



October 7, 2011

## **NASDPTS Guidance Document Reducing Risk Associated with Pedal Misapplication in School Buses**

### **Background:**

In May 2005, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) began its investigation of a school bus accident that occurred in Liberty, Missouri. During the course of the investigation, information was uncovered that suggested pedal misapplication as a factor in the accident; that is, depressing the accelerator instead of, or in addition to, the brake pedal.

The NTSB subsequently investigated four additional accidents involving heavy vehicles in which pedal misapplication was determined to be a factor. Three of the four additional accidents involved school buses. Despite varying circumstances, these five accidents share common elements. In all five, the drivers either reported a loss of braking or were observed by vehicle occupants to be unsuccessfully attempting to stop the vehicles, though no evidence of braking system failure was found.

The NTSB summarized its findings and recommendations in *Pedal Misapplication in Heavy Vehicles*, Highway Special Investigation Report NTSB/SIR-09/02. On September 10, 2009, the NTSB made the following recommendation (Safety Recommendation H-09-14) to the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) and the National Association for Pupil Transportation (NAPT):

Advise your members - through your newsletters, website and conferences – of the following safety issues: (1) the risk of pedal misapplication and the need to educate school bus drivers about such incidents, and the need to develop and implement plans to ensure that school bus drivers undergo annual refamiliarization training on all bus types that they might drive; and (2) the risk of unintended acceleration during loading and unloading activities, as exemplified by the Falls Township, Pennsylvania accident on January 12, 2007; and suggest possible mitigation strategies, such as installing bollards or starting buses only after loading is complete.

On October 27, 2010, NASDPTS responded to NTSB, summarizing the actions it had taken to notify members about the NTSB findings and to implement Safety Recommendation H-09-14. NASDPTS also outlined its plan to issue this Guidance Document to members on mitigating the risk associated with pedal misapplication by school bus drivers.

On September 26, 2011, Deborah A.P. Hersman, Chairman of the NTSB, sent a letter notifying NASDPTS that the actions satisfied the intent of the recommendation and that Safety Recommendation H-09-14 was classified “Closed—Acceptable Action.” Chairman Hersman noted that, although the planned Guidance Document by NASDPTS was beyond the scope of the Safety Board’s recommendation, they would like to be notified and review it when it became available. NASDPTS is conveying a link to this Guidance Document to the NTSB.

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### **Guidance:**

Pursuant to the NTSB Highway Special Investigation Report NTSB/SIR-09/02 and Safety Recommendation H-09-14, NASDPTS recommends that state directors, through newsletters, websites, and conferences:

1. Inform all school districts, charter schools, contractors, private schools, and other student transportation service providers within their jurisdiction about the NTSB findings and recommendations regarding the risk of pedal misapplication in school buses and heavy vehicles.
2. Inform employers, supervisors, and trainers of school bus drivers of the need to educate drivers on an annual basis regarding the risk of pedal misapplication.
3. Inform employers, supervisors, and trainers of school bus drivers of the need to ensure that drivers undergo annual refamiliarization training on all bus types that they might drive.
4. Inform student transportation and school facilities administrators, school-based personnel, and transportation personnel, including school bus drivers, of the risk of unintended acceleration during loading and unloading activities and suggest possible mitigation strategies to appropriate parties, such as installing bollards, starting buses only after loading is complete, and ensuring supervision in loading and unloading areas.
5. Provide a copy of this guidance to state school officials with responsibility for school facilities design to inform them about the risk of unintended acceleration during loading and unloading activities and possible facilities-related mitigation strategies.

This Guidance Document and the other referenced documents can be found at [www.nasdpts.org](http://www.nasdpts.org). Comments and questions should be directed to Bob Riley, Executive Director of NASDPTS, at [ExecDir@nasdpts.org](mailto:ExecDir@nasdpts.org) or (970) 871-1784.