

Bus&MotorcoachNEWS

December 1, 2005

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

Slow pay for hurricane evacuations is hurting operators

Motorcoach operators from across the United States were quick to respond when the call went out for buses needed to move thousands of people away from danger caused by two devastating Gulf Coast hurricanes this past summer.

Now, many of them are wondering what is taking so long to get paid for their lifesaving work. In some cases, the delays are caus-

ing severe financial problems for operators.

Carriers that took part in the massive evacuations prompted by Hurricane Katrina that hit Louisiana and Mississippi in August and Hurricane Rita that struck Texas in September say they still are owed thousands of dollars.

"We thought we would get paid right after the jobs were finished,

but so far we've only gotten about two-thirds of our money and we're still waiting for the rest," said Daryl Johnson, owner of JJ Charters in Crosby, Texas. "Our fuel bill ran up to \$30,000 before we got any money at all."

Fortunately, he said, he had held back five of his 12 buses from the hurricane work, allowing him to continue doing regular charter

business. That brought in cash to help him keep up with expenses.

Autobuses Garcia in Houston said it has been paid only about \$7,000 of a \$39,000 bill for its hurricane work, and the slow payment is creating problems for the company. "The drivers want their money and we have fuel bills to pay," said spokeswoman Irma Gomez. "It has been a real struggle for us."

In addition to the slow pay, operators complain the pay rates for the government work were changed numerous times during the movements, causing confusion and creating billing problems.

They said that early on the government was paying \$2 a mile for empty runs and \$4 a mile with passengers on board, plus reim-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►

Manufacturer Neoplan to close early in 2006; competition takes toll

DENVER — Neoplan USA, which for nearly 25 years has produced the most diverse line-up of buses in North America at its plant in rural Colorado, is shutting down early next year.

The long-expected collapse of Neoplan was announced late last month, confirming the worst fears of the company's 300+ employees.

The 186,800-square-foot Lamar plant will close Friday, Jan. 13.

"By the middle of December, most production work in the plant will have ended, and we will be focused on activities essentially to 'mothball' the plant in a way that it could be re-started with minimal

disruption," Neoplan CEO John Russell said in a memo to employees. The workforce will receive two weeks severance pay.

Generally, the shutdown is being blamed on Neoplan's poor market position, weak financial situation and slow transit bus sales: "Despite everyone's best efforts, we could not continue to operate against larger, stronger competitors," Russell said in his memo.

Among transit bus manufacturers, Neoplan was weakest kid on the block. It was being outpaced by New Flyer, Gillig, Orion, North American Bus Industries, Blue Bird, and Motor Coach Industries



Neoplan USA's plant in Colorado (circa 2000) is being closed on Friday, the 13th.

(commuter coaches).

Neoplan has not been a significant factor in the motorcoach sector of the bus industry for years. It made a modest effort in 2000 to re-establish itself in the charter bus

market with the introduction of a U.S. version of the celebrated Starliner luxury coach developed by Neoplan Germany.

When it was founded, Neoplan USA was a subsidiary of Neoplan

Germany. Later, after an ownership change, it became a licensee of Neoplan Germany.

Neoplan USA unveiled the glamorous Starliner at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ►

Duane Spader: The force behind successful 20 Groups

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. — They laughed at Duane Spader when he tried to put together his first 20 Group.

But, as is so often the case, he got the last laugh.

It was 1974, and Spader was a recreational vehicle dealer in Sioux Falls. He had gone to the National Automobile Dealers Association and asked for its help in creating an RV dealers "20

Group" business development team — like the association had been operating successfully for its car dealer members.

Spader was hoping a 20 Group, in which he and 19 other noncompeting RV dealers would get together three or four times a year to review each other's financials, develop benchmarks for performance, and discuss how they might improve their businesses, could help

him and other camper dealers pull out of a prolonged gasoline shortage-induced slump.

"They laughed at us and said it would be impossible to start a group because our industry did not have standardized accounting," recalls Spader.

Unfazed by the response, Spader went elsewhere and found a company willing to give it a try. "But, they were

right, it failed because our accounting wasn't standardized," he explains.

Spader didn't quit, though. In 1976, he was back at it, but this time he had a new game plan that bypassed the need for everyone to have the same financial reporting system.

He called it his "one-dollar" concept and he made it work by putting less

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14 ►



Duane Spader



Enter to win

4 tickets to The Game

in Detroit Feb. 5, 2006

For official rules and to register visit
www.mcicoach.com



Get 1,000 gal. of diesel fuel FREE
on select Fast-Track, in-stock MCI J4500 coaches purchased by Dec. 11, 2005.

For details, call MCI's sales information hotline at 800-466-1446



Announcing ABC's Catch & Release Program

Net great savings during this unprecedented release on well-maintained MC-12s!

Now's the time to reel in a great deal on a pre-owned MC-12. As the former workhorse of a major U.S. carrier's fleet, these MC-12s have been professionally maintained since their original purchase and provide buyers a unique opportunity to upgrade their fleet. These coaches are available with great features including:



- Streamlined systems designed for simplified maintenance
- Goodyear tires
- Restroom equipped
- Clean interiors
- Integral steering
- Thermo Pane side glass
- Late model air conditioning system
- 47 passengers with rotating armrests on seats
- 6V92 DDEC III Detroit Diesel Engine
- HT-740 Allison Transmission

View hundreds of premier **pre-owned coaches** at www.abc-companies.com!



Used vehicle sold "as is." No warranties expressed or implied.

ADD YEARS OF REVENUE TO YOUR CURRENT FLEET.

Call your nearby ABC Account Executive for more information and to reserve available units immediately.

SERVICE FIRST, SATISFACTION ALWAYS

MIDWEST | NORTHEAST | SOUTHEAST | SOUTHWEST | WESTERN
800-222-2875 | 800-222-2873 | 800-222-2871 | 800-222-2877 | 800-322-2877



Exclusive U.S.  Distributor

www.abc-companies.com

Grand jury fails to indict driver in Dallas bus fire

DALLAS — The driver of the motorcoach in which 23 elderly people died when the vehicle caught fire outside of Dallas has been cleared of criminal charges.

A grand jury in Dallas County decided against indicting Juan Robles Gutierrez, 37, a Mexican immigrant who faced 23 counts of criminally negligent homicide.

The case was brought to the grand jury following a Dallas County sheriff's office investigation of the fire, which occurred while the bus was being used to evacuate a group of nursing home residents from the Houston area, which was being threatened by Hurricane Rita.

Investigators initially claimed Robles did not inspect the bus before he began the 15-hour trip to Dallas and then failed to help the passengers after the fire broke out. Twenty-two other seniors and nursing home staff members escaped the blaze, which federal regulators said appeared to have been caused by faulty wheel bearings.

Family members of Robles and his attorney, George Shaffer of San Antonio, disputed the claims of investigators, saying the driver was seen helping passengers from the bus until oxygen tanks inside the coach exploded and he was unable to return.

An attorney for one of the victims who has filed a suit against the bus company, Pharr, Texas-based Global Limo Inc., agreed with the grand jury decision not to charge Robles. "He was an easy target," Ronald Blair of Houston told the *Dallas Morning News*. "He didn't have any choice but to do what he was told to do. They need to indict the people that put him in that position."

Robles, who was taken into custody several days after the fire and accused of an immigration violation of being in the United States illegally, had been detained as a material witness in what is believed to be a federal grand jury investigation of the fire.

However, he was released from custody without bond Nov. 17, according to Nina Pruneda, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokeswoman in San Antonio. She said he still faces a yet-to-be scheduled administrative hearing for entering the country illegally.

Some news media reports indicated Robles was cooperating with federal investigators who are trying to determine who might have been responsible for the fire. Global Limo, which leased the bus and was operating it at the time, was shut down by federal regulators shortly after the fire.

Meantime, Sgt. Don Peritz, spokesman for the Dallas County sheriff's office, said the criminal investigation of the fire is continuing. "We have many other things to look at such as who leased the bus,

the owners and who was responsible for maintenance of the bus," he said.

Rachel Horton, a spokeswoman for the Dallas County District Attorney's Office, said the

decision by the grand jury not to indict Robles essentially ends any criminal charges against him unless something new surfaces. "We will look at anything new that the sheriff's office submits," she said.

HIGH EFFICIENCY ALTERNATORS AND MOBILE ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Get The
PennTex
INDUSTRIES, INC.

PX-833 Advantage!



The PennTex PX-833 is efficiently air-cooled and produces 60 additional amps with an output rating of 330 amps.

The efficient PX-833 causes less drag on the engine to produce the same output as the 500N, which saves fuel.

- ✓ **330A/24V, with more than 200 amps at idle**
- ✓ **Air-cooled for maximum performance**
- ✓ **Efficient design reduces fuel consumption**
- ✓ **High temperature bearings and grease**
- ✓ **Uses existing regulator, pulley, wiring and is easily serviced with 50DN components**

Complete Equipment and Parts Catalog Available. Can be downloaded from our expanded Web Site: penntexusa.com

PennTex products are proudly manufactured in FORT WORTH, TEXASK, USA

PennTex
INDUSTRIES, INC.

PennTex Industries, Inc. 202 Plaza Dr. Manchester, PA 17345

Sales and Technical Toll Free: 877-590-7366 • Sales Fax: 817-590-0505
E-MAIL: sales@penntexusa.com

Shuttle Bus Leasing

"Your Solution For Shuttling & Fixed Route Contracting"

Leases Terms Available From 3 Months to 2 Years

High Quality, Transit Shuttle Buses

Over 1000 Buses In Inventory

22' To 60' Models Available



Parking Lot Shuttles ~ Seasonal Coverage
Employee Shuttling ~ Peak Demand Coverage



Top Quality Transit Buses Also
Available for Sale

800-287-7253

1863 Service Court, Riverside, CA 92507
www.ShuttleBusLeasing.com

THE DOCKET

FMCSA warns operators about process agent filing

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has sent letters to motorcoach operators across the U.S. warning them they could lose their operating authority because they don't have the name of a process agent on file with the agency.

The letters, sent last month by the commercial enforcement division of the FMCSA, also tells operators that if they fail to designate a process agent and provide the agency with the name of that agent (or agents) they are subject to civil

penalties of up to \$500 per day.

A process agent is a representative who may be served court papers in any regulatory or court proceeding brought against a motor carrier. Every carrier registered with the FMCSA and the U.S. Department of Transportation is supposed to list the name and address of an agent for every state in which it operates.

There are commercial firms that will arrange process agents in all states for a fee. The FMCSA Web site lists more than 30 such

companies providing the service.

Go to <http://li-public.fmcsa.dot.gov>, or to www.fmcsa.dot.gov, click on *Registration & Licensing* or *Process Agent or Insurance Filing*, click on *Continue* and look for the small window that says *Choose Menu Option*. Chose *Blanket Companies* and click *Go*.

The United Motorcoach Association provides blanket process agent services for its members that request it — as a free member benefit. The American Bus Association provides similar service for

its members. Both associations are listed on the FMCSA Web site as being blanket process agents.

UMA investigated the origin of the letter and discovered that a foul-up by federal agencies apparently created its need. It appears that the pre-1996 records of process agent filings, which were maintained by the now defunct Interstate Commerce Commission, failed to be transferred to the old FHWA Office of Motor Carriers and subsequently do not show up in the current FMCSA database.

The letter gives operators 30 days to designate a process agent and file the appropriate paperwork with the FMCSA. The agency has a special document, Form BOC-3, that's used for designating a process agent. The form also can be found on the FMCSA Web site, www.fmcsa.dot.gov. Click on *Forms* and scroll down to the BOC-3 form and print it. The completed form must be sent to the FMCSA in Washington.

Questions can be directed to (202) 385-2423.

Operators now subject to Ohio business taxes

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio's new commercial activities tax has gone into effect for motorcoach companies doing business in the Buckeye state and operators that have not registered for the tax are subject to being fined.

Nov. 15 was the deadline to register for the levy that taxes gross receipts in Ohio. If a company fails to register, it could be fined \$100 a month, or a maximum of \$1,000. (See Oct. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The commercial activities tax is essentially a yearly levy for the privilege of doing business in Ohio. It is based on gross income, with the amount of taxable gross receipts determining whether or how the tax applies.

Ohio-based bus operators that have annual taxable gross receipts of at least \$150,000 are subject to the tax. Out-of-state operators having more than \$500,000 in taxable gross receipts in Ohio or driving more than 25 percent of their miles in Ohio are also subject to the tax.

Operators doing a significant amount of business in Ohio, including those in such adjoining states as Michigan, Indiana, Pennsylvania, New York, Kentucky and West Virginia should verify their mileage in Ohio does not exceed 25 percent of their fleet total.

Out-of-state operators also become subject to the tax if they have more than \$50,000 in real or personal property in Ohio, or spend more than \$50,000 in pay-

roll for work in Ohio. So, an operator that has a single motorcoach it keeps in Ohio could be subject to the tax.

Because the new levy taxes gross receipts, even companies that did not make a profit are required to pay it. In the past, if a company lost money, it may not have had to pay taxes. Now it will. The new tax replaces the state corporate franchise tax.

Operators subject to the tax must register with the Ohio Department of Taxation. Registration includes a one-time refundable fee of \$15 for registering on-line, or a \$20 fee for paper registration.

On-line registration is available via the Internet at the Ohio Business Gateway at www.obg.ohio.gov; paper applications are available on the Ohio Department of Taxation Web site at www.tax.ohio.gov.

The first returns must be filed by Feb. 10.

Businesses with annual gross receipts of \$150,000 or less are not subject to the tax; those in-state businesses with receipts from \$150,001-\$1,000,000 pay a minimum \$150 tax; receipts exceeding \$1 million — when the tax is fully phased in — will be taxed at a rate of 0.26 percent (\$150 plus 0.26 percent)

The tax rate for the first tax period — from July 1 to Dec. 31, 2005 — is 0.06 percent.

For more information, go to the Department of Taxation Web site or call (888) 722-8829.

Voters retain gasoline tax hike in Wash.

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Fuel taxes in Washington state are going up for all motorists — not just bus operators and truckers.

That's because voters rejected a ballot measure that would have blocked a gasoline tax increase intended to help finance \$8.5 billion in transportation projects.

The measure, Initiative 912, would have rolled back the 9.5 cents-per-gallon hike in Washington's gasoline tax approved by lawmakers and signed by the governor earlier this year.

The first three cents of the tax increase went into effect July 1, boosting the state tax to 31 cents a gallon for both gasoline and diesel fuel.

However, the ballot measure would have left in place a tax increase for diesel fuel that is being primarily paid by truckers and bus operators.

The fuel-tax increase, which is being phased in over four years, will finance more than 200 transportation projects statewide. The state had to put a planned sale of at least \$60 million worth of the debt on hold pending the outcome of the vote on the measure.

The fairness of the measure caused many truckers and bus operators to oppose because it would have eliminated only the tax increase on gasoline, not diesel fuel. (See Sept 15 and Aug. 1 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Voters in three states approve road bonds

Voters in three states went to the polls last month and approved more than \$5 billion in bonds for transportation projects.

And in New Jersey, voters approved a measure to change the state constitution, allowing some revenue from taxes levied on businesses to be used to put soot-reducing filters on publicly owned or operated diesel buses and trucks.

New York voters passed a \$2.9 billion bond measure to fund highway and bridge projects in upstate New York, and subway and rail improvements in New York City. Half of the bond proceeds going to New York City will buy new buses and subway cars, and pay for a new subway line and a Long Island Rail Road extension to Grand Central Terminal. The other half of the money will be spent on road and bridge projects across the state. (See Oct. 15 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

At the same time, voters in

Ohio authorized \$2 billion in debt for road construction and investments to foster business development. About \$1.35 billion of the Ohio bond proceeds are to be used for highways and other infrastructure projects such as water and sewer systems.

And in Maine, voters approved an \$83 million borrowing package to bankroll investments in that state's infrastructure, including highways and bridges.

The largest of the five bond issues on the ballot, Question 2, calls for \$33.1 million for improvements to roads and bridges, airports, public transit systems, state ferries and ports.

Projects to be financed with the bonds include the Waldo-Hancock Bridge replacement; reconstruction of more than 100 miles of highways, and replacement or rehabilitation of 84 bridges. (See Aug. 1, 2003 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Arkansas to vote on road plan

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Arkansas voters will decide this month whether to renew a 1999 bond program for highway improvements.

The measure, which will be decided in a Dec. 13 election, is being opposed by Arkansas truckers.

The Arkansas Trucking Association executive committee voted to oppose the highway initiative. The truckers had been expected to support the program but, instead, said they would fight the plan because it could obligate the state

to \$1 billion in debt.

Six years ago, the association supported the bond program — and a 4-cent tax increase on diesel fuel — that has transformed one of the nation's worst interstate systems into one of the best.

Now, trucking executives strongly object not only to using expensive debt to finance road improvements but also to the ballot question that would transfer authority to approve bonds from voters to the appointed state Highway Commission.

Florida ports' ID program is moving closer to reality

PENSACOLA, Fla. — The state of Florida will begin phasing in its own version of the federal Transportation Worker Identification Credential program before the end of this year, but motorcoach operators probably won't have to worry about it for several months.

The state Highway Safety and Motor Vehicle Department plans to implement the program by the middle of December at the Pensacola seaport, one of 12 deep-water ports in the state where workers and others will have to use specially issued biometric ID cards to gain access.

"Once we're comfortable with Pensacola, then we'll move to the next one, and once we are comfortable with that one then we'll move to the next until we've done all 12," said James Kneeland, director of the department's project management office. "This is not a big-bang conversion."

He said the motorcoach industry is not likely to be impacted until the implementation process reaches the first seaport that caters to cruise ships — Canaveral, which is No. 7 on the list. It is not expected to become involved for several months. Other seaports with cruise ship operations include Miami, Everglades and Manatee and they are further down the list.

"It strikes me that they will have special lanes and techniques for the motorcoach industry to make it as quick and easy as possible for them," Kneeland noted. "We absolutely recognize that the only way the ports stay in business is through commerce, so we have to make sure there's minimal disruption to commerce. We are trying to make sure the ports are as secure and safe as possible while minimally interrupting the nature of their business."

Florida is moving to better secure the seaports in response to state legislation adopted two years ago mandating that all deep-water ports in the state have biometric access protection. It was supposed to have been in place last year but implementation was delayed so state officials could work closely with the Transportation Security Administration, which is putting together a national TWIC program for seaport, airport, rail, pipeline, trucking and mass transit facilities.

Kneeland said Florida has reached an agreement with TSA that will make the state program a prototype for the federal program. "This will help save the state money because we will not have to do a second implementation when the federal government comes around to do theirs," he said. "Instead, we will already be done."

The TSA is assisting with the implementation and will gather statistics to help assure the credential program is well planned, the rules make sense, and the process works properly, he added.

The federal program was started more than three years ago and last June completed its third phase — the testing of some biometric

cards by an estimated 200,000 workers at facilities in four states, including Florida. Results of the tests are being evaluated and it is not known when the final phase of rolling out the program nationally will begin. "It will be sometime in the future," said Nico Melendez of the Los Angeles TSA office.

Under the Florida program, the

biometric cards will store the fingerprints of the cardholder, which will be read by stationary readers at the gated entrances to the seaports and handheld readers that can be used elsewhere.

Unlike the current situation where a different identification card is needed for each seaport, the new biometric card will be ac-

cepted at all 12 ports. However, having a card will not automatically allow the cardholder to enter any of the ports.

"The credential just proves you have been vetted and you have gone through the background check. It is then up to the individual port to authorize access," said Kneeland.

We Provide The Reliability And Durability, You Provide The View.

Detroit Diesel's Series 60 engine, proven for 15 years with more than 800,000 on the road, delivers outstanding performance whether climbing mountains, cruising over the plains or operating in extreme temperature conditions.

SERIES 60®

- Will Meet 2007 EPA Standards
- Improved Performance And Electronics
- Heavy Duty Durability
- Dedicated Service Network

Still The Fuel Economy Leader

DETROIT DIESEL

www.detroitdiesel.com



Impact of planned Indiana toll hike stretches to Ohio

GRANGER, Ind. — Plans by Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels to hike tolls on the Indiana Toll Road have touched off plenty of criticism, some of it coming from neighboring Ohio.

The Indiana Toll Road is a divided highway running across northern Indiana. Its route is no more than 10 miles from either Lake Michigan or the Michigan state line. It feeds directly into toll roads at the Illinois and Ohio state lines, the Chicago Skyway on the west and the Ohio Turnpike in the east.

The toll road is designated Interstate 90. All of the highway east of the junction of I-90, Interstate 80 and Interstate 94 also is designated I-80.

Daniels wants to boost tolls along the entire 157-mile route, with autos and truckers bearing the brunt of the increase. An automobile traveling from one end to the other would pay \$8 under Daniels' proposal, compared to the current \$4.65. That's an increase of 72 percent. A five-axle truck would pay \$31, up from the cur-

rent \$14.55, or an increase of about 113 percent.

By comparison, the toll for a three-axle motorcoach would go to \$11, from the current \$8.85, or an increase of 24 percent.

Trucking company executives opposing the increase say it will force many truckers to seek alternative east-west corridors.

That's exactly what happened in Ohio during the past decade when that state jacked up tolls for trucks on the Ohio Turnpike. Secondary east-west highways

such as U.S. 20, U.S. 24 and state Route 2 became favorites of truckers, causing years of consternation by residents along those roads.

A year ago, however, Ohio began an 18-month test of rolling back tolls to lure truckers back onto the turnpike. Twelve months into the test, the Ohio Department of Transportation reports a "pretty steady rise" in truck traffic on the turnpike and a drop in the number of trucks on secondary roads.

On Route 2, ODOT measured 60 percent less traffic on a stretch near Port Clinton and 43 percent in eastern Lucas County. On U.S. 20 in parts of Williams County, traffic decreased nearly 29 percent, while falling 23 percent on a sec-

tion in Fulton County.

Now the fear is the success may be short-lived because of Daniels' proposal to raise tolls on the Indiana Toll Road in the spring. The Indiana increase is nearly as much as Ohio's rollback.

Truckers in northern Indiana with routes to eastbound destinations are saying they intend to avoid toll roads as much as possible in both states. In other words, Indiana's toll rate hike could hamper Ohio's efforts to keep big rigs on the turnpike.

Said one trucker: "It would be in the best interest of Ohio to get a hold of Indiana and convince them not to do so. They need to work together."

Coalition calls for more toll roads

WASHINGTON — A diverse coalition of groups has called on state and local governments to consider tolling each time a new road or road reconstruction project is considered anywhere in the U.S.

Citing deteriorating roads and a lack of funding to pay for needed improvements as two of the biggest challenges facing state and local government officials, the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association and allied groups called for the move.

"Roads have become a lower priority than they should be," said Patrick Jones, IBTTA's executive

director. "The time has come for all levels of government to acknowledge they don't have the resources they need to build, maintain and upgrade America's roads."

Other members of the coalition include the American Public Transportation Association, Environmental Defense, Hudson Institute, Intelligent Transportation Society of America, and the Reason Foundation.

The coalition members had three specific recommendations to state highway officials:

- Include tolling as an option whenever they consider building a

new road or upgrading an existing road in their jurisdiction;

- Include tolling as an option when they consider road projects that may be several years off to determine whether tolling would allow them to accelerate those projects; and

- When tolling is determined not to be appropriate, provide a publicly explanation as to why.

Jones also presented Maryland Gov. Robert Ehrlich and Virginia Gov. Mark Warner with an award for their efforts to advance a study to consider adding toll lanes to the Capital Beltway, near Washington.

Maryland, Virginia study tolls

WASHINGTON — Maryland and Virginia plan to study adding express toll lanes to Interstate 95 and 495 around Washington, also known as the Capital Beltway.

Maryland will study adding toll lanes to 14 miles of the Beltway's western side, leading to Interstate 270, while Virginia will study adding 14 miles on the southern side, from the I-95 connection at the southern part of the Beltway east to the Woodrow

Wilson Bridge, which crosses the Potomac River, the *Washington Post* reported.

Officials said that combined with a plan already under study to add toll lanes between the two new areas, the three stretches could bring express lanes to about half of the 64-mile Beltway.

The proposed timeframe would be a minimum of five years following completion of the studies, which will take about 18 months.

Operators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

bursements for fuel and lodging. Later, the loaded runs were dropped to \$3.50 a mile and finally \$2.50. Also, the pay for sitting buses was reduced to \$700 from \$1,050.

"It got real confusing," said Johnson.

The transportation management companies that recruited the motorcoach operators for the hurricane work acknowledge that things have not been going very well and they blame the Federal Emergency Management Agency for failing to properly set up the payment system at the outset.

"Very frankly, FEMA was just not prepared for this, that's really what happened," said William Maulsby, chief executive of Bus Bank in Chicago. "It's the government and that's just how it is."

He said the federal agency made the project even more complicated by failing to bring in someone from the charter bus industry to manage the massive job. Instead, he said the work was turned over to companies that were involved in the trucking and limousine business.

"It was a system that just wasn't set up very well from the begin-

ning," he said.

FEMA gave the main contract for the evacuation work to Landstar Systems, a Jacksonville, Fla., trucking logistics company that has had a long-term relationship with the federal government for emergency transportation needs. Landstar, in turn, contracted with Carey Limousine, another national transportation company, which then hired two companies involved in the motorcoach industry, Bus Bank and Transportation Management Service of Vienna, Va. Bus Bank and TMS did most of the work in rounding up buses.

Kevin O'Connor, chief operating officer of TMS, said a major part of the payment problems can be traced to the rush of signing up motorcoach companies and getting buses to where they needed to be to evacuate people. The initial contracts with the companies did not contain payment terms or billing procedures because no one knew at the time what they were going to be. "We got buses out there in a hurry and it was a couple of weeks before we knew what they were going to be," he said.

When the billing procedures finally were developed, he said they were very complicated and required each operator to file weekly forms containing very spe-

cific documents backing up each charge for each bus used in the evacuation. "We were told that everything had to match up precisely with the invoices or Carey would kick them back," he explained.

O'Connor said many small operators had difficulty following the procedures, which resulted in large numbers of invoices being returned for additional documentation. "We wore out two fax machines sending things back and forth," he said.

Under the payment schedule set up by FEMA, the carriers were to get 50 percent of their payment within 10 days of receiving the invoice and the remainder after another 20 days. The counting period, however, did not actually begin until the first "acceptable" invoice was received, which in some cases delayed payments for weeks.

"I have had seven or eight people working these bills fulltime ever since it all started," O'Connor emphasized.

To help cut through the red tape, O'Connor said he eventually made arrangements with Carey to contact his billing staff each time there was a question on a single invoice so it could be addressed immediately, which has speeded up the payment process. Addition-

ally, he said his company has been advancing money to some companies that are having serious financial problems because they have not yet been paid for their hurricane work.

"This is painful for us on two levels — one because it is hurting these little guys and two because we have the contracts with them and the payments are not coming through fast enough and it could hurt us in the long run with the perception some of them might have of us," he noted.

Some companies that were involved in the hurricane evacuations through private companies — rather than the government — had much better luck. However, one of them fears that the slow payment of the government might have spread beyond FEMA.

Tom Curtis, president of The Express Bus Co. in Hattiesburg, Miss., said his company moved 700 people from seven extended-care facilities and 82 from two hospitals in New Orleans and was paid promptly by the businesses.

"But now I am worried about the military," he said, adding that he has had a long-time relationship with the U.S. Department of Defense to transport military troops in and out of Camp Shelby where members of the armed forces are

sent before they are sent to Iraq and when they return to the U.S. He said credit cards issued by the government went bad several weeks ago and he has not received any pay since.

"They owe us in excess of \$100,000 now and we have two buses out there right now moving troops," he said. "It's not a problem right now, but it could be very soon because we have bills to pay."

Curtis said he plans to take his concerns higher than the office personnel at Camp Shelby. "I need to talk to someone a little higher than a sergeant to find out what's going on,"

Maulsby said although the situation with the hurricane project has been frustrating, it could teach the government a lesson for the future. "The next time it does not need to be a trucking logistics company or a limo company leading the way, but it needs to be someone in the charter bus industry who deals with motorcoach operators day in and day out," he said. "We all know how to do business with each other."

And, Johnson said, despite the payment problems he is having, he would do it all over again. "I sure would," he said. "I know it was the right thing to do."

STYLE THAT'S AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3.

WHEN IT COMES TO COACHES, ONE STYLE DOES NOT FIT ALL. THAT'S WHY MCI TAKES PRIDE IN BUILDING COACHES FOR EVERY CUSTOMER NEED. WHETHER YOU'RE LOOKING FOR BASIC EXCELLENCE

OR ULTIMATE LUXURY, WE'VE GOT YOU COVERED. YET HOWEVER DIFFERENT OUR MODELS MAY LOOK, THEY ALL HAVE ONE, VERY IMPORTANT THING IN COMMON: MCI RELIABILITY.

E4500. EXCLUSIVE ELEGANCE.

FROM OUR RENOWNED SPIRAL ENTRYWAY TO THE STEERABLE TAG AXLE THAT GIVES THE E4500 AN UNPARALLELED TIGHT TURNING RADIUS, THIS TOP MODEL HAS IT ALL—GREAT LOOKS, POSH PASSENGER AMENITIES AND HIGH-PERFORMANCE, HIGH-TECH SPECS.



E4500LX

J4500. LUXURY THAT SELLS.

ALLURE AT THE CURB, TOP-TIER AMENITIES, AND THE PROVEN COMPONENTRY OF OUR BEST-LOVED MODELS. WHAT'S NOT TO LIKE? PRAISED BY OPERATORS FOR ITS EASE OF OWNERSHIP, AND A FAVORITE WITH DRIVERS FOR ITS NIMBLE HANDLING, AMERICA'S BEST-SELLING TOURING COACH WILL EARN KUDOS IN YOUR FLEET AS WELL.



J4500

D4505 AND D4005. A CLASSIC ANEW.

FOR YEARS, THE D SERIES HAS PERFORMED RELIABLY FOR TOUR AND CHARTER OPERATORS AND HAS BROUGHT A TOUCH OF TOURING CLASS TO INTERCITY COMMUTES. NOW WITH A NEW LOOK, THE NATION'S ALL-TIME BEST-SELLING COACHES ARE READY TO IMPRESS YOUR PASSENGERS ALL OVER AGAIN. THE MCI® D4505 AND D4005: STYLISH, PROVEN, AND ALWAYS POPULAR.



D4505

CALL 1-866-MCICOACH
WWW.MCICOACH.COM

©2005 Motor Coach Industries International, Inc. and its subsidiaries. All rights reserved.


MOTOR COACH
INDUSTRIES
Going further!™

FMCSA increases focus on driver health, qualifications

By Wendy Leavitt

"We've focused on brakes, we've focused on tires — all of those things — but the Crash Causation Study shows us that we clearly need to focus on drivers and the issues surrounding them," observed Administrator Annette M. Sandberg head of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) at a recent public meeting of certified medical examiners.

Sandberg was not talking about driver training or experience or even technical expertise, she was talking about health and wellness.

Today, FMCSA has three major driver health initiatives underway, including the creation of a five-member Medical Review Board to provide advice on how to update the current physical qualifications for drivers, the development of a National Registry of Medical Examiners who are certified to provide the required DOT physicals, and the merger of the CDL and Medical Certificate into a single document.

Each of these projects is intended to improve highway safety by making it easier to identify and weed out drivers who have health problems that make them unsafe, while permitting qualified drivers with now-controllable medical conditions to continue working.

Updating driver qualifications

It may seem strange to hear that the criteria for a person fit enough to perform the task of driving could have altered over the past couple of decades.

People are still the same, after all, and healthy is still healthy,

right?

Well, yes and no, according to the FMCSA, which will be reviewing all current medical standards and guidance for physicians and developing new standards where gaps exist.

For starters, there are now 13 standards directly related to medical requirements for commercial motor vehicle drivers, four are specific and nine are general, according to the FMCSA. The specific standards deal with physical requirements relating to vision, hearing, use of insulin, and seizure disorder (epilepsy). These are absolute and not open to interpretation by a medical examiner.

The remaining nine, however, are general in scope, so medical examiners must decide whether or not such medical conditions will negatively affect the driver's ability to safely operate a commercial motor vehicle.

"The medical advisory criteria under CFR 49 Part 391.41 (available at www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rules-regulations/administration/fmcsr/391.41.htm) provide the medical examiner with recommendations and FMCSA interpretations of the medical standards," explains the FMCSA. "Much of this guidance is outdated. Complex issues, such as an aging commercial motor vehicle workforce population and lack of medical examiner training and certification, complicate the CMV driver medical certification process."

Specifically, the agency points to areas such as neurology and psychiatry where new treatments and new medications have improved outcomes.

"Neurology research differs from the regulation in that the agency standards do not reflect

current treatment," notes the FMCSA. "For example, advances in the treatment of people with strokes have resulted in much better outcomes, possibly reducing the period of time drivers would be disqualified from service. FMCSA guidance for qualifying drivers with issues related to psychiatry has not been updated since 1988. Medications that have been available since that time may help drivers adjust to their mental health conditions and be able to drive safely."

The proposed Medical Review Board would be the entity charged with sorting out issues such as these and recommending changes to the current standards and practices. Details concerning the formation of the board, including recruitment of interested physicians and a tentative schedule of work, were to be published in the Federal Register last month (see Nov. 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*).

National Registry of Medical Examiners

While there seems to be general agreement on the need for updating driver medical qualifications to reflect the current best practices and medical advances, there are some outstanding questions concerning the proposed National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners, including its potential impact on costs and on the number of physicians available to perform the estimated 6.4 million physicals now conducted on a biannual basis. These issues, along with other matters, will be addressed later in the rulemaking process.

The stated need for the registry, however, is clear: "There is evidence that improper medical

certification has contributed directly to crashes," reports the FMCSA.

"The National Transportation Safety Board, for example, has documented cases where drivers with serious disqualifying medical conditions were involved in significant fatal and injury crashes. Reports from FMCSA field staff indicate numerous problems on our roads, where drivers who have disqualifying medical conditions are operating commercial motor vehicles. These issues indicate that there is a need to improve the medical certification process, and the proposed National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners is one strategy for addressing this problem."

According to the agency, if established, the proposed registry will be a directory of certified medical examiners who "fully understand the medical standards in the FMCSA regulations and how they relate to the mental and physical demands of operating a commercial motor vehicle. The medical examiners listed in the directory will successfully complete required training and a certification examination, and will be listed on the proposed National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners."

Another approach to certification

Now the question on the table is: Is this strategy the best option available? "The problem is finding a way to fix this problem without creating new ones," observes Robert Hirsch, founder and president of the nonprofit National Academy of DOT Medical Examiners (www.nadme.org).

"Establishing the criteria is the

FMCSA's job; it is what they are charged with doing. At NADME, however, we believe that the medical examiner certification process can be better handled in the private sector. The last thing we want to do is diminish the number of examiners available to do driver physicals or increase the cost.

"An incentive-based program that gives doctors a reason to participate can provide a much more efficient and effective approach," he adds. "To be truly successful, everyone has to benefit — the general public, carriers and drivers, and physicians."

Merging the CDL, Medical Certificate

The third FMCSA driver health action item is to combine the CDL and the driver's medical certificate into a single record. A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking is scheduled to be published in March 2006, where the details will be presented and public comment solicited, according to the FMCSA.

It is, of course, in everyone's best interest to make sure that only healthy drivers who are fit for the difficult job they do are out on the nation's highways. Over the months ahead, the commercial vehicle industry will have many opportunities to explore ways to help achieve that goal. You can learn more about FMCSA's driver health and wellness initiatives at the agency's Web sites, including: www.nrcme.fmcsa.dot.gov.

TCA Safety Commission Newsletter. Reprinted with the permission of Primedia Business Magazines & Media Inc. Copyright 2005. All rights reserved.

How to contact us:

To submit or report news, Letters to the Editor, articles:

E-mail: BusNews@qwest.net

Fax: (866) 930-8426

Mail: 4930 W. Glendale Ave., Suite 6
Glendale, AZ 85301

Call: (623) 930-8423

To advertise or to mail advertising-related materials:

Call: Johnny Steger

(623) 930-8422 or (602) 980-0840

E-mail: Redboots44@aol.com

Mail: 4930 W. Glendale Ave., Suite 6
Glendale, AZ 85301

To report errors:

Call: (623) 930-8421

E-mail: BusNews@qwest.net

To contact the United Motorcoach Association:

Call: (800) 424-8262

Online: www.uma.org

To send advertisements or photographs via the Internet:

E-mail: BMNews@jezac.com

Upload: www.jezac.com/uploads

To subscribe or inquire about your subscription:

Call: (623) 930-8421

E-mail: BusNewsSubs@qwest.net

Fax: (866) 930-8426

Mail: 4930 W. Glendale Ave., Suite 6
Glendale, AZ 85301

©2005 by the United Motorcoach Association.
Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited.

Bus&MotorcoachNEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

ISSUE NO. 67

Staff

Editor & Publisher
Victor Parra

Sales Director
Johnny Steger

Senior Editor
Bruce Sankey

Government Editor
Norman Littler

Associate Editor
Ellen Balm

Editorial Assistant
Tara Sheehan

Editorial Assistant
Amy Stalknecht

Accountant
John Giddens

Editorial Assistant
Melissa Harden

Art Director
Mary E. McCarty

Advisory Board

William Allen
Sierra Trailways
Sacramento, Calif.

Bob Foley
ABC Companies
Faribault, Minn.

Larry Benjamin
Northfield Lines
Northfield, Minn.

Steve Haddad
Carl R. Bieber Tourways
Kutztown, Pa.

Dave Bolen
New World Tours
Bristow, Va.

Rick Hillard
Tri-State Tours
Galena, Ill.

Bob Brisman
West Point Trailways
Vails Gate, N.Y.

Todd Holland
Ramblin' Express
Colorado Springs

David Brown
Holiday Tours
Randlemann, N.C.

Robert Hume
Travel Mates Trailways
Harrisonburg, Va.

Steve Brown
Brown Coach
Amsterdam, N.Y.

Daryl G. Johnson
J & J Charters
Crosby, Texas

Dale Krapf
Krapf Coaches
West Chester, Pa.

Godfrey LeBon
Paradise Trailways
West Hempstead, N.Y.

Joan Libby
Cavalier Coach
Boston, Mass.

Jeff Polzien
Red Carpet Tours
Oklahoma City

Tom Ready
Ready Bus Lines
LaCrescent, Minn.

Brian Scott
Escot Bus Lines
Largo, Fla.

Michelle Silvestro
National Interstate Insurance Co.
Richfield, Ohio

T. Ralph Young
Young Transportation
Asheville, N.C.

Important dot-travel deadline is Dec. 31

LONDON — More than 10,000 travel companies and organizations worldwide reportedly have signed up for at least one new .travel domain name.

Interest in the new Internet Web-address extension, known as .travel, was said to be widespread at the World Travel Market here last month.

Launch of the .travel registry will occur on schedule next month, Ron Andruff, president and CEO of Tralliance Corp., announced at the show. Tralliance is a U.S. company that develops and promotes e-commerce products and services for travel and tourism providers. It has been organizing and developing the idea of a .travel registry and domain for more than two years.

"All systems are go" for the global kickoff, said Andruff.

Right now, the .travel domain is in what is being called a limited launch phase. That continues through Dec. 26 to confirm that all systems are operating and functioning as planned, said Andruff. Then, in January, the official launch takes place.

To adopt a Web name with a .travel extension, motorcoach companies and others in the travel industry must register the Web name they want use by Dec. 31, and they must be "authenticated."

Authentication simply means that an approved organization has confirmed that a particular company or organization does business in the travel and tourism industry.

The goal of the .travel program is to boost the Internet visibility of the travel industry by having its own Web-address extension. So, instead of having a Web address that ends in .com or .net, motorcoach and other travel companies that want to participate in the program will have an internet address that ends in .travel. Companies can keep their .com extension and adopt .travel, as well.

Members of the United Motorcoach Association, the National Tour Association and the American Bus Association can reserve a .travel Web name by registering with one of the associations. The associations have been authorized to handle the reservation process.

The Dec. 31, deadline is important because after that date any company or organization can apply for a .travel name as long as it can be verified as being in the travel industry.

Coach operators interested in signing up for a .travel domain name should call or visit the Web site of the association they are a member of and request or look for the .travel information. There is a fee for registering a .travel name.

Safety award nominations sought

TAMPA, Fla. — Nominations are being sought for the 2006 United Motorcoach Safety Leader of the Year Award, the top safety honor in the over-the-road bus industry.

The award, presented annually at the Vision Awards Banquet during Motorcoach Expo, is given to a person who has made a measurable impact on safety at his or her company or in the motorcoach industry.

The specific qualifications include being involved in the

industry for at least five years; active in industry initiatives and organizations; active in non-industry activities, and safety-related accomplishments at his or her company or in the industry.

"The person's position or title is not a factor," explains Carmen Daecher of the Daecher Consulting Group of Camp Hill, Pa., whose organization sponsors the award. "His or her achievements in the motorcoach safety field and activities in and outside of the industry are what count,"

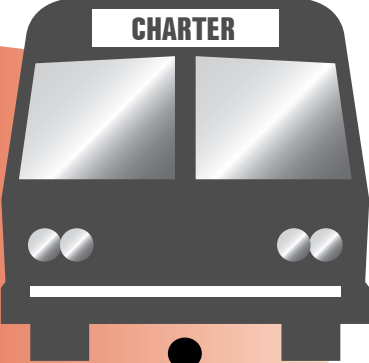
adds Daecher, a safety guru.

A nomination form can be obtained from the Daecher Consulting Group by e-mailing cdaecher@safetyteam.com or calling (717) 975-9190.

The form basically asks for two things: Safety achievements and other notable activities and/or achievements of the person being nominated.

The award will be presented during the Vision Awards Banquet on Friday, Jan 20, at Motorcoach Expo in Tampa.

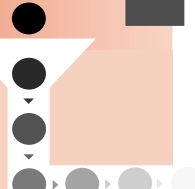
Dump CLEAN... Dump LEGAL!



WASHROOM WASTE DISPOSAL UNIT
Installs directly into your existing sewer system!

Lavatory dump hopper is assembled and ready to install in your existing sewer system. Its cover plate is easily rolled back with the remover tool. Each of your service lanes can easily be equipped with this time-saving unit, which has been the industry standard for over thirty years. All major credit cards accepted.

Call 1-866-LAV-DUMP or email lavdump@yahoo.com for additional information.



▲ Washroom waste is removed quickly, easily and safely

HUDSON RIVER CORPORATION
Call toll free: 1-866-LAV-DUMP | Fax: 1-201-420-3322

Focused on Safety & Security

Trust the Industry Leader in Audio/Video for Camera Surveillance.

Digital BUS-WATCH®

Benefits of a Quality On-Board Camera System:

- Reduce Litigation Risk, Insurance Costs and Theft
- Counter Terrorist Threats
- Reduce Vandalism and Sabotage by Passengers & Drivers
- Provide a Safe Environment for Both Passengers & Drivers
- Increase Driver Awareness

Digital BUS-WATCH® DVR



Why BUS-WATCH®?

Keep your buses, drivers and passengers safe with the most durable and reliable recording systems available today. BUS-WATCH® Systems provide the tools you need to reduce or eliminate risks inside and outside the bus and respond to situations as they occur with clean picture quality and clear audio.



Desktop Viewing Station



REI

TOLL-FREE SALES
Monday - Friday: 8:00am - 5:00pm CST
1-800-228-9275

TOLL-FREE SERVICE
24 / 7 Technical Support & Troubleshooting
1-877-726-4617

Radio Engineering Industries, Inc.

w w w . r a d i o e n g . c o m

Neoplan

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Motorcoach Expo 2000 in Orlando but was only able to generate a few orders. Also for 2000, Neoplan upgraded its Cityliner over-the-road coach with a curved entry stairway (a la MCI E-model), and a new A/C system that expanded leg room.

In 2001, Neoplan brought what may have been the most unusual bus ever displayed at a Motorcoach Expo, the Intermodal Expedito. A combination passenger/freight vehicle, the 12-wheeled Expedito could seat up to 35 passengers in a double-decker compartment in the front half and haul 20,000 pounds of freight in back.

Also in 2001, Neoplan announced it was opening a second manufacturing plant. It made arrangements with Brownsville, Texas, to occupy the old Eagle plant. The heavily vandalized Eagle facility was refurbished by Brownsville taxpayers and a gala opening was conducted in June 2001. Three months later, 9/11 happened.

Within months of those events, Neoplan revealed it was withdrawing from the motorcoach sector,

REI partners with fleet tracking supplier

OMAHA, Neb. — Radio Engineering Industries has announced a strategic partnership with Fleet Management Solutions aimed at boosting sales of the satellite-based fleet management, tracking and vehicle-location systems produced by Fleet Management Solutions.

REI, which is based in Omaha, is best known in the motorcoach industry as the No. 1 supplier of audio/video entertainment systems. It also produces camera surveillance systems for a wide range of bus customers.

ceasing production and sale of its Cityliner, Skyliner, Starliner and Spaceliner models. The Skyliner was the industry's only double-decker motorcoach and the Spaceliner was a conversion shell.

Neoplan produced another intercity model, the Metroliner AN340, which competed with MCI's Commuter Coach. Several transit systems bought the Metroliner, whose exterior appearance strongly resembled the MCI D-model.

Almost from the time it began producing buses at its plant in

Fleet Management Solutions, which has its headquarters in San Luis Obispo, Calif., manufactures, distributes and supports systems that help fleet operators track and manage their vehicles.

Fleet Management Solutions made news in the coach industry early this year when it entered into an agreement with ABC Companies to supply a satellite system that enables ABC to, among other things, track coaches it leases.

The systems of hardware, software and firmware that Fleet Management Solutions produces

can track vehicles in a variety of ways and create a number of reports, including stop reports, idle-time reports, DOT logs, state-crossing reports and trip reports, plus such information as vehicle speed, direction and location. (Firmware is computer programming instructions that are stored in a read-only memory unit rather than being implemented through software.)

In announcing the partnership, REI said it was incorporating all Fleet Management Solutions' satellite-based Web tracking tech-

nology with its surveillance and A/V products for the motorcoach, transit, school bus and agricultural markets.

“Used separately or integrated with REI's surveillance products, this partnership provides additional cost-effective solutions for fleet managers,” said Dave Ruback, president of REI.

“Together, REI and FMS will quickly and substantially increase the installed base of the FMS applications in this rapidly growing market,” said Cliff Henley, CEO of Fleet Management Solutions.

with either diesel or natural gas.

Then there was its 60-foot articulated transit bus and specialty low-floor models like the 45-foot Intraliner. The 100 percent low-floor Intraliner was primarily used by airports and could be outfitted with as many as four doors on one side.

The Neoplan nameplate first appeared in the U.S. in the 1970s with the import of German-made Neoplane. According to *National Bus Trader* magazine, Neoplan was the top-selling imported coach

in the U.S. prior to 1985. In 1984, 106 Neoplan coaches were sold in the U.S. The next year, however, Setra took over top billing, reports *National Bus Trader* editor Larry Plachno.

Industry speculation that Neoplan was on the ropes has circulated for months. The layoff of 100 workers last year helped fuel the talk. Neoplan was by far the single biggest private-sector employer in Prowers County, Colo., and Lamar, a community of 8,800 people, 200 miles southeast of Denver.

UNDER the BUS?



NO PROBLEM

The safest lift on the market!

SEFAC

Where Safety Matters

800-826-3486

email us at: sefac@sefac.com

or, visit our site at: www.sefac.com



Take Control of Your Costs and Odors!

Ultra PowrPak XL

Better than ever. Controls odors all week long.



NEW!



Super Chem-Tabs
Powerful tablet for hot, humid temperatures and heavily used sites.

NEW!



Chem-Tabs

Perfect tablet for special events and winter use. Extra deep blue color.

NEW!

Little Shots

Little Shots keep your units fresh smelling for up to 30 days.



chempace
corporation "the solution people"

Call for Free Samples!
1-800-423-5350

www.chempace.com



Turbo IMAGES



Why they all choose ***Turbo*** ?

- Graphic Design
- Production
- Installation
- After Sales Support



Exclusive Technologies



1.888.219.8872

customer@turbo-images.com

www.turbo-images.com

Pretty in Pink

Wraps add marketing power

Two motorcoach companies from different parts of the U.S. have found that pink buses can be powerful marketing tools.

The companies, Tourco Travel of Minneapolis and Paradise Trailways of Hempstead, N.Y., were asked to assist in promotions that required one of their coaches get a pink-dominated bus wrap.

Paradise Trailways was asked by the March of Dimes in New York to donate the use of a coach during the third-annual Prematurity Awareness Day, which focuses public attention on the growing problem of premature birth.

Tourco was asked by the Marshall Field department store chain to help support the launch of a limited edition of Pink Frango Mints. A portion of the sale of the mints is going to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation.

The March of Dimes uses pink and blue colors to help promote Prematurity Awareness Day, and pink has become widely identified

with breast cancer awareness.

After the promotions were completed, the coach operators found their pink-wrapped buses continued to create a stir among customers and potential customers, encouraging both companies to keep the wraps on longer than they originally had expected.

"My cost to donate a coach for a day and keep it wrapped through out the holiday season gets us a lot of goodwill at very little cost," said Godfrey LeBron, vice president of Paradise Trailways.

And David Ebertowski, founder and president of Tourco, said that "when people saw our coach they asked about the promotion, and we're getting calls specifically asking for that 'pink bus.'"

"It's been enlightening to learn first-hand the successful impact of a wrapped coach as a traveling billboard."

Ebertowski founded Tourco 14 years ago. The company, which offers more than 150 tours through-



March of Dimes volunteer moms gather at the CBS Early Show in New York City with the Prematurity Awareness Day coach, owned by Paradise Trailways, behind them. A March of Dimes spokesman said the bus helped make the day a "huge success." Tourco Travel of Minneapolis' J-model MCI, below, was wrapped with a Pink Frango flower graphic.



out the U.S. and Canada, has a fleet of 15 coaches.

Godfrey LeBron and his wife, Lauren, company president, have

operated Paradise Trailways since 1987. The charter company has a fleet of eight coaches.

Invitational 100 in '06 is set for Virginia valley

MOUNT JACKSON, Va. — The Shenandoah Valley of Virginia will be the locale for the 2006 Invitational 100 meeting, which annually brings motorcoach tour and charter operators from throughout the U.S. to meet with leading tourism suppliers.

The historic Stonewall Jackson Hotel and Conference Center in Staunton, Va., will serve as headquarters for the '06 invitational, July 20-23. Staunton is where Interstates 64 and 81 intersect, in the heart of the Shenandoah Valley.

The Invitational 100 is hosted jointly by the National Motorcoach Network and the Trailways Transportation System.

"We're excited to bring this meeting to this part of Virginia for the first time," said National Motorcoach Network President Steve Kirchner.

Additional information about the event is available by calling National Motorcoach Network at (888) 733-5287 or Trailways at (703) 691-3052.

Inca Gold

PRODUCTS LLC

You can always depend on INCA GOLD for bus restroom maintenance.
A trusted name in the Transportation Industry since 1971!

CONCENTRATED
CONVENIENT
COST EFFECTIVE

INCA GOLD Powder



- Pre-measured packaging-hermetically sealed pouches
- Allows toilet to be charged in remote locations
- Effective management control over product application (cost control)
- Original formaldehyde and non-formaldehyde formulas
- Fresh pine scent
- Bulk packaging also available - 30 lb. pails & 180 lb. kegs

INCA LIQUID GOLD II



- Non-formaldehyde
- Biodegradable - completely safe for discharge into sewage treatment facilities
- Concentrated
- Packaged in 1-gallon bottle with pump dispenser, shipped 4 per case
- Pleasant "Airy" scent

Phone : (800) 789-9969 or (310) 808-9359 Fax : (310) 808-9369

VISIT www.incagoldonline.com TODAY!!

NIMCO/Bus Division

973 589-9265 • Toll Free 800-526-8055
FAX 973-589-2253 • P.O. BOX 5157 • NEWARK, NJ 07105
www.nimcobus.com

Supplying the Transportation Industry with
Used, Serviceable & Rebuildable Bus Parts
for Over 25 Years!

VOLUME DISCOUNTS • PRIDE IN PERFORMANCE

DEEP DISCOUNTS!

on all Detroit Diesel & Allison Transmissions

SAVE MONEY ~ SAVE TIME

We sell good running qualified bus components.

NO RISK PURCHASE PLAN

We unconditionally guarantee our customers satisfaction.

WE ALSO STOCK

- Front and Rear Axle Parts • Engine Accessories
- Alternators and other Electrical Components
- Air Conditioning Components • Body Parts

We Buy & Sell Buses... Call for a Quote

Nat'l Interstate reports big jump in quarterly net

RICHFIELD, Ohio — Strong results by all aspects of its business produced sharply higher net income for the quarter ended Sept. 30, at National Interstate Corp.

Net earnings for the insurer's latest reporting period were \$8.2 million, or 43 cents per diluted share, compared to \$4.7 million, or 31 cents per share diluted, for the third quarter of 2004.

A year ago, National Interstate had fewer shares outstanding, accounting for the noticeably higher per-share earnings figure. The company made its initial public stock offering in February of this year.

The 75 percent increase in 2005 third-quarter profit reflects a 29 percent increase in earned premium, a 4.6-point improvement in the GAAP combined ratio, and a 35 percent increase in net investment income.

Net earnings for the first nine months of 2005 increased to \$22.4 million, or \$1.18 per share diluted, compared to \$16.1 million, or \$1.05 per share diluted, for the same period last year.

National Interstate, corporate parent of the bus industry's second-largest insurance company, also announced its board had declared a 4 cents per share dividend. The dividend is payable Dec. 15, to shareholders of record Dec. 1.

Alan Spachman, chairman and president of National Interstate, said the dividend reflects an intention by the board "to begin paying a regular quarterly dividend." He noted the board "is expressing its confidence in the company's prospects for continued growth and profitability."

Insurance losses and the company's loss adjustment expense ratio were slightly higher in this year's third quarter but consistent with expectations. The underwriting expense ratio was sharply lower, reflecting several factors, including efforts to control expenses, retention of public transportation products, a reduction in estimated expenses for insolvencies and other state fees, and reclassification of expenses that had no impact on income.

Said Spachman: "We had an exceptional third quarter in all aspects of our business. Our year-to-date results remain strong, and we are well-positioned as we head into the final quarter of the year."

National Interstate also reiterated that its losses, compared to others in the insurance industry, from this year's killer hurricanes — Katrina, Rita and Wilma — were limited. Its estimated losses are not expected to exceed \$3 million, making them comparable to last year.

MCI opens Nashville sales, service center

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Motor Coach Industries has expanded its reach in the Mid South by opening a sales-and-service center in Lebanon, Tenn., 22 miles east of Nashville.

The new facility, which opened Nov. 28, is the company's seventh sales and eighth service center.

Built on a 7.7-acre site, the center will sell conversion shells and seated coaches, plus pre-

owned buses available for immediate delivery.

The 18,720-square-foot facility has six drive-through service bays, a bus wash, customer lounge and parts warehouse with sales counter. The center will provide warranty, routine maintenance, repair and major collision services by MCI-trained technicians.

"The Nashville area is an ideal sales and service location for

many reasons," said Pete Cotter, MCI senior vice president of coach sales. "We'll be able to better serve coach operators traveling to and through this popular tour destination. Additionally the new site demonstrates MCI's renewed commitment to the conversion and entertainer market. We'll also be able to better serve the entertainer conversion leasing companies and related businesses in the surround-

ing areas."

Mark Paterson, general manager of the MCI service center in Des Plaines, Ill., will also be responsible for the new center. Mike Hannum has joined the facility as customer service manager.

A grand opening event is being planned for early February.

The center is at 215 Maddox Simpson Pkwy. in Lebanon. Phone: (800) 927-50414.

January 18-22 • Tampa, Florida

Finding Your Road to Success

The Biggest Show for the Motorcoach and Travel Industry!

- New Solution Sessions, including:
 - ☀ Update on 2007 Engine Emission Requirements
 - ☀ Implementing a Fuel Surcharge
 - ☀ Easy-to-Use Market Research Techniques
 - ☀ **Developing Packaged Travel**
 - ☀ Buying Pre-Owned vs. New: Understanding Replacement Costs
 - ☀ **Special Sessions for the Small Operator**
 - ☀ **Special Sessions for the School Bus Operator**
- Exciting hospitality events, including the Welcome Reception at the Florida Aquarium and the not-to-be missed UMA Vision Awards Banquet!
- Industry networking opportunities you *Only Get at Expo!*
- **Over 13 exclusive exhibit hours!**
- **...Plus Save More in 2006!** NEW
 - ☀ Save when registering multiple operators!
 - ☀ Save another \$25 per registrant by staying at one of the Expo 2006 hotels.
 - ☀ Save with the Package Deal for UMA Membership and 2006 Expo!



See www.motorcoachexpo.com for info on Package Deals and more detailed schedule information!



Register today at www.motorcoachexpo.com

Comments? Questions? Call 800-424-8262 or e-mail us at info@uma.org



School bus operator appeals ruling for firing hurt driver

NEW YORK — A school bus service has appealed a federal ruling that it pay back wages and penalties of nearly \$60,000 to a driver who was fired for refusing to continue his route after he was injured by rowdy students who pelted him with packed ice and snow.

The appeal by Kids Bus Service of Bronx, N.Y., will be heard by a U.S. Labor Department administrative judge early next

month, according to Ted Fitzgerald, spokesman for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in New York.

In addition to the monetary assessment, OSHA also ordered Kids Bus to rehire driver Jack Marziano, expunge his personnel records of any adverse references about the firing, and refrain from making negative comments about the discharge to any future requests for employment references.

The incident took place in February 2004, while Marziano was operating a school bus carrying teenagers who caused a disturbance. The driver said he was pelted on the back of the neck with hard snow and ice, causing him to momentarily black out and making him feel dizzy. He refused to continue the route and later was fired.

Marziano filed a complaint with OSHA shortly after he was discharged, claiming the firing

violated the Surface Transportation Assistance Act.

OSHA investigated and determined that a reasonable bus driver would not have continued driving after blacking out and becoming disoriented because those conditions could have led to an accident.

"The safety of both workers and passengers must be a paramount concern in operating buses and other commercial vehicles," said Patricia K. Clark, OSHA's

regional administrator in New York. "We will not hesitate to take the necessary legal steps to protect employees' rights to safe working conditions."

The ruling by OSHA ordered Kid's Bus Service to pay \$33,227 in lost wages, \$1,288 in interest, and \$25,000 in compensatory damages.

Neither the bus company nor Marziano was available for comment

Spader

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

emphasis on the many complicated details that make up financial reports and concentrated more on the bottom line.

"It's like a basketball game with traditional accounting being all of the many statistics in a game and the one-dollar system being just the score," he said. "If a player had to keep track of his or her statistics during a game it would bog them down and they would not play well."

The concept worked so well and the 20 Group produced such

good results for the RV dealers that it caught the attention of other industries. Marine dealerships talked Spader into bringing the program to their industry. Later, he introduced it to the office furniture, power sports, trailer, farm equipment, lighting showroom, and bus distribution industries.

"It led from one to another and it just exploded," says Spader, who eventually turned to consulting fulltime and expanded the business by adding business training and a business software program to his offerings.

Motorcoach operators got involved with Spader seven years

ago when the International Motor Coach Group began offering the 20 Group program to its 50 select members. The program is just beginning to spread deeper into the motorcoach industry with the announcement last month that the United Motorcoach Association has partnered with Spader to begin marketing the program to its 800 operator members.

One of the keys that helped spread the success of the 20 Group was a switch in the emphasis from looking to the past to looking forward, according to Spader. "We still evaluate the past but we put more emphasis on looking for-

ward, projecting what is going to happen," he explains. "And this has turned out to be a great big jump for a lot of our members."

Spader said once a company is about 30 percent into its business year, projections can be made that will show how well it will perform if it continues to do what it is doing at the time. This gives the group the opportunity to figure out what it can change so the results will turn out better.

"You can't make decisions that affect the past, you can only make decisions that affect the future," he stresses.

Honesty and openness among

the members of a 20 Group have been critical to its success as well, he says, adding that the members usually form a strong bond that allows them to be very candid with each other much like what usually is seen among boards of directors.

"Some times, at national meetings, Group 20 members are seen as cliques, but it's really that they've just developed such a close bond," said Spader. "They know they'll get an honest answer."

Spader, who is cutting back on his work load and transitioning his firm to his son, John, gets excited when he talks about the success of businesses that participate in the 20 Group program.

"I have an RV client who just sold his business for \$120 million and when he started in the business 10 years ago he could hardly afford our workshop fee," he says. "And there are stories like that in all of the other industries as well."

He seems to take special pride in watching struggling companies turn around after joining a 20 Group. "We've had some who when they came to us had lost as much as 80 percent of their business and they survived," he emphasizes.

Those who have worked with Spader see him as a dedicated businessman who simply likes what he's doing and enjoys helping others. "I think he just really likes watching companies make money and show improvements in a lot of different areas," observes Stephen Story, president of James River Bus Lines in Richmond, Va., who has been a 20 Group member since 1998. "It shows in what he does and how he does it."

Rather than take all of the credit, though, Spader points to the members themselves for carrying out what they learn in their 20 Group meetings.

"What we do is unusual and different and we have thousands of business people who have gone on to be much more successful, not because we made them successful, but because we gave them some tools they were looking for," he says.

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING



FOR SALE

<p>1 • 1989 • 102C3 8V92 Automatic • AC • R134A Enclosed Parcel Rack • AM/FM Cassette Baggage Door Air Locks VCR • 6 Monitors Good Condition, Ready to Go! \$35,000 or B/O</p>	<p>1 • 1998 MCI 102 EL3 • 350,000 Miles Transmission • Allison B500 • Jake Brake 56 Pass. • Series 60 • AC • Lavatory 6 Monitors • VCR • AM/FM, Cassette CD Changer • Wireless Mic. • Baggage Door Locks. All Updates Performed. Coach is easy to Go \$169,000</p>
--	---

Call Tim at 320-251-1202



1998 MCI 102EL3

54 pass • Series 60 Engine • New B500R Trans.
New Rear End • Cruise Control • Alum. Wheels with
New Tires • 6 Monitor VCR • CD Player
National 4210 Seats with Trays and Mag. Holders
All Updates Done
588k - Very, Very Clean Unit - \$175,000
Call Riley's Bus Service 1-800-288-8246

PARTS & LITERATURE WANTED

ABC Companies is currently restoring a 1940 Yellow Coach,
Coach #TG211077.

Please send a list of parts or literature along with asking price to:

ABC Companies / Keith Harvey
17469 W. Colonial Drive
Winter Garden, FL 34787
or e-mail your list to kharvey@abc-companies.com

Aluminum Wheel Polishing
1-800-333-0268 ~ Nationwide ~ New & Used



Machined, Sanded, Cut & Polished
www.WheelPolishSpecialist.com



FOR SALE

(1) 1999 MCI 102EL3 - 54 pax, Series 60, B-500R, 250,000 miles, one owner, factory updates, VCR w/6 monitors, 6 disc CD w/ wireless mic. Overhead blowers, shades, enclosed racks, beam central vac w/ inverter (not installed), fabric on sidewalls, rear bulkhead, under racks, kneeling, flush lav. New white paint. \$187,500.00
845-658-3960 ask for Gary
Arrow Bus Line, Inc. • Tillson, NY

Improving Greyhound helps boost parent company

NAPERVILLE, Ill. — Laidlaw International, the holding company that owns Greyhound Lines, says Greyhound's improving performance helped boost Laidlaw financial results for fiscal 2005.

And Laidlaw thinks Greyhound profitability will continue to strengthen, helping the parent company achieve better bottom-line operational numbers next year.

For the 12 months ended Sept. 30, Laidlaw earned \$212.4 million, or \$2.12 a share, compared to fiscal 2004 net income of \$61.7 million, or 62 cents a share. The huge jump in fiscal '05 earnings resulted primarily from the sale of Laidlaw's healthcare subsidiaries.

For its continuing operations, Laidlaw reported a fiscal 2005 loss of \$5.6 million, compared to earnings of \$46.5 million in fiscal '04. The company said it was hurt by higher fuel prices and debt restructuring expenses.

Laidlaw retired \$399 million of its post-reorganization debt, as well as \$155 million in Greyhound bonds.

Revenue at Laidlaw for fiscal '05 was essentially flat at \$3.3 billion, reflecting continuing efforts by both Greyhound and the company's school bus operation to get rid of poor performing segments of their operations. At Greyhound, that has meant abandoning hundreds of stops and routes that were money losers.

Total revenue at Greyhound in fiscal 2005 was \$1.2 billion, down slightly from fiscal 2004 revenue of \$1.23 billion.

Fiscal '05 EBITDA at Greyhound climbed to nearly \$102 million, up from \$86.2 million in fiscal 2004. EBITDA is a financial measure, used in certain industries, that in the case of Laidlaw represents operating income plus depreciation and amortization. Laidlaw provides EBITDA numbers for its subsidiaries but not net income figures.

Laidlaw says Greyhound's EBITDA will continue to improve as its system makeover matures and its operating lease expenses decline because it is leasing fewer buses.

Greyhound's EBTDA margins have improved during the past two years to 8.5 percent from 5.5 percent, and further improvement into the low double-digit range in the next few years is anticipated.

Laidlaw expects companywide per-share earnings from continuing operations in fiscal 2006 to be \$1.20 to \$1.35. That would compare with a fiscal 2005 per-share loss on continuing operations of 6 cents.

The impact of the system makeover that Greyhound announced in June of last year is reflected in the fiscal 2005 annual report Laidlaw filed late last month with the Securities and Exchange Commission. Some comparisons:

- Greyhound now operates roughly 15,000 daily departures to about 2,400 locations. Two years

ago, it had 20,000 daily departures to 3,700 destinations.

- Greyhound now has a fleet of approximately 3,300 coaches, down from 3,700 two years ago. It "retired" more than 300 buses in the past year. The average age of coaches in the Greyhound fleet has increased to 8.7 years, from 7.6 years in 2003.

- Greyhound now has roughly 12,800 employees, down from 16,000 two years ago. The number of drivers has fallen to 4,700 from 6,500 and the number of mechanics to 900 from 1,000. The number of supervisory and clerical workers has dropped to 2,100 from 3,500.

- Greyhound has reduced the

number of company-operated bus terminals to 100 from 150 two years ago, and the number of agency-operated terminals to 1,800 from 2,100.

Laidlaw's board declared a dividend of 15 cents per share of common stock, to the owners of record on Nov. 29. The dividend will be paid Dec. 7.

Sometimes you need a little help getting to the top

A **UMA 20 Group** is just the help that you need.

A UMA 20 Group is a series of high-level management meetings that can help operators improve their entire business. Through the use of benchmarks and peer feedback, a 20 Group can help you:

- **Learn cutting edge management techniques specific to the motorcoach industry and your company!**
- **Create unique solutions to all your business problems through brainstorming with the best minds in the industry.**
- **Totally revolutionize your marketing, operations and financial procedures in order to improve your bottom line!**
- **Share your best practices, while learning the best practices of others in a non-competitive environment.**

This is a very special opportunity you can only be a part of by being a UMA Member. UMA 20 Groups will be run by the Spader Group—the Spader Group is a business management organization that has worked with the motorcoach industry for years—Duane Spader is a frequent speaker at Motorcoach Expo. The Spader Group knows the motorcoach industry and their insights and information are second to none.

A UMA 20 Group can really transform your business and make it soar to new heights!

"I have been a regular participant in 20 Groups for over 5 years and have enjoyed unprecedented growth not only in my fleet size, but where it counts, in my bottom line...all of this during what is arguably one of the most turbulent times in the motorcoach industry. I cannot say enough about the power and value the decision to participate in a 20 Group will bring to your company."

David Brown, Holiday Tours



To sign up today, please call Milt Ellis at the Spader Group, 1.800.772.3377 or 605.339.3616.



ORPHEUM

THE X3 - 45.

FEATURING ULTRA-SMOOTH RIDE.
COMING TO TAMPA JAN. 18-21

COMING SOON, THE

X3 45

Now's your chance to see the new Prevost X3-45 passenger coach. Prevost's renowned long-wheelbase concept, developed for the Entertainer coach industry, now brings an ultra-smooth ride to the passenger coach market. Experience this rock star ride at the 2006 Motorcoach Expo. When? January. Where? Tampa.

Ride like a rock star

www.prevostcar.com

PREVOST
THE SMART CHOICE