

School Bus Safety at RSU14

Did you know that RSU 14 operates 33 school buses and 21 vans for the purpose of daily student transportation?

We transport the most precious cargo in the world, our children, and we at RSU 14 Transportation Department take that as our primary focus.



There are multiple ways that transportation safety is accomplished and each is equally important. One aspect of the safety process is the inspection and maintenance of our vehicles.

The State of Maine in conjunction with Federal Government regulates school bus specifications and the State governs the purchase of buses through an extensive application process. Vans are purchased at the District level but are regulated by the Federal Government as far as passenger capacity. The State of Maine also requires school buses to undergo the inspection process twice per year as opposed to the typical annual inspection for all other vehicles. Vans are still subject to the annual state inspection process but we do conduct additional inspections during preventive maintenance inspections and driver inspection. The Maine State Police, through their Traffic Division employ motor vehicle inspectors. These inspectors visit School Districts annually to verify we are compliant with state inspection requirements. This essentially means that buses are inspected three times per year.

RSU 14 employs three mechanics, one of which is designated as the Head Mechanic. The Head Mechanic is not only responsible for repairing and maintaining vehicles, he is also responsible for quality control of the other mechanics and adherence to all safety and scheduling requirements. Mechanics possess inspection Licenses issued by the State of Maine for both School Buses and Motor Vehicles and are also required to possess school bus licenses so they are familiar with the functionality of the bus. All three have undergone various training for the purpose of maintaining proficiency in repairing our equipment. All vehicles are set up for a Preventive Maintenance Schedule and during these maintenance visits, the vehicle's critical safety systems are inspected as recommended by the manufacturer. During these inspections, anything close to marginal is placed as "Out of Service" and not returned to the road until repairs are completed. In the event that we are unable to complete the repairs internally, vehicles are taken to certified facilities who conduct the repairs on our behalf. During the course of the summer vacation period, RSU 14 takes vehicle maintenance and inspections to a

different level. We schedule each and every fleet vehicle for an inspection whether it requires an inspection sticker or not. During this process, we pull apart all seating to assure that they are to full safety specifications. We also recondition all vehicles with cleaning, waxing, painting, and seat cover replacement. This demonstrates our pride as a District and our duty to safely transport our children.

Bus and Van drivers also possess critical roles in the maintenance of vehicles. State and Federal regulations require bus drivers to complete a Pre-and Post-Trip inspection of their buses.



Inspection is a requirement in acquiring a school bus license and is part of the written and road test at time of licensing. Van drivers are not required to follow the same regulations as bus drivers but RSU 14 requires that each driver conduct inspections PRE and POST as do bus drivers.

All drivers have a safety inspection form that has a list of designated areas of the vehicle that require inspection. These forms are signed off daily by each driver and turned into the mechanics for review. In the event that the driver discovers a safety related issue, s/he MUST check with the mechanic prior to operation to determine whether the vehicle will be placed out of service.

Not all of our students are transported by bus or van at RSU14 – but those who do are surely in good hands at RSU14. Look for the article in our soon to be published “LINK” letter to learn about a “*Day in the Life of a Bus Driver*” written by one of our very own.