

## NHTSA Announces Final Rule Requiring Seat Belts on Motor Coaches

Last Wednesday, the U.S. DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued its final rule requiring three-point seat belts for each passenger and driver seat on **new** motor coaches and other large buses. NHTSA says this new rule will enhance the safety of these vehicles by significantly reducing the risk of fatalities and serious injuries in frontal crashes and the risk of occupant ejection in rollovers. "Today's rule is a significant step forward in our efforts to improve motor coach safety," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. NHTSA's final rule does **not** require the existing fleet to be retrofitted, citing **economic and technical challenges** of a retrofit requirement.

On average, 21 motor coach and large bus occupants are killed and 7,934 are injured annually in crashes. Requiring seat belts could reduce fatalities by up to 44 percent and reduce the number of moderate to severe injuries by up to 45 percent.

"While travel on motor coaches is overall a safe form of transportation, when crashes occur, there is the potential for a greater number of deaths and serious injuries due to the number of occupants and high speeds at which the vehicles are traveling," said NHTSA Administrator David Strickland. "Adding seat belts to motor coaches increases safety for all passengers and drivers, especially in the event of a rollover crash."

"Buckling up is the most effective way to prevent deaths and injuries in all vehicular crashes, including motor coaches," said Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administrator Anne S. Ferro. "Requiring seat belts in new models is another strong step we are taking to reach an even higher level of safety for bus passengers."

The final rule, which amends Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 208, applies to **new** over-the-road buses and to other types of new buses with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) greater than 11,793 kilograms (26,000 pounds), except transit buses and school buses. Beginning in November 2016, newly manufactured buses sold in the U.S. will be required to be equipped with three-point belts.

Many motor coach operators have already begun voluntarily purchasing buses that include seat belts. NHTSA says it will encourage the industry to speed up the adoption of lap and shoulder seat belts when purchasing new coaches prior to the mandatory deadline.

The final rule which is 202 pages can be viewed at: [final rule](#)