



Tuesday, September 12, 2006

## **UAW calls for new safety measures at Boston school bus company; firm cited by OSHA after on-the-job death due to carbon monoxide**

UAW officials today called for an urgent joint effort to implement new safety measures at First Student, a multinational company that services and runs school buses for Boston Public Schools.

First Student was cited Monday for willful health and safety violations by the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, regarding the death in March of Hector Rivas, a school bus mechanic and member of UAW Local 1596.

First Student was found negligent in 13 health and safety standards, and faces fines and penalties as a result of the citation.

Rivas died March 9 at a school bus lot in Roxbury where he was helping repair and start buses so children could get to school on a cold morning. He was found in the driver's seat of a service van overcome by carbon monoxide, which came from a gasoline-powered generator improperly installed in the back of the van. The generator is used to jump-start diesel school buses.

"These hazardous gas-powered generators killed six people cleaning up after hurricanes in Florida in 2004, five people who were cleaning up after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and just last week a woman cleaning up after Hurricane Ernesto in Virginia," said Mike Longval, a bus mechanic and member of UAW Local 1596.

"Study after study show how dangerous these small engines can be; they are just not safe in enclosed areas, even with doors open. We complained about the generator problem but couldn't get the company to spend any money to fix the problem. Safety takes time, money, mechanics and know-how."

"We're deeply saddened by the loss of brother Hector Rivas; he was loved as a father and co-worker, and his family misses him dearly," said Bob Madore, director of UAW Region 9A, which includes Massachusetts.

"We think management at First Student is just starting to wake up to the seriousness of health and safety problems at the garages and bus parking lots here in Boston. Our members are ready to work with First Student to solve the numerous safety hazards in these garages. We just wish they had listened to us earlier. If they had Hector may have gone home safely to his family that day."

Unsafe working conditions at the Readville garage in Hyde Park also led to the serious injury of Miguel Camacho in April. Camacho suffered a broken hip and shoulder injuries while attempting to secure a bus on a lift with chains. Workers were following management's procedures, even though use of the chains is actively discouraged by the lift equipment manufacturer. Camacho is also a bus mechanic for First Student and a member of UAW Local 1596.

Among the ongoing worker safety concerns at First Student are chemical exposures from solvents, airborne contaminants from internal combustion engines, working beneath buses improperly secured on lifts and

service stands, and failure to lock out dangerous energy sources.

The company has 15 days from the date citations are issued to appeal the OSHA decision. The UAW will participate in the settlement process to make sure the safety concerns and conditions that led to the death of Hector Rivas are addressed.

“The settlement process will allow us to sit down with OSHA and the company and work out these issues so that our members can provide quality service in a safe working environment,” said Madore. “Hopefully First Student and the UAW can develop a full-fledged relationship where we address these important issues.”

---

**International Union, UAW**

8000 East Jefferson Avenue • Detroit, Michigan 48214 • 313.926.5291 • [www.uaw.org](http://www.uaw.org)