



# National Transportation Safety Board

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## School Bus Driver Fitness for Duty

Dennis Collins

# Overview

- Excluded driver factors
- Unusual cell phone activity
- Backing into ditch
- School bus driver medical conditions
- School bus driver fitness for duty
- Physical performance tests (PPTs)
- Driver medical referrals

# Excluded Driver Factors

- Current CDL with appropriate endorsements
- Operated school buses for 17 years
- Toxicology negative for alcohol/illicit drugs
- Driving regular bus and route
- Ample sleep opportunity

# Unusual Cell Phone Activity

- No voice calls
- Messaging activity near time of crash
- Not normal texting; could be active or passive
- Could not determine nature of activity or when it happened

# Backing Into the Ditch

- Driver familiar with driveway/road
- Dark, but normal, conditions
- He had backed out many times before
- Cannot determine why from available information



# School Bus Driver Medical Conditions

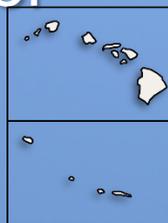
- Held current medical certificate
- Chronic, ongoing conditions
  - Recurrent pain in back & both legs
  - Weakness in right leg
  - Use of cane/walker
  - Pain moving from sitting to standing
- Spinal fusion scheduled two days after crash
- Wife reported typical back pain, no other issues

# School Bus Driver Fitness for Duty

- Found no evidence that conditions affected ability to operate bus
- Had difficulty standing/walking, used aids
- Crash and fire was abnormal, high-stress situation
- Driver's back condition impaired ability to evacuate

# Physical Performance Tests (PPTs)

- Driver duties include assisting passengers
- PPTs assess ability to physically carry out normal and emergency duties
- RCSD instituted a PPT after the crash
- PPTs can identify drivers who may not be able to assist in an emergency



## School Bus Driver Physical Performance Test

**Standard #1 – Bus Steps** Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Pass \_\_\_\_ Fail \_\_\_\_\_

Measurement: With hand on rail, climb and descend bus steps 3 times in 30 seconds

**Standard #2 – Entrance Door** Pass \_\_\_\_ Fail \_\_\_\_\_

Measurement: Repeatedly open and close service door 3 times

**Standard #3 – Clutch and or Brake Pedals** Pass \_\_\_\_ Fail \_\_\_\_\_

Measurement: Depress and hold brake pedal a minimum of 3 seconds, 5 consecutive times. (For clutch, hold clutch pedal for the duration of the test)

**Standard #4 – Accelerator to Brake** Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Pass \_\_\_\_ Fail \_\_\_\_\_

Measurement: Alternately activate accelerator and brake controls 10 times in ten seconds. (Note to examiner: Stress to do this as quickly as possible; a very short practice is allowed)

**Standard #5 – Emergency Exit** Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Pass \_\_\_\_ Fail \_\_\_\_\_

Measurement: Starting in a seat belted position, with hands on steering wheel and looking at seatbelt. Release seat belt, walk (Do not run) to rear most exit with a door, open door, SIT and slide out within 20 seconds  
(Note Examiner will stand at front of bus and say “GO”, then walk to the rear of the bus. Test is completed when the driver’s feet touch the ground)



# Driver Medical Referrals

- Co-workers expressed concerns about driver's medical condition
- Iowa Department of Transportation allows written request for medical evaluation of drivers
- Unclear if supervisor, co-workers knew they could have had driver evaluated

# Summary

- Driver licensing, experience, drugs/alcohol, route, bus, & fatigue excluded as factors in this crash
- Active/passive nature of cell phone activity and timing could not be determined
- Could not determine why bus entered ditch
- Driver medical condition likely hindered evacuation
- PPTs increase safety by assessing driver ability
- Increased awareness of ways to report drivers needed



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