

# SAFETY MATTERS: THE "SO WHAT" BEHIND BUS SAFETY RECORDS

The good news: buses are among the safest ways to travel, and most bus companies prioritize safety. But there are always a few companies that don't put safety first. Each year, thousands of people are injured in crashes involving buses<sup>1</sup>. It's important to research a company's safety records before you charter a bus or book a bus trip.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) provides a convenient Bus Safety Search to research and review those records. Learn more and access the tool at [www.fmcsa.dot.gov/lookbeforeyoubook](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/lookbeforeyoubook).

As you review safety results, it's important to understand why they matter.



**EXAMPLE COMPANY NAME: ABC**

U.S. DOT#: 4567891 **1**

Number of Vehicles: 1,368

Number of Drivers: 2,298

Number of Inspections: 4,110

**Safety Rating & OOS Rates**  
(As of 05/06/2019 updated daily from [SAFER](#))

**SATISFACTORY**  
(Rating Date: 08/11/2017)

**Out of Service Rates**

Type	OOS %	National Avg %
Vehicle	6.9	20.7
Driver	1.2	5.5
Hazmat		4.5

**Licensing and Insurance** **3**  
(As of 05/06/2019 updated hourly from [L&I](#))

**2** Active For-Hire Authority

Type	Yes/No	MC#/MX#
Authority	Yes	MC-2345678
Property	No	
Passenger	Yes	
Household Goods	No	
Broker	No	

[How does SMS relate to crashes?](#)

**BASIC Status** (Public Passenger Carrier View) ?

Behavior Analysis & Safety Improvement Categories (BASICS) Based on a 24-month record ending April 26, 2019

**4**

**UNSAFE DRIVING**

**5**

**CRASH INDICATOR**

**5**

**HOURS-OF-SERVICE COMPLIANCE**

**6**

**VEHICLE MAINTENANCE**

**7**

**CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES AND ALCOHOL**

**8**

**DRIVER FITNESS**

Select a BASIC icon above to get details, or view your [Complete SMS Profile](#).

**⚠** Denotes this carrier exceeds the FMCSA Intervention Threshold relative to its safety event grouping based upon roadside data and/or has been cited with one or more Acute/Critical Violations within the past 12 months during an investigation. Therefore, this carrier may be prioritized for an intervention action and roadside inspection.

**Summary of Activities**

The summary includes information on the 5 most...

**Carrier Registration**

**Enforcement Cases**

(Six years as of 05/06/2019 updated monthly from...)

<sup>1</sup> FMCSA 2018 Pocket Guide to Large Truck and Bus Statistics

## 1 BUS COMPANY REGISTRATION MATTERS:

FMCSA tracks the safety performance of bus companies through investigations, inspections, traffic violations, and crashes. All registered bus companies receive a U.S. Department of Transportation identification number (USDOT number). If a bus company isn't registered, it cannot legally operate across state lines.

## 2 OPERATING AUTHORITY MATTERS:

Bus companies must receive operating authority from FMCSA to transport passengers across state lines for compensation. If a bus company has an unsatisfactory safety rating, or has been ordered to discontinue operations, its operating authority is revoked. A company without operating authority cannot legally transport passengers, even if it has a USDOT number.

## 3 INSURANCE MATTERS:

In a serious crash, a bus company's insurance provides for potential passenger compensation for injuries and associated costs. Commercial bus companies are required to have:

- \$5 million in public liability insurance coverage if they have vehicles that carry 16 or more passengers (including the driver **or**
- \$1.5 million in coverage if their vehicles carry 15 passengers or fewer (including the driver).

A bus company cannot legally operate across state lines without required insurance.

## 4 UNSAFE DRIVING MATTERS:

A bus company's driving history may reflect how carefully it hires, trains, and oversees its drivers. This category includes serious traffic violations that increase crash risk, like speeding, reckless driving, improper lane changes, improper following distance, distracted driving (including illegal use of a hand-held cell phone). It also includes failure to use the driver seatbelt, which is vital to ensure the driver remains at the wheel and can control the bus in a crash.

## 5 HOURS OF SERVICE COMPLIANCE MATTERS:

Fatigue is as serious a cause of unsafe driving as impairment from alcohol or drugs. FMCSA limits the hours that a bus driver may drive and requires bus drivers and companies to maintain accurate records of all driver time on duty. This safety category includes violations such as drivers driving too many hours or having missing driver records. Bus companies must use electronic logging devices (ELDs) to record drivers' time on duty.

## 6 VEHICLE MAINTENANCE MATTERS:

Mechanical failure or non-working safety equipment puts passengers at risk on the road. Bus companies must regularly inspect vehicles, ensure all safety equipment (lights, signals, brakes, emergency exits, etc.) are working, and keep buses well maintained to help avoid breakdowns and crashes. Carriers must promptly correct violations found during an inspection. During inspections, buses with serious safety defects are placed out of service and cannot legally transport passengers until defects are corrected.

## 7 CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES/ALCOHOL USE MATTERS:

Impaired driving is a dangerous crash risk. It is illegal for a bus driver to use any controlled substance or abuse prescription or over-the-counter medications. A driver cannot operate a bus with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.02 or greater. Bus companies are required to randomly test drivers for drug and alcohol use; failure to have a testing program is a serious violation.

## 8 DRIVER FITNESS MATTERS:

A safe, qualified driver is vital to bus safety. Driver fitness includes proper training and experience, a valid Commercial Driver's License, and physical qualifications for driving that are documented in a valid medical examiner's certificate. Drivers with disqualifying medical conditions or who don't have a current medical examiner's certificate cannot legally drive a bus.

