

SAFETY COMES FIRST FOR ACTIVE ADULT GROUP TRAVEL: WHY YOU SHOULD *LOOK BEFORE YOU BOOK* OR CHARTER A BUS

Bus travel, overall, is both safe and cost effective. That makes booking a tour or chartering a bus an attractive option for active adult travelers. When planning a group trip, exciting destinations and activities are important. But safety should always be your top priority: every senior trip planner or adult community activity director should thoroughly research bus company safety records and driver qualifications before finalizing travel plans.

Bus Companies With Poor Safety Records May Pose a Greater Crash Risk

Even one bus crash is too many – particularly if it injures or takes the lives of passengers. Unfortunately, every year bus crashes result in injuries or death. While road conditions and unsafe drivers in other vehicles contribute to many crashes, there is also a correlation between a bus company's safety record and its likelihood of being involved in a crash.

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.

Make sure the company is authorized to operate. Then review the safety information provided to see how the company compares with other bus companies for important safety issues – from maintenance of the bus and its safety equipment, to safe driving, to its safety rating.

Qualified Drivers are Vital to Safety

Driving a bus requires special skills and experience. Talk to the bus company to ensure any driver assigned to your trip has a current Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and current medical certification. The company should also have and enforce driver safety policies – including a proactive drug and alcohol testing program, and prohibiting texting or using hand-held cell phones while driving.

Operating While Fatigued is a Major Crash Risk

Driving while impaired from fatigue is a significant factor in many bus crashes. The bus company and driver both have a responsibility to avoid the dangers of driving while fatigued. By law, a commercial bus driver cannot:

- Drive more than 10 consecutive hours (following 8 consecutive hours off duty);
- Drive after 15 consecutive hours on duty (including driving and other time “on the clock” for loading, unloading, etc.); or
- Drive at all after reaching maximum workweek hours of service.

If your group has a longer-distance trip, or even a shorter trip that spans many hours, your trip may require a qualified backup driver.

Verify How the Bus Operators Meet Accessibility Requirements

Every passenger with disabilities is entitled to either an accessible bus or “equivalent service” – meaning service that is just as accessible as the service provided to passengers without a disability. Bus operators are required to keep accessible features maintained and operational. Charter and tour bus operators, and small fixed-route bus companies may require 48 hours advance notice to provide service to passengers with disabilities. If any of your passengers require special accommodations to board or ride in a bus, verify how the operator will provide accessible or equivalent service – and what that means for your group.

Build Safety Into Your Trip Planning!

Add a margin of safety in planning your trip – allow extra time for traffic, detours, or other unexpected delays. Never ask your driver to speed – or to make unscheduled stops that could extend driving time illegally. And consider having one or more assigned “safety officers” onboard to help ensure travelers are mindful of safety, and to assist in the event of an emergency – particularly if any of your passengers might need special help.

Finally, visit www.fmcsa.dot.gov/lookbeforeyoubook to learn more and access safety resources and tools.

LOOK BEFORE **YOU BOOK**