

From NTSB
To National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services
Date 07/16/2019
Response For the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, the National Association for Pupil Transportation, and the National School Transportation Association, Safety Recommendation H-18-16 is reclassified from “Open—Initial Response Received” to CLOSED-ACCEPTABLE ACTION in section 2.3.5 of this report. 2.3.5 Safety Recommendations PPTs can help identify medically unfit drivers who have valid medical examination certificates but who might not be able to perform the duties of a school bus driver, especially in an emergency. The Iowa Administrative Code specifies physical fitness requirements for school bus drivers, which include having sufficient physical capacity to operate a bus effectively and to render assistance to passengers in case of illness or injury. However, the State code leaves it to the discretion of the chief administrator (or a designee of the employer or prospective employer) to evaluate the ability of a school bus driver to operate safety equipment and assist passengers. Each State may be different in the discretion given to school districts for instituting PPTs. The NTSB recognizes the RCSD for reinstating the PPTs for its drivers on hiring, annually, and as needed. School bus drivers can experience health-related changes, either temporary or permanent, in their ability to physically perform the duties of their job. As this crash demonstrates, changes can occur between annual or biennial driver examinations. Given the special requirements related to evacuation and assistance of students that apply to school bus drivers, the NTSB believes that requiring school bus drivers nationwide to complete a PPT regularly or when there is a concern about their abilities to meet the physical requirements of the job enhances the safety of students and drivers alike and, further, that school systems without such programs are missing a safety opportunity. Accordingly, the NTSB recommends that the 44 States that do not currently require PPTs, the District of Columbia, and Puerto

Rico revise their school bus driver requirements so that all drivers must pass a PPT on hiring and at least annually, and also whenever a driver's physical condition changes in a manner that could affect his or her ability to physically perform school bus driver duties, including helping passengers evacuate a bus in an emergency.⁷⁵ As discussed in the NTSB's special investigation report addressing the Baltimore crash (NTSB 2018), all State licensing agencies accept third-party reporting of drivers who have medical conditions that might impair their ability to safely operate a vehicle. In the Baltimore report, the NTSB noted that "school bus drivers with potentially hazardous medical conditions are of concern nationwide. Every State allows individual reporting of medically unsafe drivers to the State licensing agency." The NTSB recommended that the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS), the NAPT, the National School Transportation Association (NSTA), the American School Bus Council, and the Maryland School Bus Contractors Association (MSBCA) inform their members of the circumstances of the Baltimore school bus crash and lessons learned from the crash investigation to help raise awareness of the avenues available to report school bus drivers with medical conditions that may make it unsafe for them to operate a school bus (Safety Recommendation H-18-16). For the MSBCA, Safety Recommendation H-18-16 was classified "Closed—Acceptable Action" on October 16, 2018. For the NASDPTS, the NAPT, and the NSTA, the current Status of Safety Recommendation H-18-16 is "Open—Initial Response Received." For the American School Bus Council, the current Status of Safety Recommendation H-18-16 is "Open—Await Response." In June 2018, the NSTA published an article in its newsletter informing all its members of the circumstances of the Baltimore crash and the lessons learned to raise awareness of driver reporting. The NSTA discussed the Baltimore crash safety recommendation in July 2018 at its annual conference, and then in November 2018, hosted a webinar covering driver fitness for duty. In June 2018, the NASDPTS sent a copy of the NTSB's special investigation report on the Baltimore crash to its members and encouraged them to review it. In July 2018, the MSBCA published a letter on its website informing its members of the Baltimore crash to

raise awareness of reporting methods for school bus drivers who have medical conditions that might make it unsafe for them to operate school buses. In October 2018, the NASDPTS surveyed its State directors to assess existing State requirements and guidelines in many of the areas related to updating school bus driver qualification requirements and programs and discussed the results at its annual conference. Also in 2018, the electronic newsletter of the NASDPTS published a link to the NTSB press release and media reports about the Baltimore crash investigation. The NAPT presented a keynote address at its October 2018 annual conference, informing all members about the Baltimore crash circumstances and the NTSB's safety recommendations. On the basis of a review of the work those associations have done to raise awareness of reporting methods, as discussed in the report addressing the Baltimore crash, the NTSB classifies Safety Recommendation H-18-16 as CLOSED—ACCEPTABLE ACTION for the NASDPTS, the NAPT, and the NSTA. For the American School Bus Council, the Status of Safety Recommendation H-18-16 remains "Open—Await Response." The NTSB is concerned that school districts are overlooking medical conditions that would impair a driver's ability to safely operate a school bus in order to maintain school bus transportation services. A driver should be physically fit for the demands of the position, which include not only driving the school bus but also possessing the dexterity and physical strength to operate the emergency exits for an evacuation, to lift and deploy a fire extinguisher, and to assist one or more passengers who are incapacitated and need egress assistance. The NTSB recommends that the State of Iowa inform its school districts of the circumstances of the Oakland school bus crash and fire and the lessons learned from the investigation, and that it publicize to its staff the methods available for individually reporting school bus drivers who have medical conditions that might affect their ability to safely operate a school bus.