

SUMMARY OF CHANGES FOR PROPOSED RULE 6A-3.0171, FAC.

Rule changes to bus inspection (Rule 6A-3.0171): Section 1006.22, FS, requires the State Board of Education to adopt rules relating to “examination of the mechanical and safety condition of each school bus.” Rule 6A-3.0171, FAC, is the resulting implementing regulation, and the Florida School Bus Safety Inspection Manual is adopted by reference. Under this rule, all public school buses must be inspected monthly by the school district (or an approved contractor) that owns and operates the bus. Rule 6A-3.0171, FAC, currently interprets monthly as “each 20 school days.” The proposed rule change would allow these inspections at intervals not to exceed each 30 school days. This proposal was suggested by Florida school district personnel, and was approved as a formal recommendation by the members of the Florida Association for Pupil Transportation, a professional association comprised of a broad cross-section of local school district transportation providers and contractors. The proposal is based on their finding that Florida buses now incorporate features that improve the longevity of safety and mechanical systems (for example, automatic adjusters for air brakes), allowing for a longer inspection interval without compromising the safety of school children. They have also observed that there have been no incidents of serious injuries or fatalities arising from failure of Florida school bus mechanical systems in recent memory, and that required inspection of school buses by drivers before each trip adds to this margin of safety. Moreover, the current and proposed inspection intervals well exceed the interval in place in most states (semi-annual or annual).

This rule change also incorporates technical changes in the content of the Florida School Bus Safety Inspection Manual to incorporate recent changes to school bus equipment and safety standards (for example, inspection of recently required lap belts and wheelchair and occupant securement systems).