

BUS CHARTERING GUIDELINES

In planning a year's activities, there are times when a Girl Scout troop needs to arrange transportation for a sizable group to travel a distance from home (e.g. for a day trip, a troop camping weekend or a trip out of state.) Although sometimes several parents are recruited to drive small groups of girls, chartered busses or other public transportation be used. This is because such "common carriers" are required to operate under government regulations covering equipment, personnel and insurance, which help to assure that such transportation is safe and dependable.

LICENSING: When a Girl Scout troop charters a bus for a troop activity, the bus is at the disposal of the troop for a specified length of time. Under an approved charter agreement, the bus company provides both the vehicle and the driver. Girl Scout troops may not enter into arrangements where they rent or lease just the vehicle and provide their own driver. In Massachusetts, all companies chartering buses for trips within the state must have a permit from the Department of Public Utilities (DPU). For trips across state lines, the federal government requires the company to have a permit from the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC). The use of school buses during off-school time and by non-school groups is not within the law unless the school bus company also holds a DPU and/or ICC permit to charter buses to the general public.

FINDING A BUS COMPANY: A list of current bus companies located within the general council area, which have DPU and/or ICC permits on file at the Council Office can be found on our website at <http://www.girlscoutseasternmass.org/forms.html?cat=825> or by calling your service center. The procedures governing the certification of bus companies are extremely complicated: companies often hold permits (and advertise) under more than one corporate name; there are several types of permits, some placing specified restrictions or limitations on the kinds of service they may provide, etc.

Inclusion of a particular bus company on this council list does not imply any judgment of the company's relative cost, punctuality, cleanliness or any other factor except its legal authority to transport Girl Scouts on trips specified. It is the responsibility of the troop to determine whether the company is able to give the type of service that their trip will require. Troops are encouraged to consult several companies and to ask all the necessary questions before making a firm commitment. (NOTE: bear in mind that the addresses on this list are business offices; many companies' garage buses in other locations. Make sure to ask about this and that you are charged mileage from the garage nearest your pick-up point)

THE WRITTEN CONTRACT/LETTER OF AGREEMENT: Once a company has been selected, it is necessary to enter into a written agreement specifying all of the agreed upon arrangements. Some companies prefer to use their own form for this purpose; if not, it can be a letter written by the company or by the troop volunteer. (See 'Guideline for Letter of Agreement' below) **Because this agreement is a legal contract, it must reviewed by an executive of Girl Scouts of Eastern Massachusetts before it can be signed.** A copy of the agreement should be sent to the Waltham office at least one month before the date of the trip in order to allow time for securing the necessary information and dealing with any problems that may arise.

GUIDELINES FOR LETTER OF AGREEMENT: A letter of agreement signed by the bus company and the volunteer is necessary before a Girl Scout troop may use a chartered bus. A copy of the letter of agreement must be in the council office one month before the date of the trip. An executive will review the copy of the letter. Keep a copy and inform the volunteer if it is ok to sign.

This letter of agreement may be on a form used by the chartering company or it may be a letter that the company writes. If you have difficulty obtaining a letter of agreement from the bus company, you may write your own. In any case, it should contain all the information listed below which applies to the trip the troop is taking:

- Name and address of the bus company
- Name of the person at the bus company responsible for the arrangements
- Troop Volunteers name and address
- Troop number and town
- Number of people going on the trip
- Specific information concerning the trip itself; time, date and place of pickup and final destination, specific details concerning all side trips and stops
- Type of equipment: size and type of bus, equipment desired, including air conditioning, lavatory, heater, luggage storage under the bus, luggage racks overhead, radio, etc
- Driver: experience, knowledge of area of trip, where he/she will stay, who is responsible for paying for his/her accommodation, etc
- Financial arrangements; total cost of trip, when it is to be paid deposit required and when refund arrangements or cancellation arrangements