

## Who has a responsibility for school bus safety?

This fact sheet outlines the ways in which the Ministry of Education and other organisations ensure that school bus services are safe. The information contained in this sheet is current as at June 2010.

### Overview

Safety is of paramount importance to the Ministry of Education, and making sure students are safe is the top priority in the provision of school bus services. The school bus service is a large operation, carrying approximately 100,000 students each day, and has a very good safety record. However, the Ministry continues to watch for ways in which school bus safety can be improved.

### How does the school bus service tender process make sure there are safety standards?

When bus services are established, there is a tender process to contract a suitable bus operator to run the route. Most bus contracts have a standard length of 6 years, after which time they are re-tendered.

Bus operators are required to adhere to all relevant transport legislation, which are designed to ensure a high level of safety standards. As a further safeguard, the Ministry also requires as a part of the tender process:

- ◆ details of licences, driver training, the vehicles tendered, the vehicle maintenance programme, business experience, school transport experience, accounting systems, and so on
- ◆ technical advice on safety of individual vehicles from a representative of New Zealand Transport Agency.

During a tender process, the tendered cost is not considered until the Ministry is satisfied that the tenderer has met safety requirements.

### Who decides which tenders are successful?

A tender evaluation committee decides which tenders are successful, and the committee may consist of:

- ◆ a Ministry of Education national office representative
- ◆ a service agent representative
- ◆ a New Zealand Transport Agency representative
- ◆ an independent observer.

### School Transport: What you need to know

*The following fact sheets about school transport are available:*

1. Who is eligible for school transport assistance?
2. What if a student doesn't attend the nearest school?
3. What if the nearest school doesn't offer education in the desired language?
4. What types of assistance can a student get?
5. How is transport assistance provided for students with special needs?
6. What should I know about school bus services?
7. Student behaviour on buses: What is expected?
8. What is good practice for school bus safety?

### 9. Who has a responsibility for school bus safety?

10. What is a Conveyance Allowance and who can receive it?
11. Who can I contact about school transport?
12. How are bus routes designed?

For more information visit our website at:

[www.minedu.govt.nz/schooltransport](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/schooltransport)

## What safety requirements must a bus operator meet?

The contract between the Ministry of Education and the bus operator requires the operator to provide a safe and reliable service, to observe all transport laws, regulations, and rules, and to make changes when they know a problem exists.

Safety requirements in the contract include:

- ◆ which vehicles must be used
- ◆ up-to-date certificates of loading, fitness, and registration, plus road user charges paid
- ◆ bus to be clean and hygienic and comply with relevant legislation
- ◆ drivers must have current licence for the class of vehicle, and no medical condition that would affect a safe, reliable service
- ◆ drivers do not have any convictions relating to child abuse or abuse of alcohol or drugs
- ◆ loading limits (as specified in the certificate of loading) are not exceeded
- ◆ bus operator must hold insurance (public liability, vehicle, baggage)
- ◆ all appropriate laws, regulations, orders and rules are complied with.

Note:

- ◆ Not all school buses are required to be fitted with seatbelts. Where seats are fitted with a belt, the belt must be used.
- ◆ There is no requirement for all students to be seated on a bus. To clarify whether children can stand on the bus they are travelling on, refer to the loading certificate for that bus.

If you are concerned that a school bus service is not meeting safety requirements, you can make a complaint – for more information see **Fact Sheet 11: Who can I contact about school transport?**

## How does the Ministry of Education check on safety?

The Ministry of Education's service agents are required to visit bus operators at least once a year to monitor contractual safety requirements, and contact them by telephone at least twice a year to discuss any safety issues. Service agents are also expected to communicate with schools regularly to stay informed of any safety concerns.

## Who else is involved in school bus safety standards?

### New Zealand Transport Agency

New Zealand Transport Agency:

- sets vehicle standards
- identifies issues on vehicle design, construction, and maintenance
- checks vehicles for safety (together with vehicle inspection agents and the NZ Police)
- issues/declines passenger service licences, which are required for all school bus operators. Monitors operators to ensure they continue to meet criteria
- advises the Minister of Transport on transport safety matters and helps draft transport law
- works with NZ Police to produce guidelines and training for school traffic safety teams
- participates in school bus tendering evaluation including the identification of vehicles and/or operators with unsafe history.

### Vehicle Certification Unit (VCU)

The VCU is part of New Zealand Transport Agency and it:

- appoints and monitors different types of vehicle inspectors
- writes the inspection manuals that inspectors use
- advises on certification issues
- investigates complaints about certifications
- liaises with the motor industry on vehicle certification issues.

### New Zealand Police Youth Education Service

The NZ Police Youth Education Service:

- teaches students the bus warden system, which covers passenger safety, movement of students to and from the bus, and behaviour on the bus
- carries out checks (with VCU) on bus loadings and other legal requirements relating to bus use.

### Vehicle Inspection Services

Providers of vehicle inspection services are responsible for:

- having a technical knowledge about mechanical safety points
- understanding the laws that apply to vehicles in New Zealand
- managing vehicle testing stations
- employing vehicle inspectors
- inspecting vehicles according to the various rules that apply to them
- issuing/or declining warrants and certificates of fitness
- providing information on the history of Certificate of Fitness (COF) inspection results for vehicles.

### NZ Police Commercial Investigation Unit

The NZ Police Commercial Investigation Unit:

- polices all aspects of commercial vehicle use including vehicle and driver fitness, driving hours and logbooks, road user charges, vehicle, road and bridge limits, and vehicle dimensions
- attends and reports on commercial vehicle crashes.

### Bus and Coach Association (New Zealand) Inc

The Bus and Coach Association:

- represents its members in dealings with the Ministry of Education and updates its members on issues such as law changes and new safety developments
- promotes a quality assurance scheme called Q-base, which is designed to make sure a vehicle is on the road at certificate of fitness standard every day it runs.