

**NHTSA 34-03**  
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### **NHTSA Creates New School Bus Category For Multifunction Transportation Needs**

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) today defined a new subcategory of school buses for use in transporting children in trips other than to and from school.

NHTSA's new subcategory, the "multifunction school activity bus" (MFSAB) is defined as a vehicle that is sold for purposes that do not include transportation between home and school for students from kindergarten through Grade 12. Accordingly, these multifunction buses will be exempt from requirements for traffic control equipment requirements when the rule takes effect in 30 days.

This new class of vehicles should serve as a safe choice for companies and institutions that have a need to transport groups of people. A particular safety benefit exists for transporting 12 to 15 passengers, since school buses have a better safety record than 15- passenger vans for this purpose.

"This modification allows institutions to take advantage of the safety benefits associated with school buses, which are by far the safest means of transporting children," said Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D., NHTSA administrator.

Under current federal law, dealers cannot sell a vehicle for the purpose of transporting school-age students to or from school or related events unless it meets all federal motor vehicle safety standards for school buses. Among those requirements are ones requiring all school buses to be equipped with devices designed to control traffic, including flashing lights and stop arms.

The new multi-function buses will be exempt from the traffic control requirements since they are not intended to be used for picking up or discharging students on public roadways. While the new multi-function buses are exempt from the traffic control requirements, they are required to meet all other school bus safety standards.

NHTSA noted that in June 1999 the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommended that the 50 states and the District of Columbia require that all vehicles carrying more than 10 passengers (buses) and transporting children to and from school and school related activities, including, but not limited to, Head Start programs and day care centers, meet the school bus structural standards and enact regulatory measures to enforce compliance with the revised statutes.

The complete final rule is available at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/rules/rulings>.