

To,

Sh. Ajay Bhalla, IAS
Union Home Secretary
Government of India
North Block,
New Delhi – 110 001

Dated: 13.05.2020

Dear Sir,

Subject: Importance of Road Safety during National Lockdown

We, the Road Safety Network, a body of organizations that seeks to promote road safety in India through improved governance of the sector are deeply concerned that road crashes and traffic violations have continued to put many lives in danger even during the national lockdown. Road crashes killed 1,51,417 people in 2018. As part of the Road Safety Network, SaveLIFE Foundation has been maintaining a 'Road Crash Tracker' to document road crash deaths and traffic violations during the lockdown from Mar 24th till date. So far, we have recorded 1,137 crashes nationwide and 274 road crash deaths. Recently, 6 migrant labourers were killed and 14 injured when the truck in which they were travelling overturned in Madhya Pradesh's Narsinghpur district. While there has been a dip in the absolute number of road crash fatalities, the ratio of deaths to road crashes has remained unchanged.

Risk factors like speeding, driving while fatigued, not wearing helmets, etc continue to be responsible for the fatalities across the states . Speeding on empty roads has been one of the most common reasons for road crash deaths across States. Pedestrians in both urban areas, as well as State and National Highways, remain at tremendous risk from speeding vehicles. There is an urgent need to effectively enforce speed limits.

While we welcome the decision by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to run special trains and buses for ferrying migrants, students and stranded tourists to their hometowns, we remain concerned about the safety of drivers and passengers on the journeys by road. Recent media reports indicate that driver fatigue combined with speeding has been responsible for recent crashes.

In order to assist the Government of India to keep the road-users, especially passenger using the migrant bus services safe during these journeys, we, at Road Safety Network have prepared a draft set of safety protocols for your consideration.

We request you to kindly direct the states operating the said services to follow these or similar guidelines to prevent road crashes and consequent deaths and injuries. Should you require any other assistance from us we will be happy to make ourselves available for the same.

With best regards,

Piyush Tewari

On Behalf of
Road Safety Network

(Road Safety Network is a National Coalition of organisations promoting safe roads in India)



Annexure 1:

Standard Operating Procedure w.r.t Road Safety for Government-Organised Inter-State Transit during Lockdown

A. To Mitigate Speeding:

1. To prevent speeding, electronic enforcement should be employed wherever possible. On routes, without such infrastructure staff training and briefing would be essential to ensure that the driver is not speeding.
2. The location of the bus could also be monitored with GPS technology to monitor the speed of the vehicle.

B. Driver Related Procedure:

3. The driver must possess a valid commercial driving license.
4. The driver should be familiar with the terrain. For example, a driver experienced in driving on hills road or ghat section should only be asked to drive in such terrain.
5. Drivers should be provided adequate information about the route to be able to drive properly especially for long distance inter-state commutes.
6. Driver must be given a briefing by authorities before undertaking the journey; Driver must be accompanied by a helper and substitute driver at all times during the journey.
7. Further, authorities should ensure a two-way communication channel with the bus crew through command and control centre. Driver and other staff should be briefed and trained about the SOPs and safety precautions.

8. Driving timings should be fixed - not more than 8 hours.
9. To mitigate the risk of fatigue, for long journeys over 8 hours, there must be 2 drivers present in the bus so they can get adequate rest and take turns to drive.
10. There must be adequate provision of food and good quality drinking water for the driver.

C. To Prevent Overcrowding:

11. For standard size 12 m bus, maximum allowable total passenger capacity should be 18-20 while for mini buses, it should be 12-14. For instance, for a 44 seater bus including the driver, only 18-20 people should be allowed.

D. For Access to Emergency Care:

12. The Driver and passengers should be briefed about the emergency helpline numbers in case of a breakdown or emergency.
13. The bus should have a standard first aid kit under the supervision of the driver and conductor.

E. Access to Safe Road Infrastructure and Vehicles:

14. The State Government should create temporary lanes for cyclists and pedestrians on urban roads, State and National Highways to ensure the safety of vulnerable road users dying in road crashes.
15. The vehicle should be inspected before starting the journey to check for any engineering issues or defects. For instance, functioning side and rear view mirrors and indicators etc.