

The Training Wheels

West County Transportation Agency 707.206.9988

Special Interest Articles:

- Lock Box VS Ignition
- Railroad Crossings
- Don't Be Idle
- What is a Black Curb?
- Rubber Contact
- CNG Buses & Luggage Bays

Highlights:

Employee of the Month

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Lock Box Vs Ignition

It always pumps your adrenalin when you see the sheriff's department out in force doing an active search for a bad guy. When you notice that helicopter circling around and around you tend to get a little excited over the prospect of seeing a chase or the apprehension of a suspect. Then again you probably just want to get out of the area and out of the way and not get involved.

On Wednesday, October 24th, the sheriff's department was out in force in our little neck of the woods, the Santa Rosa yard. They were looking for a high school student that had brought a gun to Elsie Allen High School. The result was the lock down of Meadow View, Bellevue and Elsie Allen High School during the search for this suspect who had left the school campus. A High School Student considered armed and dangerous.

There were numerous sheriffs' deputies out on Juniper Rd and in our little field behind our Office looking for this high school student. The Sheriff's deputies pulled into our yard numerous times during this 2 hour search.

During this period of time I had the opportunity to go out in the yard to pre-trip a bus and the sheriff was nice enough to drive through the yard while I was performing my duties. I will tell you that I did consider the possibility that this high school student could have been in the back of one of our buses hiding and

waiting for the right opportunity for escape.

As I was walking back into the office, I decided to pop into a few buses to check our security measures. The one security measure that I was concerned about was the ignition keys being safely locked up into our little key storage locks on the side of our buses. Let me tell you I was very disappointed in numerous drivers that failed to lock their keys away.

The local news station and probably the major networks would have picked up on the high profile news broadcast that would have occurred when one of our buses was involved in a high speed chase likely ending in a terrific accident with probable injuries.

How embarrassing that would be for the driver that did not follow policy of securing their bus keys in the lock box. How would you answer the questions that surely would be asked directly of the driver who parked that bus? What would you say? The aftermath of 9-11 should have taught all of us enough common sense to know that any thing can occur at any time to anyone at anyplace. Would you leave your keys in your car parked in this yard? Why give them the golden opportunity by leaving the keys in the ignition of your school bus? Lockbox verses ignition -Who really loses in this situation?



RENEWAL CLASS

Renewal Classes are scheduled for March, July and November 2008
Times and Dates TBA



Last years Poster Contest Winner Won a 4 hour Free field trip within Sonoma County

Railroad Crossings

Railroad crossings are always dangerous. You must approach every railroad crossing expecting to see a train coming.

Never attempt to race a train to a crossing. It is extremely difficult to judge the speed of an approaching train.

Your speed should be based on your ability to see whether a train is approaching from any direction. You should be driving slowly enough so you can stop short of the tracks in case of an emergency.

Because of noise in the cab, you cannot expect to hear the train horn until the train is dangerously close to the crossing.

Do not rely solely upon the presence of warning signals, gates, or flagmen to warn of approaching trains.

Double tracks require a double check. Remember that a train on one track may hide a train on the other track. Look both ways before crossing. After one train has cleared a crossing, be sure no other trains are near before starting across the tracks.

Train yard areas and grade crossings in cities and towns are just as dangerous as rural grade crossings. Approach them with care.

A full stop is required at grade crossings whenever:

- The nature of the cargo makes a stop mandatory under state or federal regulations.
- Such a stop is otherwise required by law.

Railroad crossings with steep approaches can cause your unit to hang up on the tracks. Never permit traffic conditions to trap you in a position where you have to stop on the tracks. Be sure you can get all the way across the tracks before you start across.

Do not shift gears while crossing railroad tracks.

The speed limit is 15 mph within 100 feet of a railroad crossing where you cannot see the tracks for 400 feet in both directions. You may drive faster than 15 mph if the crossing is controlled by gates, a warning signal, or a flagman.

A driver is disqualified from operating a Commercial Motor Vehicle (CMV) if convicted of any of the following RAILROAD-HIGHWAY GRADE CROSSING offenses (either federal, state, or local):

Fails to slow down to check for approaching train. Regulations may not require the driver to stop.

Fails to stop before crossing the tracks. Regulations require the driver to stop.

Fails to allow enough space to completely cross the tracks without stopping.

Cannot cross tracks because of insufficient undercarriage clearance

1st conviction: no less than 60 days

Railroad tracks in Sonoma County are being maintained and the lights/ signals are currently being replaced. However at this time these crossing are not controlled by gates, warning signals or a flagman – the speed limit is 15 mph unless you can see 400 feet in both directions.

Don't Be Idle

Idling school buses pollute the air that children breathe. Pollutants can accumulate inside the bus and outdoors near the bus. Exhaust from buses can be sucked into building ventilation systems affecting air quality inside schools. This causes health risks for everyone, especially children and drivers. Air pollution from vehicles has health implications for everyone, but children are more susceptible to this pollution because they breathe at a faster rate than adults. Children's lungs are still developing and children are more likely to play actively outdoors.

The California Air Resources Board has approved an airborne toxic control measure that limits school bus idling and idling at or near schools to only when necessary for safety or operational concerns.

There is a new law in town.

A) School bus drivers and other drivers of pupils must turn off their engine upon arriving at or within 100 feet of a school, and restart the engine no more than 30 seconds before departing.

B) School bus drivers also must not idle at any location beyond 100 feet of a school for more than 5 minutes.

C) Transit and delivery vehicle drivers must turn off their engine upon arriving at a school, and restart the engine no more than 30 seconds before departing. Transit and delivery vehicle drivers must not idle the engine at any location within 100 feet of a school for more than 5 minutes.

D) Some exemptions to this regulation include: idling while in the midst of traffic, to ascertain safe operating conditions of the bus or

vehicle, for testing, service, repair, or diagnostic purposes, or to operate equipment needed by persons with disabilities and climate control devices for children.

Penalties:

For each violation, a driver of a school bus, school pupil activity bus, youth bus, or general public para-transit vehicle is subject to a minimum civil penalty of 100 dollars and to criminal penalties to the maximum extent provided by law.

What this means to you. Turn your bus off as soon as you stop to unload at the schools morning and afternoon, if you are the last bus in the line at the school; do not start your bus until the other buses have already started pulling away or 30 seconds before you start moving.

If your front windshield is fogging up, you could possibly turn on your fans on while loading, this small piece of equipment should not cause a problem with starting the bus however if that does not seem to work then the last resort would be to start your bus early enough so you can activate your defrosters.

If you have a layover no matter where you have parked you cannot idle for more than 5 minutes.

Eliminating unnecessary idling is a simple, cost effective way to help reduce children's exposure to air pollution.

Most idling is not necessary.



"It ain't what you don't know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure that just ain't so."

Mark Twain

What is a Black Curb?

Recently I had a driver ask me, "We know what a red curb means, a yellow curb, a green curb even a white curb but what is a black curb?" Of course it was a joke however it is no joking matter when too many of our drivers are making contact with the curb coming into our yard and the curb going around our parking lot.

How to make the right turn into the bus yard

The basics: When approaching the turn make sure



to approach parallel and no further out than the blue marker (which indicates the location of a fire hydrant) near the center of the roadway.



Continue straight forward and parallel until the front bumper of your bus is on the imaginary line that you have drawn from the available edge of the roadway. Turn your bus full right and the bus should clear the curb as well as the center gate.

If the bus does not clear the curb then adjust your turning point instead of the bumper on the

imaginary line – maybe use your front entrance door and the imaginary line. If the bus does not clear the center gate then adjust the turning point to just before the bumper touches the imaginary line turn your bus. If this turning point is too hard to judge then you can also use the tree and your shoulder. Turn when your shoulder is directly even or just past the tree. If this does not make sense to you and you would like individual instruction on how to make the turn into the yard without curbing the wheel or making the turn so wide that you are driving on the wrong side of the road – please see me to make an appointment.

Rubber Contact

Ok so you positioned your bus a little close to the curb. So what, they can repaint the curb, heck it needs it anyway. The service department will spray that tire dressing stuff on the tire when they wash it.

Nobody will know the difference, no big deal the tire is still round and it looks good from what I can see?

That is the hidden problem. We have become comfortable in this thought process and it will lead to a tire failure possibly - it may happen at the wrong time.

Do you know how to handle a tire failure at road speed?

If you look at (fig A)

Go ahead do it now.

You saw a cutaway of a tire case. You can see the steel wire in the case it goes from side to side. This makes up the sidewall strength, which makes the tire case round. The other metal bands you see are the metal ply's that give the tire its load rating. These strands are intertwined with the metal belts that you see layered.

Ok now that you contacted the curb with your 23,000-pound bus.

You have just bruised the tire case, which is un-

repairable and undetectable.

This is the same as bruising your thigh but the bruise you can see, it will go away a few weeks later but the internal bruise on the tire will not go away.



Fig A

Under the sidewall rubber the metal strands will break because of the sudden flexing that it was not intended to do. When this happens the metal strands in the sidewall can become frayed or snap, this can allow air to get between the sidewall and the metal strand this is known as blister. A common phrase you may have heard is separation - this is when the section of metal strands or a metal belt will break which will cause a lump in the tire case sidewall.

If you see this or feel a vibration the tire should be inspected as soon as possible.

You can do serious damage to the tire case and all steering components when you come in contact with a fixed object.

Remember that you cannot see the damage just the scuff mark (*your signature*) on the sidewall.



Side Note:
What I Never want to hear is that you have to hit the curb or run over the curb to make a turn – if you feel this way we need to discuss further

training in your vehicle and the turn you feel you must scuff.

You should never be rubbing a curb at a school-loading zone.

I have found that as you return to the bus yard, generally we all have a tendency to relax more. If you are rubbing the curb coming into the yard or the one going into the bus parking lot you need to realize that you are probably relaxing way to much and need to bring your attention back to driving a 40 foot bus.

CNG Buses and Luggage Bays

Recently 2 of our drivers have had a common problem with the luggage bays on the CNG buses. Basically after returning from a field trip the drivers were not able to open the luggage doors on one of the bays under the CNG bus. The problem arises when you overload the luggage bays.



The luggage is either loaded in such a way that when the doors are closed the latching mechanism for the door is jammed up against the luggage or the other possibility is that the luggage can shift and jam the latch as well. All Bluebird CNG buses have 4 separate luggage bays that are relatively small. The diesel bluebird buses have luggage bays that go all the way across under the bus and can be easily accessed from any luggage door.

Be extremely careful about loading the luggage – do not overload the luggage bays – if you run out of space unfortunately the only solution is to store some of the luggage inside the bus. Usually take one seat and load from the floor up and do not go above the top of the seat back. This only displaces two students. Do not block aisles, steps or emergency exits.

Regardless of the bus you drive on your field trip make sure to check all luggage bays during your pre trip inspection. For security purposes you should open and check all your luggage bays during every pre trip – you never know what you might find.

Employee of the Month

The employee of the Month for September went to Joan Moore, who received a \$100 for her dedication to her kids, her job and her profession.

Congratulations to Matt Sherwin for being Employee of the Month for October. Matt will also receive \$100 for his dedication and pride in his work.

**West County
Transportation Agency**

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.schoolbusing.com

or

www.schoolbusing.org

Interesting Web Sites

How Stuff Works

www.howstuffworks.com

Sonoma County Chapter
of the American Red
Cross

www.redcross-sonomacounty.org

School Transportation
News

www.stnonline.com/

National Transportation
Safety Board

[www.nts.gov./](http://www.nts.gov/)

School Bus Fleet

www.schoolbusfleet.com/

National Highway Traffic
Safety Administration

[www.nhtsa.dot.gov./](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/)

School Bus Information
Council

www.schoolbusinfo.org

California Association Of
School Transportation
Officials

www.castoways.org

National Safe Kids
Campaign

www.safekids.org

Parents Soup

www.parentsoup.com

Safe Havens International,
Inc

[http://www.safehavensinte
national.org/](http://www.safehavensinternational.org/)

Stop Bullying Now

[http://www.stopbullyingno
w.hrsa.gov/index.asp](http://www.stopbullyingnow.hrsa.gov/index.asp)

Drivers.com

<http://www.drivers.com/>

In-Service Programs – Coming your way.....

These are the current topics I have planned for this year. If there is any topic that is not listed that you would like to have please leave me a message @ 206-9988 ext 12

Mountain Driving

Night Driving

Pupil Management

Railroad Crossings

Bus Jeopardy

Defensive Driving

Emergency Procedures

Loading and Unloading

Bully Prevention

Hidden in Plain Sight – Disguised
Weapons

Mirror Use and Blind Spots

Wheel Chair Procedures

Below are listed some new Special
Needs Programs that I have received
and will be working on presenting this
school year.

Commitment and Care
Kids are People, Too

Don't Lose Your Touch

Transporting Pre-Schoolers /
Pre-K Transportation