

H-165

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: March 22, 1979

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Forwarded to:

Honorable William G. Milliken  
Governor of Michigan  
Executive Office  
Lansing, Michigan 48903

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-79-8

About 10:00 a.m., April 11, 1978, a "schoolbus" type bus, occupied by 56 boys and 2 adults, was southbound on I-75 near Tifton, Georgia, en route to Disney World, Florida, from Ypsilanti, Michigan. 1/ The bus was operated by the Ypsilanti Boys Club. As the bus exited I-75 at a safety rest area, it went off the road while negotiating a right curve on the exit lane, overturned, and struck a tree. Three passengers were killed and the driver and 25 passengers were injured.

A post-crash examination of the bus revealed the following deficiencies:

1. Foot brake pedal travel, measured with the engine running, was 6 1/4 inches, 2 1/4 inches beyond the 4-inch manufacturer's recommended maximum.

The brake lining to brakedrum clearance at the front wheels was .030 inch, at the right rear wheel it was .16 inch, and at the left rear wheel it was .125 inch. The maximum clearance suggested by the manufacturer is .040 to .045 inch.

2. The parking brake was out of adjustment and when tested provided no braking torque.

3. The right rear spring had three fractured leaves, leaves three, four, and five.

1/ For more information read Highway Accident Report - Overturn of a Ypsilanti, Michigan, Boys Club Bus, I-75, Near Tifton, Georgia, April 11, 1978. (NTSB-HAR-79-2.)

4. Tire air pressure was: Left front tire - 36 psi, right front -- 34 psi, left rear tires -- 42 and 46 psi, and the right rears -- 52 and 64 psi. The tire pressure recommended for these tires was 75 psi for the front tires and 70 psi for the dual rear tires.

5. The accelerator return spring was missing from the carburetor and was found in the engine compartment with one end fractured.

Since the State of Michigan did not require that the bus be inspected, the responsibility for its mechanical condition rested solely with the driver and the Director of the Boy's Club. Neither person maintained the bus properly, as evidenced by the lack of maintenance records, lack of a maintenance program, and a failure to recognize the most apparent discrepancies, such as the excessive brake pedal travel, inoperative parking brake, improper tire inflation, and broken spring leaves. Their maintenance policy consisted of repairing the bus when they realized something was wrong. This indeed was a hazardous maintenance philosophy to adopt because it permitted deterioration of components to the point of failure before any maintenance was performed.

The State of Michigan adopted a random spot inspection procedure for inspecting motor vehicles and did not require a periodic motor vehicle inspection, except for schoolbuses, which must be inspected annually.

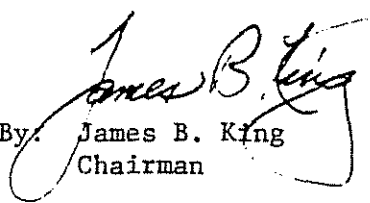
The Michigan State School Code of 1976, Section 15.4134, which mandates the annual schoolbus inspection, states in subdivision (1), "The State Board shall promulgate rules for safety specifications for schoolbuses transporting pupils to public and nonpublic schools." Since the accident bus did not transport pupils to school, it does not satisfy the requirements of the school code and would not have to be inspected. Two State officials stated that the accident bus was not considered a schoolbus. Section 9.1857 of the State Motor Vehicle Code defines schoolbuses. Since this bus was used to transport children from school, it falls under the requirements of the Code, which requires an annual State inspection and a certificate to indicate that the driver has either completed or is enrolled in a schoolbus safety course. In addition, the bus displayed schoolbus registration plates and was painted chrome yellow with black trim. Section 15.41344 of the Michigan School Code of 1976 reserves these colors for schoolbuses and, further, prohibits any bus not engaged in the transportation of school pupils, either part-time or full-time, to be painted these colors.

Since State law does not clearly establish that this bus was a "schoolbus," a situation exists where buses regularly used to transport children, elude State motor vehicle inspections for the service life of the vehicles. The use of this type of bus in similar operations requires closer scrutiny to insure maximum safety to the children being transported.

Accordingly the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the State of Michigan:

Provide at least an annual motor vehicle inspection program for vehicles that seat 10 or more persons and buses that are not presently required to be inspected. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-79-8)

KING, Chairman, DRIVER, Vice Chairman, McADAMS and HOGUE, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

  
By: James B. King  
Chairman