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Great Fleets Across America 2010

Our annual series is back as we profile five outstanding pupil transportation operations from around the nation. Find out how their safety practices, innovative training programs and open lines of communication have led them to succeed.

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Transportation Director David Twiddy (front row, second from right) says his operation has been awarded top bus safety inspection honors by the state's Department of Public Instruction two years in a row. Pictured with Twiddy is the shop staff.

Dare County Schools Nags Head, N.C.

Staff experience encourages success

Dare County Schools' transportation staff has had much to celebrate in the past several years.

For two consecutive years, the department has received the best bus safety inspection rating for the state's eastern region by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Moreover, one of the department's drivers placed second in the state's school bus roдео last year and went on to compete in the International School Bus Driver Safety Competition.

A key to the department's success, and what Transportation Director David Twiddy believes is its greatest strength, is the staff's experience. Most of the employees have been with the department for over 10 years, and Twiddy has worked at Dare County Schools for more than 20 years. He served as a student

bus driver for the district, and upon graduating high school in 1988, he worked as a fuel truck driver and later as a technician before becoming transportation director in 1999.

Twiddy says he feels that intra-department communication has been the primary contributing factor to the department's low turnover. He allows all members of the staff to have hands-on roles in day-to-day responsibilities, and he meets with them regularly to discuss impending changes or projects.

Twiddy also offers incentives for employees who exhibit a strong work ethic. "Each month, the drivers who don't miss a day receive \$100," he reveals, "and the drivers are given \$10.50 a day to clean their buses." Twiddy says this not only creates a sense of pride among drivers toward their buses, it also keeps the buses in good condition.

The staff's experience has also been instrumental in helping them find solutions to the challenges that they face. Dare County Schools is located on the coast, and Twiddy says they deal with everything from hurricanes to snow. As an example, Twiddy cites a strong storm that passed through the area last year. "It affected our pickups; we couldn't go down some roads because they were flooded, and we had to reroute buses," he says.

Another challenge stems from residents who frequently move around the county. Serving students whose addresses and pickup and drop-off points constantly change makes it difficult for the department to keep records up to date, but Twiddy says that utilizing EDULOG's routing software has helped in this area. The department also began using EDULOG's GPS solution over two years ago, facilitating bus stop consolidation and more efficient routes.

For the past year, the department has been participating in a pilot program for the state to test the effectiveness of Rosco Vision Systems' Bright-Vision Safety System. Two of the operation's school buses and one of its 21 activity buses are equipped with the system, which illuminates the danger zone in low-light situations and allows drivers to more easily see students who might be in the zone.

"Anytime that there's a chance for us to pilot something that will make riding a school bus safer for students, we like to do it," Twiddy says.

In addition to serving students, the department aids residents of Dare County and its neighboring county. Twiddy says that the department uses its school buses to assist with evacuations during hurricane season; the buses are also used to assist with emergency management efforts for sick and elderly residents.

On the "green" front, the department recently began recycling its old vehicle filters.

— KELLY ROHER

Fleet Facts

School buses: 46
Students transported daily: 1,910

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Schools served: 11
Transportation staff: 55
Area of service: 150 sq. miles

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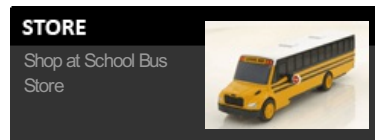
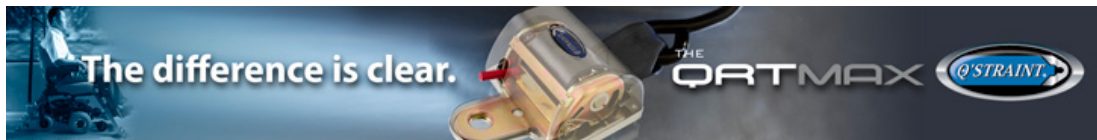
Hi: Just wondering what your drain interval is? Have you begun Analyzing your fluids yet? And are you currently using Synthetic Oils?

SammySamuelson | Nov 11, 2010 03:10 PM

Wow!! Kudos to Dare County!! I drive a school bus in Johnston County- larger numbers in area/buses/students and we do a great job also!! Thanks for doing your part to make us all look great!

Toni Lee | Mar 20, 2010 04:57 AM

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