



# NYAPT

NEW YORK ASSOCIATION FOR PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

266 Hudson Avenue • Albany, NY 12210 • PH: 518-463-4937 FX: 518-463-8743 • WWW.NYAPT.ORG

*Our future is riding with us!*

## School Buses: Built for Safety

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**Contact: Peter Mannella, Executive Director**

**518-463-4937 (o) 518-588-3924 (c)**

### **National School Bus Safety Week is October 17-21, 2011**

*The New York Association for Pupil Transportation is using the 2011 National School Bus Safety Week to highlight the factors that contribute to the overall safety of the school buses and school transportation systems that transport over 2.3 million New York children every day, and some 25 million nationwide.*

*The yellow school bus is an icon in our society. It speaks of safety and security and a solid and wholesome education for our children. That safety and security do not come easily but require the dedication and hard work of many professionals in the school transportation community.*

Do you wonder just what makes a school bus special and safer than other vehicles in which we might transport our children?

The first major safety element is that the school bus stands out with its National School Bus Chrome Yellow color. The first National School Bus Standards Conference, which was held in 1939 and hosted by New Yorker Frank Cyr, institutionalized the Chrome Yellow color of the school bus. Cyr and his colleagues, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, determined that the particular shade of yellow would ensure visibility and therefore contribute to child safety.

The school bus is also manufactured with safety in mind. At about 26,000 pounds for the larger buses, it starts off being larger and heavier than most other vehicles on the roads. It has a reinforced steel body and its steel cage frame and superior body strength protect students and prevent penetration into the passenger compartment. Moreover, its fuel tank is protected inside a large steel cage to protect against crashes and leakage.

Not only that, the color, the lights and the signage on the school bus add to the safety and visibility, making the school bus a moving traffic control device. Each school bus is marked with large black lettering in the front and rear indicating that it is a SCHOOL BUS. It is also equipped with very visible reflective markings to outline the bus at nighttime. It is equipped with flashing amber and red lights that indicate it is about to stop and that it has stopped to pick up or let off passengers---our children. School bus drivers are aided by a sophisticated system of cross-view mirrors that give them excellent perspectives on the bus and the location of children around the vehicle. And most buses are equipped with red, lighted STOP sign arms that extend from the side of the bus to remind motorists to stop.

Inside the bus, the seating is *compartmentalized* so that each child is held safely within the seat compartment --- often compared to an egg in an egg carton. Various tests have been done of the 'compartmentalized' seating systems and they have been shown to provide optimal passenger protection when the children are seated within the compartment. This is the reason that no children are allowed to stand on a moving school bus.

These tests have also indicated that the seat compartment also provides adequate protection without seat belts. This is the reason why there is no national mandate for installing and using seat belts on school buses. In New York State, seat belts became mandated equipment on school buses in 1987 but fewer than 50 school districts exercise their option to require that their students use the seat belts, in large part due to the inconclusive evidence of and continuing questions about their effectiveness.

The simple statement that can be made here is that the SCHOOL BUS is the safest means of transporting our children to and from school each day. It is not only safe, but also efficient in terms of saving parents from traveling to and from their child's school and in terms of fewer vehicles on the roads around our schools and school parking areas.

### **The SCHOOL BUS: Safe for our Children!**



*The New York Association for Pupil Transportation is a professional organization comprised of over 600 members, representing school transportation officials in school districts, BOCES and public educational institutions across New York State. NYAPT is committed first and always to the safety of the 2.3 million school children we transport to and from school each and every day. We are committed to actively support legislation, regulations and policies that are in the interests of those school children and call upon State leaders to keep those children in mind during legislative negotiations.*