

**Division of State Patrol
Informational Memorandum**

11-03-3

**Tab 4
School Bus Inspection Manual**

TOPIC: Seat Spacing Measurement

Background: There is a growing trend in the school bus industry to offer seats that include side bolsters and/or bucket seat style construction. Questions have arisen about their use and the 24" seat spacing requirement in Trans 300.59(1).

Side bolsters are often used to ensure compliance with Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard 222, School Bus Passenger Seating and Crash Protection. The additional padding around the metal frame of the seat increases crash protection but briefly reduces the seat spacing to less than 24" at the reinforced area. It also helps place the occupant properly on the seat. Bucket style seats add comfort although they usually decrease the capacity of the bus in comparison to the classic bench seat. Bucket style seats also usually have seat spacing measurements of less than 24" when measured at the edges.

Decision: Additional padding around a seat frame and the use of bucket seats does not interfere with proper compartmentalization. Seats with side bolsters and bucket seats are allowed provided the majority of the seat retains the 24" spacing requirement and they meet other applicable state and federal regulations. When measuring seat spacing measure approximately 4" inboard of the outer limits of the seat back or where the reinforcing foam visibly ends. 24" is still the minimum requirement for the majority of the seat to retain optimum compartmentalization. The next revision of Trans 300 includes language allowing for said brief reductions in the 24" seat spacing measurements. Established tolerances still apply to the remainder of the seat spacing measurements.

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