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Wed 28/03/2018 16:01

John Dunne

"why school bus and driver safety has to be a major priority for us all"

To info@independent.ie

For the Attention of:
The Road Safety Authority Expert of the Irish Independent

Dear Sir/Madam,

Your article in the 28th March edition of the Irish Independent titled "why school bus and driver safety has to be a major priority for us all" paints a poor picture of safety standards in our school transport system. As the risk manager of the insurance contracts for over 60% of private operators providing these services for over 40 years I feel obliged to bring some balance to this article. Irish private bus and coach operators have provided one of the safest school transport services in Europe over these 40 years through their professionalism, dedication and ability. Certainly the average age of the school bus fleet, including the state company, Bus Eireann, is at the older end of the bus fleet here in Ireland but this does not automatically mean that these buses are less safe or less roadworthy if they are maintained properly and with safety at the core of that maintenance. The risk management protocols required to maintain the balanced insurance portfolio managed by J.F.Dunne Insurances for over 40 years is proof of the safety record of these Irish bus and coach operators.

One would have to question the definitions now being applied to a "safe bus" and what is a "major fault"? The numbers quoted in this article are that 10% of the school bus fleet tested had "major faults", we are not told if this included the Bus Eireann School Bus fleet. We are not told either the breakdown of these major faults that could include the "poor condition of a brake light", surely not cause for concern, or indeed the scaremongering, if it is merely condensation on the glass? Of course there is always room for improvement and constant vigilance, however, we need to be reasoned and measured in our approach. The priority for us all in this high risk area is to protect lives. The track record over the last 40 years where over 6,250 routes are travelled daily on our school bus services, with the lowest incident rate in Europe, is proof of the ongoing commitment to the safety of our children by these Irish private bus and coach operators.

John Dunne
Chairman
J.F.Dunne Insurances

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