tri-fold brochure that we encourage you to print. This brochure contains important school bus stop and loading zone safety tips. Please review the circumstances of the recent crashes in your school bus driver training and distribute the attached brochure to all bus drivers and attendants in your district.

We have also attached a one-page flyer that emphasizes the importance of every school bus driver wearing his or her seat belt properly. We encourage you to post it on the bulletin boards in your bus driver and attendants' lounges to remind the drivers that the driver's and the students' seat belts must be used while the school bus is in transit.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact our office at (850) 245-9795 or e-mail Ronnie.McCallister@fldoe.org.

CFH:jw

Attachments: Tri-fold brochure
One-page flyer

cc: Charter Schools
School Bus Driver Trainers