

SafeGuard Case Study

Buffalo Public Schools

Buffalo, New York

October 2010

With a new transportation contract effective in the fall of 2010, Buffalo Public Schools District has equipped its entire fleet of 630 buses with the SafeGuard Integrated Child Seats (ICS) and 20 percent of its fleet with the SafeGuard FlexSeat®. Through a phase-in schedule, by the 2014-2015 school year, all buses will be equipped with FlexSeat, offering lap-shoulder belt protection to all student riders.



Al Diamico

Buffalo Director of Transportation

The Bid Process

Former Buffalo Assistant Superintendent John Fahey

managed the bid process that led to equipping the fleet with belted seating. A key goal of the bid was to create specifications that provided for the highest levels of safety, service and efficiency for children being transported. The decision to include lap-shoulder belts on the Buffalo fleet started with Fahey's personal experiences investigating an average of 80 school bus accidents each year.

"I have witnessed firsthand how compartmentalization works, but during the course of my investigations, I saw way too many accidents where the kids were jostled around the compartment and I wish they had been restrained," Fahey explained. "There's a longstanding dichotomy about seat belts in this industry. Seat belts are everywhere else. That never sat well with me."

The new seating technology was specified as part of a recent transportation bid. The district's incumbent contractor was the successful bidder, retaining its long standing partnership with the Buffalo Schools. The result was ideal according to Fahey. "Among the benefits, our children get to be transported in state-of-the-art buses with all the newest technology. And in the end, transportation costs to the school system actually decreased because of the competitive nature of the bidding process," he said.

Improved Protection

Buffalo Director of Transportation Al Diamico says the startup has gone very smoothly. "We had the best start-up ever. It all came together, and we're very pleased with the service being provided by our contractor," he said. "Drivers I've interacted with appreciate the lap-shoulder belts because they know where the students are – in their seats and safe. When students are belted, and they have seating assignments, we're finding that they are getting into less trouble with other students."

Diamico says SafeGuard SmartFrame gives him a sense of assurance about the safety of children riding the buses. "I never realized the technology it would take to put a lap-shoulder belt on a school bus seat," Diamico explained, "and now that I see it in action, I think it's brilliant. In a crash, the seat back stays there for the unbelted kid so he has compartmentalization protection."

Integrated Child Seats

Before Buffalo Public Schools equipped 100 percent of buses with the Integrated Child Seat (ICS), Fahey says the district used child seats for transporting its preschool-age children.

“We were forced to use standard car seats, fishing the lap belt of the bus through the back of the seats to secure them,” Fahey explained. “We found child seats to be awkward and difficult to use, and we were never able to be fully confident they were always installed properly.”

Diamico says ICS has worked very effectively in the operation and has improved timeliness of the district’s transportation services. “The ICS seat is absolutely easy to use since the seats are built into the bus,” he explained. “It’s changed our operations because we’re not lugging car seats across the yard anymore. Every single bus has what we need, so the buses get out there on time.”

IMMI Support

Before Buffalo Public Schools implemented belted seating at the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year, IMMI played an advisory role in helping the district succeed with the project. IMMI staff provided training for technicians on ICS seat installation in existing buses and on maintenance procedures for all seats, as well as working with trainers and managers to provide instruction on proper seat usage and usage policies.

For more information on the SafeGuard FlexSeat, visit www.safeguardseat.com.