

School Transportation[®] News

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Profiles in Security

School districts employ innovative measures to make school buses safer

What's new with GPS?

Companies sound off on latest offerings in global positioning, automatic vehicle location

The Broken Window Theory:

Schools get proactive in battling school bus vandalism



What is SIF, and why do school bus ops need to know about it?

Voice Commands Offer Safety Reminders

School transporters are painfully aware of crossing fatalities. The crossing control arms mandated in more than 17 states and numerous school districts in the U.S. and Canada have gone a long way to reduce these types of fatalities. Now, a new safety device has been introduced that may make further inroads into eliminating crossing fatalities, and tackle the thorny problem of sleeping children left on the bus as well.

When children are ready to cross the street in front of the bus, and the swing arm deploys, they may also hear this message repeatedly:

"Warning, Kiddie Cross Guard is active. Proceed with caution. Proceed with caution. Proceed with Caution. Thank you."

That's the message children hear on school buses equipped with the Kiddie Voice™ system by ATWEC Technologies, Inc. of Memphis, Tenn. There is more.

Here is the message drivers hear when they turn off the ignition switch and prepare to depart the vehicle: "Warning Kiddie Voice™ has activated. This is to ensure all passengers have been removed. Please check this vehicle. Please check this vehicle. Please check this vehicle. Thank you."

This message is designed to guard against children being accidentally left on school buses. It, too, is repeated over and over.

The only way to silence the verbal message is for the driver

to walk to the back of the bus, conduct a visual check for sleeping children, and press an industrial size reset switch mounted in the rear, or a digital keypad located at the side rear of the vehicle. If the driver ignores the verbal message a siren goes off.

The Kiddie Voice™ works equally well in school buses or vans in day care use.

When drivers back up the vehicle here is the message that plays outside the bus. "(several harsh beeps) Warning ... This vehicle is in reverse. Please stand clear. Please stand clear. Please stand clear. Thank you."

Backing is not common in school bus service but is not uncommon in day care service. This February a 7-year-old day care student in Milwaukee was run over twice when a van first backed up over the child and then pulled forward and ran over him again.

"What we've done is add a voice command to the beep-beep-beep sound we hear in parking lots and elsewhere when car alarm systems go off," said Alex T. Wiley, president and CEO of the company. "These are verbal messages that begin to warn the kids, or drivers, of what they should be aware of."

Wiley added, "All the systems are aftermarket products and can be programmed in any brand school bus. The verbal messages are available in Spanish or English."

The product has even caught the eye of insurers. West Bend Mutual Insurance Company offers clients utilizing the Kiddie Systems discounts for its casualty insurance. ■

