

SafeGuard® Case Study

SafeGuard School Bus Seating Case Study Palmdale School District Palmdale, California

Palmdale School District, 45 miles northeast of Los Angeles, runs 60 Type 1 and Type 2 buses, transporting approximately 20 percent of the district's 23,000 students. The first bus with SafeGuard seats was added to the fleet in 2004, when California began requiring belted seating on all new school buses.

In 2001, Palmdale School District conducted a two-part pilot program with IMMI, first replacing lap-belt only seats on a Special Needs Type 2 bus and later replacing standard school bus seats on a transit bus with SafeGuard seats.

In the fall of 2009, the district adds six more buses to the fleet, which will be used exclusively for field trips and out-of-town activities. The SafeGuard FlexSeat® is the product of choice.

Transportation Director Sherilyn Thacker says FlexSeat was a natural choice for the new fleet. "Our first bus was equipped with 3/2 SafeGuard seating, and we made that work," she said. "But when I saw FlexSeat, I thought it was a great design that makes a lot of sense. It gives us the ability to offer 69 belted seats on a conventional bus. With our first belted bus, we lost capacity and went transporting 84 students on a bus to transporting just 55."

Within the past five years, Thacker has witnessed two school bus seat sled tests at IMMI. "That gave me a different perspective," she said. "I could put the face of any one of my kids – and I have 23,000 of them – on one of the ATDs, and watch them fly out of their seat unrestrained. Belted seating was a no-brainer at that point."

Other benefits of belted seating mentioned by Thacker include faster loading, lower noise level and significantly reduced discipline issues. "When we did our pilot back in 2001, we put the lap-shoulder belted seats on a bus with one of our best drivers," she recalled. "Jayne was almost at the point of quitting because the kids wouldn't behave. After she got the bus with lap-shoulder belts, she wasn't having discipline issues any more. And she stayed."

In advance of implementing lap-shoulder belts on the first bus in 2001, the school district sent letters to parents about the change in transportation. "One of the reasons I knew we had been successful was that the letter didn't spur a lot of feedback from parents," she said. "I did get the question, 'Why isn't my kid on that bus?'"



Sherilyn Thacker
Palmdale Transportation Director

Budget constraints limit the ability of the school district to add belted seating to more buses in the near future. “I feel badly we can’t provide every kid with the best that’s available,” Thacker said. “The reality is that walk zones have increased significantly, and our fleet is aging. We were able to get these latest additions to our fleet because the school district refinanced some debt. We feel like we were able to get a lot for our money with this new addition to our fleet.”