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During the start of 2011 there have been horrific and alarming bus crashes across the globe. Studies have however revealed that the transportation of school children is safest in buses and in fact significantly safer than transporting school children in minibuses, vans or other passenger motor vehicles.

Professional bus service operators spend significant amounts of time, money and expertise in the management and safety of fleets of vehicles. This includes training and real time monitoring of the bus operations and the performance of well qualified drivers.

In this guide we would like to focus on the safety of bus passengers and pay special attention to the following aspects:

- Planning your trip and selecting a bus service
- Safety before climbing on the bus
- Boarding the bus
- Safety from crime and confrontation
- Safety on the bus
- Safety in emergency situations
- Safety as you disembark the bus
- Safety getting home from the bus stop

Planning your trip and selecting bus transport

Even though price is always an important consideration, price should not be the only deciding factor used when chartering a bus. Do not allow the price of the ticket to compromise your expectations of professionalism and safety!

Allow yourself the time and effort to enquire about safety:

- Bus companies should always be willing to answer any questions you have about their safety practices.
- You might be advised not only to ask about routes and estimated time of arrival –but also about whether the operator is fully licensed.
- Enquire about the policy with regards to driving time, relief drivers etc.
- Enquire about safety at the ticket office or tour operator.
- You might be able to find more information on the bus operators' website.

- Do not go only on bus service marketing material – ask friends and family about their customer experiences.
- The transportation experts in your area might have additional information about a specific service, the company's record of regulatory violations and roadside out-of-service violations and the company's highway crash history.
- Does the company have its buses inspected regularly?
- Does the company have notification procedures for roadside emergencies and breakdowns?

Is the driver equipped with a wireless communications device?

If you have to arrange bus travel for sports groups, school sides etc, also find more info on the following:

- What are the policy with regards to carrying and storage of baggage and sports equipment?
- Are there external storage capacity? External storage areas on a bus are usually lockable.
- How long will the trip be and is it necessary to arrange for rest stops and meal stops?
- Are safe/clean facilities available along the planned route for rest stops?

While at the destination, will the bus (and its contents) be in an area where it will be secure from theft or vandalism?

Safety before climbing on the Bus

Safety starts long before you climb on the bus. With the correct preparation you will enhance your safety and be able to avoid accidents while waiting for the bus.

- Determine your route of travel well ahead of time.
- Choose appropriate clothing and footwear for the journey with caution – This should be comfortable but not pose additional risks.
- Be careful with loose fitting clothing and backpacks. Ensure there are no drawstrings or other hanging objects that could get caught as you enter or exit the bus.
- Ensure that you have a fully charged cellular phone with you and that family and friends are alerted to estimated times of arrival.
- It is sound advice to carry a bottle of water with you for emergencies, thirst or dehydration.
- Do not plan to take on the bus weapons or any dangerous, flammable, hazardous or illegal items that can cause a hazard or inconven-

ience, including car batteries or gasoline.

- You should know exactly where to board the bus and what time it will be at your stop.
- Bus stops prevent passengers having to board in hazardous situations such as intersections, or where the bus is turning and is not using the curb lane.
- Go to the bus stop well before time of departure and if possible, have someone with you to assist if needed.
- Walk safely facing oncoming traffic.
- Don't run. Stay on the sidewalk, or if there is no sidewalk, stay as far as possible away from the traffic.
- If crossing the road to the bus stop you should be aware of other traffic, especially that which may overtake the bus if it is already in the bay.
- Don't play around at bus stops – other traffic might be easily distracted and collide with people running across the road.
- Use the proper receptacles to extinguish and dispose of cigarettes or other smoking materials prior to boarding the bus. Do your part to prevent fires and littering.
- Stay well clear from the kerb as the bus arrives - Make sure you have a clear view of the driver at all times.
- Remember, if you are cannot see the driver's eyes, the driver cannot see you.
- Once the bus arrives, wait for the driver to come to a complete stop and the door of the bus to open before you move forward to the bus.

Boarding the Bus

- Follow the instructions of the bus driver at all times – There is a good reason for the sequence in which you have to board the bus!
- Present any passes or identification cards clearly to the bus operator.
- Allow passengers to leave the bus before you attempt to board.
- If the bus is not close to the curb, be careful when climbing the first step because it may be higher than you realize.
- Board the bus one-at-a-time and try not to push.
- Passengers should exercise care when boarding or exiting the bus and use the handrail when ascending or descending steps
- If you drop something, never go under or near the bus to retrieve papers or other objects. The driver may not be able to see you. Alert the driver and ask for assistance
- During inclement weather, especially snow and ice, be careful and watch your step. It is wise to wear rubbers or boots at these times. They will not only keep your feet warm and dry, but they will add more traction that will help prevent slips and falls.
- Strollers should be folded prior to boarding. Always leave the bus with children in front of you, never behind you.
- Unfortunately bus stops and lots of absent minded people in close proximity might also invite opportunity for criminal activity. Be alert to the following safety suggestions:
 - If you are jostled in a crowd, be aware that pickpockets might also see an opportunity.
 - Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings.
 - Pay attention to the safekeeping of your wallet, keys and cellular phones.
 - Hold your purse tightly, close to your body. Keep your wallet in a front or inside coat pocket, or in a buttoned hip pocket.
 - Even when on the bus, enjoy your ride but see to it that your purse or other belongings do not become unguarded.

- If you are travelling with small children, it is important that they are well supervised.
- To prevent separation from children, be sure to board together.

Passengers Safety on the Bus

- Allow the elderly and people with disabilities to use the priority seating in the front of the bus.
- If a passenger in a wheelchair boards the bus and you are seated at a wheelchair lock-down location, please move to another area.
- Passengers should remain seated as much as possible while the bus is in motion.
- Do not switch seats; do not reach across the aisle or to seats around you.
- The safest place in an accident is within the framework of the seats which are well padded to protect you.
- If it is necessary to stand or walk while the bus is moving, passengers should always use handrails.
- Hold on to the railings and steady yourself to prevent falls when standing or walking through the bus.
- Always stand behind the line that is located on the floor opposite the driver.
- Do not talk to or distract the bus operator while he or she is driving.
- Remain silent at all railroad crossings. The bus driver needs to listen for oncoming trains.
- Never block the centre aisle and stand clear of doorways whenever possible.
- Do not extend your legs or other personal belongings into the aisle. This can present a tripping hazard.
- Nothing should be in the aisle, no legs, arms, book, bags, or other objects that someone could trip over.
- Do not put any part of your body outside the bus window.
- Ask the bus driver before opening any windows [Luxury buses should have air conditioning.]
- Use the seat belt if one is fitted. You may be spared death or serious injury in the event of an accident.
- Approach eating with caution - if you choke, or have food allergies, you may die before the driver can do anything about it.
- Avoid opening or tampering with emergency windows, except during an emergency.
- Avoid tampering with or operating equipment intended for the bus driver's exclusive use.

Courtesy to other passengers on the bus

On the bus you are sharing a small space with several passengers. You need to avoid conduct that could lead to physical and verbal confrontation with other passengers, thereby endangering your safety, the safety of other passengers and distracting the driver.

- Be courteous at all times to both fellow passengers and the driver.
- The best passengers are the ones who tend to keep to themselves and quietly enjoy the ride home.
- Smoking will be prohibited on most passenger buses.
- Radios and tape recorders may be used for your listening pleasure, but earphones must be used and the volume should be low enough so that others cannot hear it.
- Do not commit any act or engage in any behaviour that may cause harm, damage, or disturbance to any person or property.
- Refrain from having loud and/or vulgar conversations on the bus,

including cellular phone conversations.

- Avoid unwanted conversation with other passengers tending to interfere with the other passengers' use and enjoyment of the bus; or using obscene, threatening, offensive or "hate" speech.
- Don't throw things inside the bus. This could hurt other passengers or the driver.
- Report any suspicious items or activities immediately to the operator - do not confront passengers on your own.
- Do not create unsanitary conditions on the buses or at bus stops.
- Help keep buses and bus stops clean by using trash and recycling receptacles.

In Case of Emergency

What do you have to know in the event of an accident or emergency?

- Always follow the guidance from the driver or employees from the bus service.
- In an emergency it is up to you to stay calm. Listen to the bus driver and follow instructions carefully.
- If you observe an incident that could jeopardize someone's health and safety, report it to the bus operator immediately. Your swift action could possibly prevent serious injury
- Most buses are equipped with a two-way radios and cellular phones. When an emergency occurs that requires response by Police, Fire or Emergency Medical Services, the operator can call for assistance immediately.
- If you have any questions about the safety procedures, ask the driver.
- It is best to be alert to emergency procedures when embarking on the bus – and not only when it has happened!
- It is best to carry with you identification which will inform emergency rescue personnel of your identity, your next of kin and contact numbers, allergies, medical fund details, etc.
- This is even more important for young children and the elderly who might struggle to communicate.
- Have a look around when you are seated on the bus - please take a moment to locate the emergency exits nearest to you.
- The fire extinguisher on a bus is usually located behind the driver's seat, or beneath the front row passenger's seat, or in the front-most overhead compartment.
- Remember: the primary exit from the vehicle is the same door at the front through which you entered.
- In an extreme emergency situation, the windows can also serve as exits. Follow the instruction markings on the windows or the window frames.
- Also note that there is most likely an emergency exit hatch in the roof above the center aisle.
- Evacuate the bus ONLY when told to do so by the driver. Follow the driver's instructions.
- Do not crowd the aisle. Keep moving toward the exit.
- Secure loose clothing so it won't get caught on door or any other part of the bus.
- Leave ALL belongings on the bus.
- Duck your head and bend your knees if you must jump from an exit. Move to a safe location well away from the bus.

Safety as you leave the Bus

The need for safety does not stop when the bus comes to a standstill! Many injuries occur through absent mindedness and pedestrian distractions when disembarking the bus.

- Be ready to leave the bus before it arrives at your bus stop. - don't keep the driver and others waiting while you gather your belongings.
- Wait until the bus has come to a complete stop and the front door has opened, before getting up from your seat.
- Wait until the people in the seats in front of you leave, before you get up from your seat.
- Be sure to use the handrails when going down the steps.
- Be especially careful when stepping off the low step and onto the curb or street.
- After leaving the bus move quickly away from the bus and out of the danger zone.
- The most dangerous times of any bus trip is when you are outside of the bus.
- There is also the danger of passing cars when you must cross the street.
- If you intend to cross the street after you get off the bus, watch for traffic moving around the bus.
- If possible, go to the sidewalk and wait for the bus to leave the area.
- Cross streets only in designated crosswalks, and be sure to obey all traffic signals.
- Children, even older ones can find it difficult to cross busy roads and are often seen crossing in front or behind the bus they've just got off.
- Don't cross the road from in front of the bus!

Transport from the Bus Stop

You are never safe till you are safely at home! As you disembark from the bus – be alert and pay close attention to getting home safely.

It is always best to have friends and relatives pick you up at the bus stop, but sometimes you have to use additional public transport to take you home. We would like to advise the following:

- Plan in advance for the transport to take you home.
- If you are unsure of which taxi companies are acceptable, inquire at the information desk at the bus stop, hotel concierge desk, etc.
- Take a business card with the phone number of a reputable minicab or taxi company, phone for the taxi when you need it.
- Do not trust anyone to be your taxi driver and your lift home.
- Do not accept rides from drivers who randomly approach you.
- If you have ordered a taxi, wait for the driver to approach you. Do not approach a car that you think is your taxi.
- Ask the driver the name and destination he has been given to check he is your driver. Don't get into a taxi you haven't ordered.
- If you must hail a taxi, spot one from a well known and reliable company. This requires some advanced knowledge of taxi companies in the area.
- Before getting into the taxi, make sure the driver agrees to take you to your destination.
- When you get into the taxi, note the company name, code number displayed, driver's name, ID and photograph if possible.
- Sit in the back seat.

The above safety guidelines will contribute towards increased safety and enjoyment for all bus passengers! We would like to invite the public to share their advice on how to further improve on passenger safety!