

WEST BROOK BUS CRASH FAMILIES

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I. WHY ARE WE HERE?

West Brook Bus Crash Families (WBBCF) is on Capitol Hill to join with other families who have been victimized by unsafe motorcoaches. In the wake of the recent Sherman Bus Crash that killed 17 and maimed over 30 more, we are here to say “Enough is Enough!” Our families, like many others across the nation, have experienced the loss and pain associated with this serious safety deficiency – the failure of the motorcoach industry to offer the simple occupant crash protections found in every other vehicle in the United States. No other family should feel the pain of needless death and injury that we have felt. We call on NHTSA and Congress to put an end to this carnage by the immediate passage of the Brown-Hutchison Bill (S2326) and its House Companion Bill (HR6747).

II. WHO ARE WE?

West Brook Bus Crash Families (WBBCF) is an advocacy group comprised of parents, students and family members of the 2006 West Brook High School girls’ varsity soccer team, Beaumont, Texas. On March 29, 2006, the motor coach bus transporting the team to a playoff game in Houston overturned, killing two of their daughters, Ashley Brown and Alicia Bonura, and maiming and injuring many others.

In the aftermath of the accident, the parents formed WBBCF to advocate safer bus travel for school children, including the addition of lap/shoulder seat belts in buses. On June 27, 2006, BISD became the first school district in Texas to require lap/shoulder seat belts on all new school buses purchased. Use of chartered motor coaches to transport BISD children was eliminated. With the help of area lawmakers, the group took what they learned in Beaumont to the 80th Texas Legislature. On June 8, 2007, Governor Rick Perry signed “Ashley and Alicia’s Bill” into law at a ceremony in the library at West Brook High School. The law mandates lap-shoulder seat belts in all new school buses in 2010, and all motorcoaches transporting school children in 2011.

WBBCF continues its work with advocates, school districts and bus industry groups across the country and at the Federal Agency and Congressional levels. Please visit their website at www.safebuses4kids.org.

III. UNSAFE MOTORCOACH ISSUE BACKGROUND

- NTSB
 - On the NTSB's Top Ten Most Wanted List of Safety Regulations since 1999¹
 - NTSB reiterated recommendations in July 8, 2008 report on Atlanta Bluffton Baseball Team crash.² "Contributing to the severity of the accident was the motorcoach's lack of an adequate occupant protection system."

- In August 2007, after 8 years, NHTSA finally published its approach to NTSB's recommendations.³
 - Rollover/ejection: 56% fatalities; 70% ejected
 - 14 fatalities/year; at least six student fatalities in 2006
 - Proposed Testing of NTSB dangers
 - Seat belts (required in European Union, Australia)⁴
 - Roof crush/rollover protection⁵
 - Window standards
 - Flammability
 - Emergency egress
 - Illumination
 - ESC—electronic stability control

- Brown-Hutchison Bill (S2326) and Lewis House Companion (HR6747) (*Action, not delays through testing as found in HR4690*)
 - Applies to new buses purchased with exceptions
 - Regulations w/in 1 year
 - Safety belts (retrofit in 2-5 years depending on hardship)
 - Advanced window glazing to prevent ejection
 - Firefighting Equipment (retrofit in 2-5 years)
 - Regulations w/in 2 years
 - Compartmentalization and Impact protection
 - Stability control
 - Roof Strength - Crush Resistance
 - Enhanced Conspicuity
 - Smoke and Fire Suppression (retrofit in 2-5 years)
 - Improved Passenger Evacuation/Lighting
 - Regulations w/in 3 years
 - Adaptive Cruise Control/Collision Warnings
 - Automatic Fire Supression

¹National Transportation Safety Board. 1999. *Bus Crashworthiness Issues*. Highway Special Investigation Report NTSB/SIR-99/04. Washington, DC.

² See <http://www.nts.gov/Publictn/2008/HAR0801.htm>

³ NHTSA's Approach to Motorcoach Safety. Aug 6, 2007; NHTSA Docket 2007-28793

⁴ NHTSA frontal crash test performed 12/14/2007 at 30mph. See results at crash test at <http://www.regulations.gov> at search input nhtsa-2007-28793

⁵ Id. Oddly however, NHTSA choose not to test for ejection, window glaze issue!

- Test Reports
- Improved Carrier Oversight
- Stricter Driver Training/Licensing/Requirements
- Better Bus Inspection Programs
- Financial Incentive for Small Operator Compliance (HR6747)
- Prohibit Use of Charters for Child/Student Transportation
 - Motorcoaches Lack the Occupant Protections Est. By Congress for Children in 1977
 - No roof crush (FMV220)
 - No side structure (FMV221)
 - No seat compartmentalization (FMV222)
 - Non-Conforming for school commute, but loophole in most states (like Texas) allows for “school related activities” with high crash exposures.

IV. REPRESENTATIVE PHOTOS

Alicia



Ashley



Our Accident 3/29/06



OTHER SIMILAR CRASHES



Atlanta, Ga 3/2/07



Albertville, MN 4/5/08