

## **School Bus Environments**

A Pacific Northwest transportation company ensures that children within the area travel to and from school safely. With the experience of serving the school bus industry for several years, they have been transporting children within this area for the past 4 years for the local school district. With 33 employees in the division, they maintain 25 school buses to serve the twenty one routes, fifteen regular routes and six routes for all of the special-needs children.

### **Challenge**

With the bus driver being the authoritative figure on-board, it is difficult for them to keep a watchful eye on the students and pay attention to the road while they drive. In most cases, incidents would happen and the driver wouldn't see it, losing opportunity to deal with the student or students involved. The School District directed that the buses be equipped with a surveillance camera system that would be able to assist in student management, improve on-board safety, and provide information on the driving conditions of the bus.

### **Solution**

All of the regular routes were equipped with such a system, which consists of an interior camera, an exterior camera that records when the stop arm is activated and a DVR. The students are aware they are being monitored and that has helped to improve safety and assist the driver with discipline. For the occasions where a student acts inappropriately, the situation can be reviewed when the bus is back at the depot and disciplinary action is taken.

Additionally, an average of 33 school-aged children are killed each year in bus-related accidents in the United States; the majority of those deaths occur in the “danger zone,” the 10-foot area surrounding the bus, because of passing motorists who disregard a bus’ stop arm. The exterior camera recorded drivers who passed illegally. When a stop-arm violation occurred, bus drivers would say the car’s license plate number out loud, describe the vehicle and make note of any witnesses, all of which was recorded through the system’s audio input. The driver would then report the violation and an incident report was filed. The case and the video were then turned over to the police to further investigate the violation and identify the offender.

In a six-month trial period with one camera installed on the pre-school bus, 40 drivers were caught and all but three pleaded guilty after viewing the recording. The local newspaper and radio station reported on the new school bus recording system and drivers took notice. In the second six-month recording period, only four drivers were caught passing school buses.

“It’s nearly impossible for drivers to talk their way out of a stop arm violation. We have it on disc – you can’t dispute video evidence.”