



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA
Department of Education

DATE: May 19, 2017
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Steven R. Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Non-compliance with the Parking Brake Interlocking Requirement of the Virginia School Bus Specifications**

The *Virginia School Bus Specifications* authorized by the Code of Virginia and Board of Education regulations require that all school buses sold to Virginia school divisions after March 24, 2011, must meet the parking brake interlock specification. It has come to the attention of Department of Education that there are school buses sold to school divisions after March 24, 2011, that do not meet the brake interlock requirement of the *Virginia School Bus Specifications*.

Department of Education staff recently conducted inspections of school buses from several manufacturers sold after March 24, 2011, and currently operating in a school division; the inspected buses did not have the brake interlocking mechanism installed as required by the *Virginia School Bus Specifications*.

The *Virginia School Bus Specifications* effective March 24, 2011, as well as revised versions dated November 3, 2011, and December 21, 2013, contain the following requirement (with the underlined sentence applicable to most school buses operating in Virginia school divisions):

31. Transmission.

C. Automatic transmissions incorporating a parking pawl shall have a transmission shifter interlock controlled by the application of the service brake to prohibit accidental engagement of the transmission.
All non-parking pawl transmissions shall incorporate a park brake interlock that requires the service brake to be applied to allow release of the parking brake.

In order to determine the scope of the non-compliant buses that will need to be retrofitted, the Department of Education will be sending out a survey to all school divisions. I request that your staff complete and send the survey back to the Department as soon as possible.

We will inform the bus dealers and manufacturers about this missing safety feature and advise them of the urgency to prepare and submit a corrective action plan to schedule the retrofits to install the parking brake interlock system on non-compliant buses as soon as possible. Department staff will follow up with school divisions, bus manufacturers, and bus dealers to bring the non-compliant buses into full compliance with the *Virginia School Bus Specifications*.

We will also advise all bus manufacturers doing business with Virginia's school divisions that all buses delivered after the issuance of this memorandum must meet this specifications requirement. Please alert your staff to inspect the new buses delivered and to check and ensure that this safety feature is installed on these buses and is working as specified.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the Office of Support Services at (804) 225-2037, or contact Kerry Miller, Associate Director for Pupil Transportation, at (804) 225-2772 or Kerry.miller@doe.virginia.gov.

SRS:KM

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