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OSHA News Release

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OSHA Regional News Release

U.S. Department of Labor
Office of Public Affairs

Region 1

Region 1 News Release: 06-1574-BOS/BOS 2006-246

Tuesday, September 12, 2006

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School-Bus Company Faces \$95,000 in OSHA Fines Following Boston Fatality

BRAINTREE, Mass. -- The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has proposed a total of \$95,000 in fines against First Student Inc., a Cincinnati-based school-bus service, following a fatality and an injury at two of its Boston facilities.

The fatality occurred March 9 at the company's Freeport Street bus yard when a mechanic was overcome by carbon monoxide produced by a gasoline-powered jump-starter used to start buses. On April 18, a mechanic at the firm's Hyde Park garage was injured when a 10-ton air jack used to lift buses struck him while he cleared a jammed safety chain.

OSHA's inspection found that workers at the Freeport Street location were exposed to high carbon monoxide levels when the jump-starter was in use. The company failed to identify and evaluate this carbon-monoxide hazard and did not install adequate ventilation or other controls to reduce carbon-monoxide levels. Employees were not trained about carbon-monoxide hazards and protective measures.

At Hyde Park, OSHA found that the air jack had been modified with the addition of the safety chains, which jammed, preventing the jack from moving. This exposed workers to the hazard of being struck or crushed by the jack. The jack had not been adequately de-energized to protect employees attempting to clear a jam; specific energy control procedures had not been developed and implemented for employees servicing buses and air jacks; and employees had not been adequately trained in those procedures. Finally, annual inspections that could have identified these defects had not been conducted.

As a result of these conditions, OSHA cited First Student Inc. for one alleged willful violation and eight alleged serious violations of workplace safety and health standards. OSHA defines a willful violation as one committed with an intentional disregard of, or plain indifference to, the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health Act and regulations. A serious citation is issued when death or serious physical harm are likely to result from a hazard about which the employer knew or should have known.

"These accidents show, in the starkest terms, what can happen when all safety and health standards are not met," said Brenda Gordon, OSHA's area director for Boston and Southeastern Massachusetts. "It's vital that all necessary safeguards be in place and in use at all company locations to prevent deaths and accidents."

The company has 15 business days from receipt of the citations to request and participate in an informal conference with the OSHA area director or to contest them before the

independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission. The inspection was conducted by OSHA's Braintree, Mass., area office at (617) 565-6924.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing a safe and healthful workplace for their employees. OSHA's role is to assure the safety and health of America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards; providing training, outreach and education; establishing partnerships; and encouraging continual process improvement in workplace safety and health. For more information, visit OSHA's Web site at www.osha.gov.

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