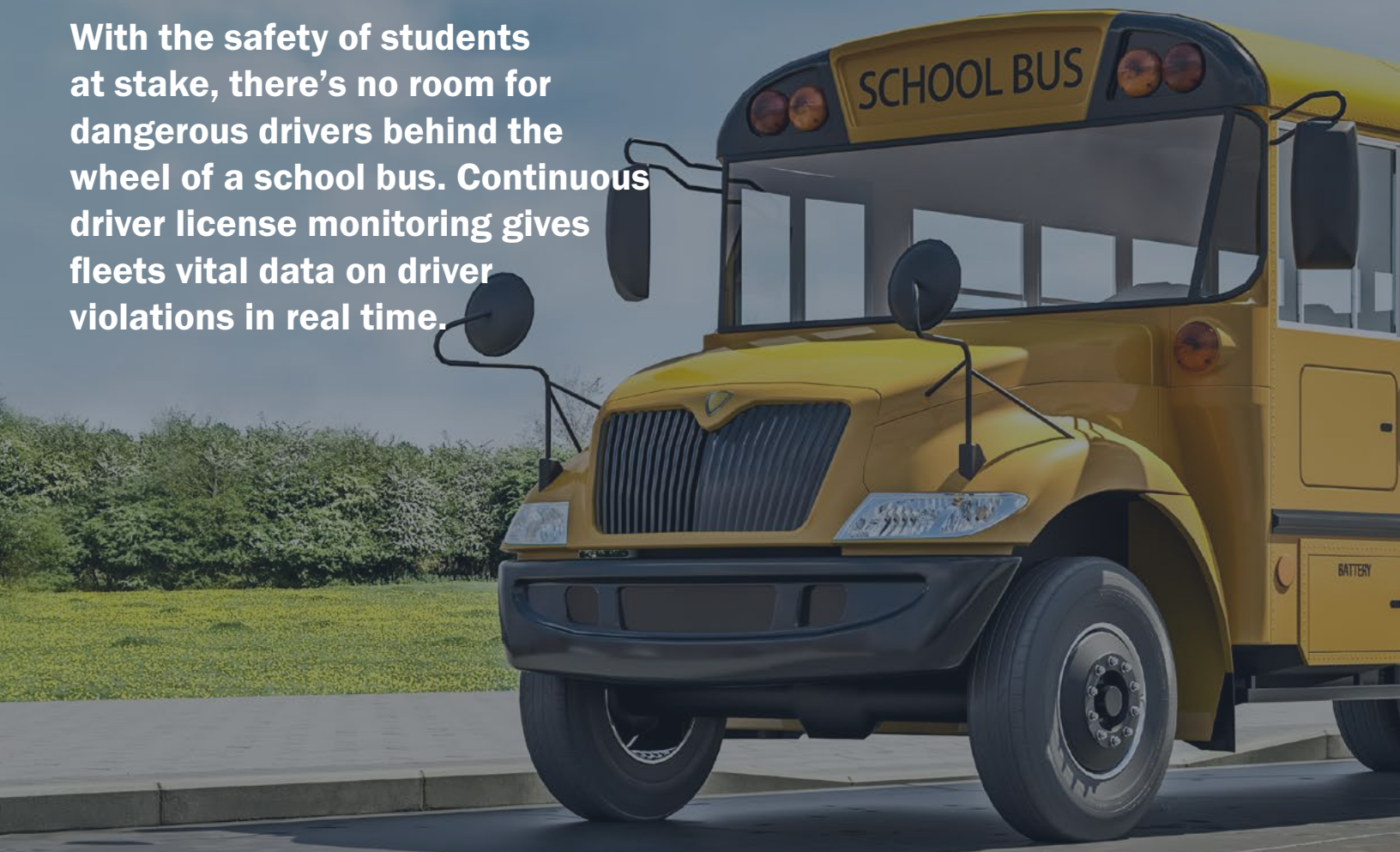
SuperVision®

ELEVATE DRIVER PERFORMANCE

How to Improve School Bus Safety with Continuous License Monitoring

With the safety of students at stake, there's no room for dangerous drivers behind the wheel of a school bus. Continuous driver license monitoring gives fleets vital data on driver violations in real time.



How long does it take for a school bus safety manager to become aware of a driver's violations? Days? Weeks? Months?

When it comes to the license status of school bus drivers, timeliness is critical. School bus fleets cannot afford to have a risky driver behind the wheel. The stakes are too high to allow for any gaps in awareness of driver violations.

Safety is paramount for school bus fleets because one bus can carry as many as ninety children. Parents, principals, school district officials, and other stakeholders are counting on the busing operation to deliver a safe and reliable ride for their students.

Meanwhile, taxpayers are counting on fleet operations to keep costs down. Safe driving is a critical way to save money, prevent crashes, and avoid potentially ruinous liability risks.

Multi-Faceted Approach to Safety

Many factors play a part in student transportation safety, starting with the vehicle itself.

School buses must meet a host of federal motor vehicle safety standards that regulate areas such as roof strength, fuel system integrity, windows, and mirrors. The vehicles are designed with a passive form of occupant protection known as compartmentalization — closely spaced, padded seating — and some states have added requirements for lap-shoulder belts.

Safety equipment will not remain effective when not maintained properly. School bus fleets keep buses in top shape by conducting preventive maintenance services at regular intervals, and the buses undergo state inspections at least once a year.

Even with a strong maintenance and vehicle inspection program in place, safety often depends heavily on the driver. Even the safest vehicle requires a safe driver.

Before they get behind the wheel, driver candidates undergo extensive training, background checks, and other screening measures. Safety managers and their team of drivers interact on the job every step of the way. However, off-duty violations (even non-driving offenses) could cause suspension of the driver's license, putting the fleet at risk of a costly negligent entrustment lawsuit.

Additional Risk: Negligent Entrustment

Negligent entrustment is a costly risk for any fleet organization. Essentially, it refers to holding an organization liable for entrusting an individual with a dangerous instrument, in this case a school bus, with which the entrusted causes harm.

Negligent Entrustment is generally found where the entrusted had a reputation or record that showed his propensity to be dangerous through possession of such an instrument. Where the claim is against the employer, the employer will be held liable if the individual's record was known to the employer or would have been easily discoverable by that employer, had a diligent search been conducted.

Negligent entrustment is yet another example why continuous MVR monitoring should be a pillar of any fleet safety policy.

The High Cost of Infrequent Monitoring

Minimizing the effects of or removing risky drivers from a fleet is the highest value a fleet can gain from its safety program, not only because it protects lives, but directly protects a company's bottom line.

Monitoring MVRs and driver license status can help prevent crashes, reduce liability, and provide managers with the peace of mind that school bus drivers are going to adhere to their fleet safety program.

While there are expenses associated with monitoring driver's licenses, they pale in comparison to the costs of crashes. A report from the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety1 calculated the average costs to employers for three types of crashes:

$5,890 on average for a crash that involves only property damage.

$64,981 on average for a nonfatal injury crash.

$671,515 on average for a fatal crash.

The same report also found that for a fleet of 1,000 vehicles, the average annual cost of property damage alone is $1,178,000.

Considering the high cost of crashes, school bus fleets can't afford to inadequately monitor their drivers' license status. That point has been illustrated by a number of tragic student transportation incidents in recent years. Here are two high-profile examples:

Mount Olive, New Jersey, May 2018

A school bus collided with a dump truck, ripping the undercarriage of the bus away from the body, killing two and hospitalizing 43 people aboard the bus.

The driver had a valid driver's license and CDL endorsement at the time of the crash. However, state officials in New Jersey noted that between 1975 and 2017, the driver had their license suspended 14 times, received 16 driving violations for speeding, and a citation for an improper lane change2. The most recent license suspension (for unpaid parking tickets) was in December of 2017, just 5 months before the crash, for unpaid parking tickets. All of these violations and suspensions are red flags that a continuous monitoring program would have caught.

Baltimore, Maryland, November 2016

A school bus struck a car, entered oncoming traffic, and hit the driver's side of a transit bus killing both drivers and four passengers.

In its investigation of the crash, the National Transportation Safety Board uncovered multiple red flags about the driver that the agency said should have sidelined him.

Investigators found that the driver had a history of hypertension, diabetes, and seizures, and in the past five years, he had been involved in at least 12 incidents while operating a school bus or personal vehicle3.

The driver did not have a current medical certificate on file with the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MMVA). The driver was notified by the MMVA two months prior to the crash that their license had been suspended and they were no longer authorized to drive a school bus. The MMVA also notified the driver that they could lose their license unless a current medical certificate was provided.

The associated school district was not aware that the driver had lost driving privileges until the driver's license was revoked the day after the crash.

A continuous license monitoring program would have caught the suspended license and the fleet manager would have been able to remove the driver from the road, prior to the deadly crash.

Fill in the Gaps with Real-Time Monitoring

If a school bus driver has a crash or incurs other violations off the job, it is essential that safety managers receive a record of the incident as soon as possible to avoid negligence. A self-reporting policy is not reliable enough, and checking MVRs only once per year could give a risky driver a lengthy free pass. Consider this: If a violation occurs the day after a once-a-year MVR check, the driver could pose a risk for a fleet operation for 364 days until the next annual check.

The solution is continuous license monitoring. This approach is more efficient, filling in the gaps to identify risky drivers sooner.

There are many reasons why a driver may have a mark on his or her record. Fleet managers need to be aware of these blemishes to determine any impacts on an individual's employment as a school bus driver.

To be clear, continuous license monitoring does not necessarily mean a higher turnover of drivers. Most school bus drivers have exemplary records; the goal is to identify the few with significant driving violations or a pattern of unsafe behavior.

Continuous license monitoring identifies opportunities for driver remediation, reducing turnover and helping potentially stellar drivers who may be struggling to improve through coaching. This, in turn, can help mitigate the severe driver shortages faced by many school bus fleets.

The SuperVision Solution

When it comes to continuous license monitoring, many top commercial fleets have turned to SuperVision's License Monitor solution. SuperVision, powered by Explore Information Services, is North America's most comprehensive and widely used monitoring solution.

License Monitor offers unparalleled geographical coverage, with continuous license monitoring available in all 51 U.S. jurisdictions and all 13 Canadian provinces and territories.

License Monitor sends fleet and safety managers alerts as they occur for all driving violations, including DUIs, speeding, illegal maneuvers, and invalid licenses. Managers can easily update driver rosters, set preferences to receive alerts by email and access the platform through both cloud-based web and mobile applications.

SuperVision's solution provides easy setup and implementation, a customizable user portal, no batch MVRs and designated customer service representatives. Furthermore, License Monitor can reduce the time and cost of reviewing MVRs by up to 30%.

In summary, continuous license monitoring is a more effective way to manage driver records, identify and address potential for risk, and, most importantly, keep children safe. With so much riding on school bus fleet safety, continuous license monitoring is a vital investment in our future.

about SuperVision®

ELEVATE DRIVER PERFORMANCE

SuperVision® provides comprehensive, fleet-safety and performance management solutions that optimize fleet oversight and driver behavior, through advanced data, actionable insights, analytics, and reporting. SuperVision is the latest in a line of industry-leading products and services created by Explore Information Services and Solera Companies. Since 1989, Explore Information Services has been providing risk-data services and developing superior information solutions for commercial fleets, insurance companies, and government entities.

LICENSE MONITOR

Learn more about the products discussed in this white paper (shown above) or schedule a free demo by visiting our website at **esupervision.com**

Resources

1. "Report: Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes to Employers—2015." Network of Employers for Traffic Safety. http://trafficsafety.org/costofcrashes/FindingsAtAGlance-NETSCostofCrashes-2015.pdf Accessed Aug. 24, 2019.

2. "School Bus Driver in Fatal N.J. Crash Received Several Suspensions, Tickets." Schlosser, Nicole. School Bus Fleet. May 24, 2018. https://www.schoolbusfleet.com/news/729911/school-bus-driver-in-fatal-n-j-crash-received-several-suspensions-tickets Accessed Aug. 24, 2019.

3. "NTSB: School Bus Driver in Baltimore Crash Had History of Seizures." Schlosser, Nicole. School Bus Fleet. Dec. 7, 2016. https://www.schoolbusfleet.com/news/719014/ntsb-school-bus-driver-in-baltimore-crash-had-history-of-seizures Accessed Aug. 24, 2019.