



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
STATE DIRECTORS OF
PUPIL TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

Information Report

Repair or Replacement of Components on School Buses

Background:

As with all types of motor vehicles, various components on school buses can and do require repair or replacement. Some components require repair or replacement as a result of failure, for example the replacement of burned out lamps, worn brake pads, or leaking fuel pump. Other components require repair or replacement as a result of damage or wear and tear, such as a broken mirror, severely damaged body components, or seat padding. How these repairs and replacements are completed, in terms of the components used and the workmanship of the person doing the repair or replacement, could be important to the safe operation of the school bus.

Discussion:

Some failed, damaged or worn-out components may be safety related. In other words, the items are either an individual safety component or part of a safety system that is necessary for the school bus to comply with the applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSSs), or the safety requirements of a state, local school district or other school entity. For example, a damaged stop signal arm, broken emergency exit door handle, or broken rear view mirror would be safety components on a school bus. Likewise, a leaking air chamber would be part of the braking system, a broken tie rod would be part of the steering system, and a seat back with missing or heavily damaged cushioning material would be part of the passenger crash protection system.

Whenever a failed or damaged safety-related component is repaired or replaced, it is important to ensure that the repaired or new component performs in such a manner that the school bus continues to meet the requirements of the applicable FMVSSs or the safety requirements of a state, local school district or other school entity. This involves both the quality of the component as well as the quality of its repair or installation. If a repaired or replaced component does not perform at least as well as the original equipment component, or is not installed properly, then the safety level of the school bus will be reduced.

Motor vehicle manufacturers, parts suppliers and their organizations work closely to develop requirements and guidelines for the manufacture of replacement components on motor vehicles. These include not only design and performance specifications for the component, but also the number of years for which the component must continue to be made available.

In some instances, the replacement component is made by the same company that supplied the original parts to the vehicle manufacturer. In some other instances, specifically, lamps, lenses, brake fluid, and tires, the component must be labeled as complying with an applicable FMVSS. While there are no government enforcement regulations to ensure components continue to be made available for a specified period of time, as a general rule, market forces ultimately dictate the continued availability of replacement components for all motor vehicles, including school buses.

Conclusions:

Whenever a component that affects the safety of a school bus needs to be repaired or replaced, it should be done in such a manner that the component performs at least as well as the component that was originally installed on the school bus during manufacture. Since the school bus had to be certified by the manufacturer as meeting all applicable FMVSSs before it was sold and first put into operation, it is important that any safety components that are repaired or replaced perform in such a manner that the school bus continues to meet the requirements of the FMVSSs or the safety requirements of a state, local school district or other school entity. Since neither the manufacturer nor the federal government has any authority over how motor vehicles are operated and maintained, the state, local school district or other school entity should establish requirements with respect to the repair or replacement of school bus components, especially those components that have a safety relationship.