



January 11, 2018

Pete Kotowski, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

Dear Pete:

I'm writing to document an irregularity in the inspection deficiency reporting of the Riverside Community School District bus #4. This vehicle was involved in a fatal school bus fire on Tuesday, December 12, 2017, which claimed the lives of two people - the school bus driver and one student.

That particular school bus was inspected by Iowa Department of Education school bus inspector Tom Simpson on Wednesday, December 6, 2017. The inspection revealed ten separate deficiency items, which included three out-of-service (OOS) items. One of the OOS items was repaired at the time of the inspection. The procedural process established by the Department for reporting the repair of the remaining items is as follows:

1. The inspection information is uploaded to the Department's online portal for school bus inspections, typically within a week of the inspection.
2. Upon repair, the district goes into the portal and "checks off" the repair to indicate it has been fixed.
3. If a bus has an OOS item, it cannot be used until it's been fixed and has been reported to the Department using the process outlined in #2 above.
4. If a district has repaired an OOS item and wants to put the bus back in service before the inspection information has been posted to the portal, the district must send confirmation of the repair to the Department via fax or email. Either method will serve as a "time stamp" showing the repairs were made prior to the vehicle actually going back into service.

Again, Riverside bus #4 had two outstanding OOS items resulting from the school bus inspection on December 6. Repairs of these items had not been reported to the Department via any of the acceptable methods prior to the bus fire on December 12. I believe the repairs were made before the bus fire, but simply had not been reported to the Department. My belief is based on the school district's handwritten repair records - provided to us by the county sheriff's office - as well as an onsite visual inspection by Department staff after the fire.

The Department's IT staff uploaded the inspection information to the portal on December 15, 2017. I personally went into the portal to view these records on that date, and several more times later in the month. I also printed off a copy of the inspection information on December 19, 2017, which showed the needed repairs had not been reported.

An IT staff member provided what is called a "data sheet" copy of the Riverside bus inspections on December 29, 2017. Upon looking at these records on January 3, 2018, I discovered that the inspection records for Riverside bus #4 had been changed to show the OOS items as being repaired. This concerned me as I didn't believe those records should have been touched or changed while the accident is under investigation by the NTSB. I then notified other Department staff as well as the NTSB.

Several things to acknowledge in this documentation would be:

1. From what the NTSB investigation team and the Department inspection team can ascertain, the OOS repairs do appear to have been completed on December 6, prior to the bus fire on December 12.

2. While there are many Department staff that have access to the inspection records on the portal, nobody on our staff would have reason to update those records after the fact of the accident.
3. The Riverside Community School District has access to the inspection records on the portal. We believe it's most likely someone at the district updated the records sometime between December 19 and December 29, 2017.

A quick timeline of events is as follows:

- December 6, 2017 - Riverside school bus #4 was inspected
- December 6, 2017 - OOS repairs completed
- December 12, 2017 - Riverside school bus #4 was involved in a fatal fire
- December 15, 2017 – Inspection records were posted to the Department portal
- December 19, 2017 – Inspection information from the portal was printed off, showing no repairs having been made, though repairs had actually been completed on December 6
- December 29, 2017 – Data sheet of Riverside bus inspection records was run and provided to Department staff, showing three repairs had been completed, including the two OOS items
- January 3, 2018 – I discovered the three repairs showing up on the data sheet as having been completed and also reported complete on the Department portal
- January 3, 2018 – I reported my findings to other Department staff
- January 4, 2018 – All of this information was provided to the NTSB via phone calls and emails
- January 4, 2018 – Department staff decided this information should be documented

Please let me know if there are any questions or additional documentation is needed.

Regards,



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