



SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION UPDATE



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The facts on school bus accidents

This morning several news stories have been in print and on television in western Ohio talking about school bus safety. In both cases the reporters quote some incorrect data that indicate an extremely high risk onboard a school bus. Because of the subject of these reports, it is likely they will be picked up in other areas across the state. You may also have some parents in your district that have questions about bus safety.

Both reports state that in 2011 there were nearly “300-thousand” school bus crashes in Ohio. The reporters go on to discuss the lack of safety on school buses and the need for seat belts.

Without getting into the seatbelt debate, it is important that we make certain the facts in the discussion are correct. There have never been “300-thousand” school bus crashes in Ohio in any year. We do not even operate close to that number of buses in Ohio. (Last year there were just 12,749 school buses on the road.)

You can obtain the same reports the reporter is quoting from the Ohio Department of Public Safety traffic accident reports, available on their web site. We did just that, and here are the results:

	2010	2011	2012	2013
Non-school bus accidents	298,348	296,088	285,486	267,510
School bus directly involved	1,579	1,487	1,354	1,393
School bus indirectly involved	233	256	238	176

In the late 90’s, we were experiencing just over 2,000 bus accidents per year. Over the last 15 years the annual number of accidents has been generally decreasing. While some of this is reflected in a decrease in the number of buses on the road, it also reflects positively on our constant focus on driver training, vehicle maintenance, and good driving practices by our school bus professionals.

With all that said, we must accept that we will still have school bus accidents every year-most certainly related to the fact that our state’s school bus fleet travels more than 1,000,000 miles per day. Most of those accidents are not the bus driver’s fault; however, with the amount of exposure we have, the potential for being involved in an accident is always with us. Continual training on defensive driving techniques and driving alertness is a critical investment for each transportation department.

Fortunately, for the students and staff that are riding in our big yellow buses, the design and construction of these vehicles continues to be the best protection for the passengers in these vehicles. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration continues to attest to the fact that students and passengers inside school buses are safer than in any other mode of transportation.