



To The Point

Bus and Shuttle Safety

Some businesses and organizations routinely use buses and/or shuttle vehicles (other than 15-passenger vans) or may occasionally charter one to transport employees or customers for special events and activities. Whether an organization has an occasional or regular need for buses and shuttle-type vehicles, it is important that a risk management review is conducted prior to purchasing or hiring a vendor. This seemingly inconsequential auto risk presents significant exposure to employees, customers, and the company due to the risk of multiple injuries to occupants riding in these vehicles, which include motorcoaches, school buses, RV's, trolley cars, passenger trailers/trams, and various sized shuttles.

Importance of Due Diligence

Whether contracting out shuttle services or performing this transportation activity in-house, businesses and organizations must conduct thorough due diligence with the motorcoach company. For those responsible for group travel within an organization, safety should remain a primary concern. Familiarity with federal requirements for motorcoach safety can help reduce risks for travelers. Specific regulations may apply to commercial motorcoaches that are chartered, while others pertain to vehicles owned by the organization. It is essential to identify, understand, and manage these auto risks to minimize the potential for loss. To manage this risk effectively, companies should make a concerted effort to implement controls similar to those already established for company-owned auto exposures.

Buses are defined by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) as vehicles designed or used to transport more than 8 passengers (including the driver) for compensation or more than 16 passengers, including the driver, for any other purpose. The big difference between 15-passenger vans and buses or shuttles is that buses are designed and made specifically to pass government safety tests for passenger vehicles. The biggest concerns are normally driver qualifications, training, lack of company policies and procedures, and vehicle condition.

Owned Bus and Shuttle Regulations

When looking to purchase or rent these vehicles while furnishing the driver, some best practices to consider include:

- Determine the size of the vehicle needed (number of seats) and if the organization must comply with state DOT or Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration rules. This is dependent on whether the travel is intrastate or interstate.

- Check the need to establish operating authority and obtain a DOT identification number.
- Check the need to file a motor carrier identification report with the proper agency.
- Review past safety results for the vehicle in question based on model, size, manufacturer, and testing done by organizations like the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration.
- The vehicle needs to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
- Review all the necessary safety systems like seatbelts, emergency evacuation portals, non-slip steps and floors, hand railings, wheel-chair tie-downs, chair lifts, etc.

If an organization has its own vehicle and a member of the organization is the driver for group outings, the organization must establish a driver qualification program for those operating a shuttle bus or motorcoach.

- For vehicles designed to transport 16 or more passengers (including the driver), it is recommended that the driver should be at least 25 years old and possess a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with passenger endorsement.
- Drivers must pass a medical exam and carry a medical examiner's certificate.
- An organization must have a drug and alcohol testing program for its CDL drivers.
- Interstate drivers (generally drivers who cross state lines) are subject to driver qualification standards, documented in a Driver Qualification File.
- Drivers are subject to Hours-of-Service rules.
- Vehicles must be systematically inspected, repaired, and maintained in safe and proper operating condition.

Learn More & Connect

For more information on protecting your fleet, contact your local risk engineer, visit the [Chubb Risk Consulting Library](#), or check out www.chubb.com/riskconsulting.

Hired/Vendor Shuttle Transportation Services

Avoid risking lives by making uninformed decisions when hiring a bus company for group travel. Selecting a bus company that complies with federal requirements enforced by FMCSA is essential. A critical safety component involves asking questions to determine whether the driver is qualified, well-rested, and drug and alcohol-free. Additionally, verifying that the bus has been properly maintained and is in good operating condition is necessary.

Below are important questions to ask or verify before selecting a bus company for group transportation:

- Does the company have a CDL driver qualification program?
- Does the company subcontract for equipment and/or drivers?
- How does the company handle driver fatigue issues and hours-of-service issues?
- Will the trip be completed within the regulated hours-of-service, will a second driver be provided, or will an overnight rest stop be included?
- Does the company have a distracted driving policy covering cell phones and electronic devices?
- Are buses inspected daily and annually per FMCSA requirements?
- What company procedures exist for roadside emergencies and breakdowns?
- Are seat belts available, and does the company require all passengers to use them, providing guidance on how to do so?
- Review all the necessary safety systems like seatbelts, emergency evacuation portals, non-slip steps and floors, hand railings, wheel-chair tie-downs, chair lifts, etc.
- Does the company have the appropriate authority to transport passengers in interstate commerce?
- What is the company's overall reputation?
- What is the company's collision history and safety rating?
 - This can be found using the Safety Measurement System. The top rating is satisfactory and bus companies with a conditional safety rating may pose a higher risk. Companies with an unsatisfactory safety rating should not be utilized.
- How has the company performed during Department of Transportation (DOT) roadside inspections?
- Does the company have a certificate of insurance?
 - If the company operates buses designed to transport 16 or more passengers, they should carry a minimum of \$5 million in liability insurance coverage.

Resources

American Bus Association, www.buses.org

FMCSA Safety Measurement System (SMS), ai.fmcsa.dot.gov/SMS/

Department of Transportation (DoT), www.dot.gov/

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), www.fmcsa.dot.gov/

United Motorcoach Association (UMA), www.uma.org/