

School bus transportation has an enviable safety record. School buses account for .2 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. Even though national accident statistics do not report school bus involved accidents as a separate category, our experience with school bus accidents indicates that other vehicle drivers did not see the school bus, either from the front, rear or side and struck the school bus.

Harleysville Insurance Co. is strongly recommending that all school buses and vans used for student transportation, regardless of size, be equipped with the standard reflective conspicuity system.. (From a pure safety standpoint, the well-being of our students and the driving public is paramount. Transportation providers should take every step possible to attain that goal.)

While the State of Pennsylvania does not require the use of general reflective systems on school buses, Harleysville's research has shown that the use of conspicuity systems can reduce the likelihood of an accident by up to 21% at night and 16% during daylight hours. Enhanced visibility is especially critical during the early morning and late afternoon and early evening hours.

Visually, school buses in high volume traffic areas must compete with other traffic, traffic signs and advertising signs to be seen. Adding to the lack of visibility are the interior distractions the driver of a vehicle has such as cell phones, radios and disc players. In rural or suburban areas, school bus visibility must be high due to the higher speeds on non-congested roadways, weather with poor visibility or early morning and late afternoon routes. Drivers in these areas also have the same in-vehicle distractions as do the urban drivers.

School bus "conspicuity" - the ability to be seen and recognized - has been a concern for a long time. In 1939 at a nationwide conference of State School Officers, the National School Bus Chrome Yellow paint scheme was adopted as a recommended national standard. The color was selected because it was easier to see in fog, rain and other bad road conditions. In 1974 the federal government approved the color and suggested that all school buses be painted in the School Bus Chrome Yellow paint scheme. The federal government did not mandate the color but left it up to each state to regulate the color of school buses.

Other means are used to identify a school bus that is in service including yellow and red warning lights, stop signal arms and white strobe lights. With all of these warning devices, school buses are still not "seen" while in the traffic matrix due to the competition of the other visual stimuli to the other drivers. In study after study, from the United States, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia and Canada, conspicuity of school buses has been investigated. The final determination is that increased conspicuity of the buses adds to the overall safety of school student transportation.

This information may not address all hazardous conditions at your location and does not warrant workplace safety or compliance with federal, state or local laws.

While Pennsylvania does not have a mandatory standard for conspicuity, they do have a standard for retrofitting school buses with reflective materials. The Pennsylvania School Bus Code outlines the following requirements:

§ 171.47. Color.

(4) If a school bus is equipped with reflective material, other than that required under §§ 171.50 and 171.59 (relating to doors and emergency exits; and lamps and signals), the reflective material shall be of automotive engineering grade or better. If additional reflective materials and markings are used, they may be applied in the black areas of the diagrams as follows and as illustrated in the photo.

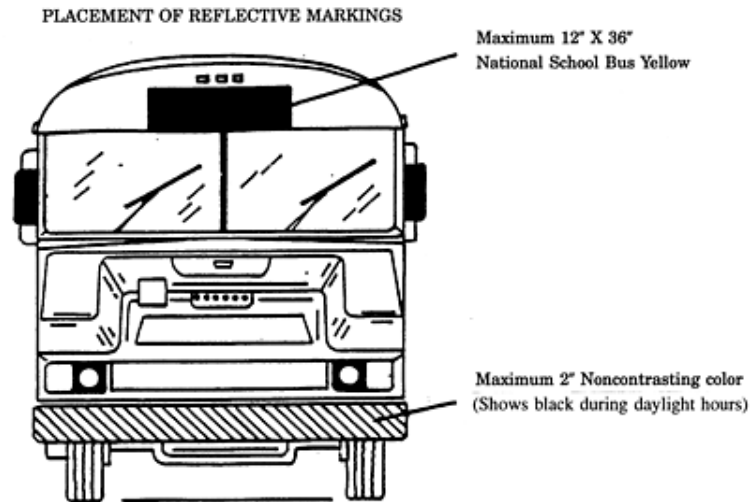


FIGURE 1

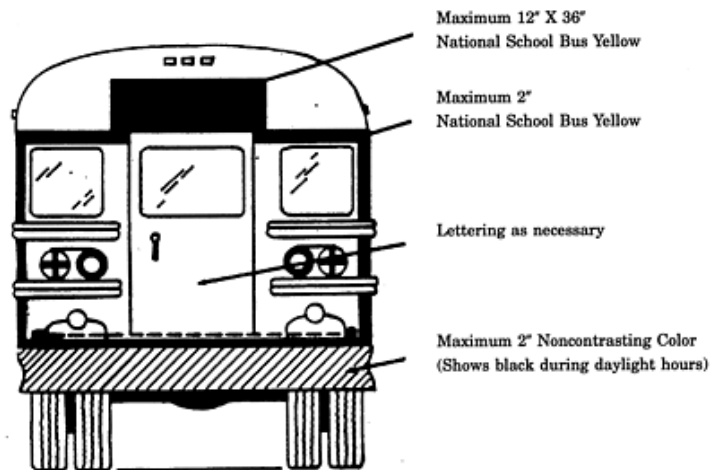
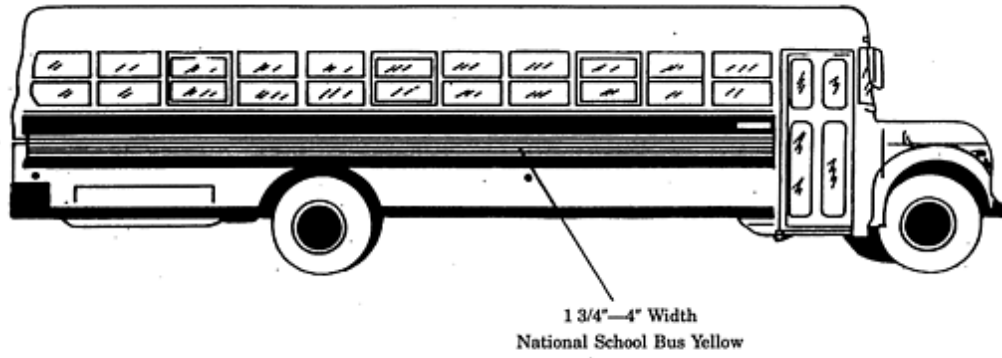


FIGURE 2

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1 3/4"–4" Width
National School Bus Yellow

FIGURE 3

A school bus that is equipped with materials that meet the state's requirements will have the appearance as the one in the picture below.



Photo courtesy of Reflexite Corp. ®.

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