

School Bus Surveillance Camera System Buyers Guide

Top 10 Considerations

(Excerpts from "Buyers Guide To School Bus Video Systems, with permission)

1 - How Long Do You Want Your School Bus Surveillance Camera System To Last?

The obvious response should be "As Long as the Bus Lasts."

The problem is most school bus video systems are made with fragile "hard drive" based DVRs, and buses work in a very harsh mobile environment that the common hard drives are not well suited to survive in.

Think to yourself of every time you have heard of a hard drive problem, a hard drive crash from a friend or business colleague. Chances are, those hard drives problems or hard drive crashes occurred while they were working on the PCs in a business office environment. Some systems may have been sitting still on a desktop or sitting safely under a desk and simply wore out or failed due to non-environmental affects. School bus video systems are mechanical devices that we trust to defend our school districts when in the worst possible scenarios events occur that require their use as a expert witness, often in court.

When you are purchasing a video system to protect your district from liability and act as an expert witness in the worst case scenarios, it seems a wise idea to make sure the one you invest district budget dollars into will not fail you when you need it most. This is the type of decision that separates those of vision and career advancement from those who might look back in hindsight after losing the lawsuit due to a failed hard drive system that was damaged in the crash that they recommended the district invest in.

Hard drive based DVRs

- *Have the highest failure rates and are poorly suited for mobile school bus applications due to their fragile design. About 560,000 hard drives crash every month (*[Mozy.com](#)).*
- *"Disk drive failures 15 times what vendors say: study says, drive vendors declined to be interviewed" (Computerworld.)*
- *The Carnegie Mellon study found hard drive failure "up to 13% observed on some systems" -- again this is in office conditions, not in a bus.*

100% Solid State SD based DVRs.

- *Offer the highest reliability, longest life, operate in extreme: heat, cold, vibration, shock and impact.*
- *The future is unwritten; circumstance and misfortune can combine without warning creating unanticipated problems in the best-laid plans.*

Most of us have several forms of solid state drive devices we use every day, in different locations

we travel, in every environment and under conditions that would damage the average hard drive in about a week. That would be our cell phones, our MP3 players or iPods, GPS NAV systems, beepers or our Blackberries. With all the abuse we provide them the recording mechanism has no moving parts to wear out or break, so they are well suited for the mobile environment.

With children's lives in your care and million dollar lawsuits on the line when something goes wrong, can you really afford to have anything less than 100% solid-state drive?

2 - Propriety Connector Hostage or Open Sourcing Freedom?

True Capitalism is predicated upon; Free exchange of value from two parties without deceit, deception or the initiation of force.

A widespread perversion of Capitalism, some label as "predatory", the business model of marketing products with propriety connectors that will require only parts or accessories from that same supplier in the future, without disclosure of the future implications to the customer.

As a way to hold past customer's hostage in future purchases to their product, this propriety connector scheme can be viewed as a mechanism employed by a company who may believe their only assurance of future sale from past customers will be a result of depriving that same customer of their freedom to choose in a free market.

Propriety Hard Drive" Connectors

Disclosure of propriety connectors on hard drives should be listed on specifications sheets to remove any intentional deceit and or deceptive aspects through customer ignorance of those connectors and how selecting a product that employs those proprietary connections will require the school district to pay several times more in the future for replacement parts, additional cameras and anything else that the customer wishes to add to that system.

Future support / parts accessibility may also be a concern, as should the manufacturer go out of business, as most have in my time in this market, the district is stuck with systems that cannot integrate any other products into their operation due to the connectors required.

To illustrate the abuse now being inflicted upon customers; a standard hard drive may cost \$30 from online sources, but place a propriety connector on it making it very difficult to source, and now a predatory manufacturer can charge \$450 for the same drive.

Requiring a non-propriety 100% Solid State SDXC card DVR based system will insure your district will never be held hostage by a predatory manufacturer pushing propriety hard drive connectors in order to insure future cash cows from high priced hard drive replacements that customers are forced to purchase from them.

"Propriety Camera" Connectors

Disclosure of propriety connectors on cameras should be listed on specifications sheets to remove any intentional deceit and or deceptive aspects through ignorance of those connectors and how selecting a product that employs those proprietary connections will require the school district to limit choices in the future for additional cameras and anything else added to that system.

American school districts who have had enough of this raw deal should start exercising their freedom of choice by choosing to spec a system that will not force them to pay up to four times more for additional or replacement hard drives & cameras from what some may label as "predatory" manufacturers in the future should they require them.

3 - DVR Technology Upgrade Program

How can the product you purchase today save your district hundreds in the future long after the warranty is expired? By investing in a product that qualifies in a "DVR Technology Upgrade Program."

It has been my observation over the last 25 years in this market; DVR manufacturers seem to change DVR models and platforms every 3-5 years. This may be due to technology, required features integration or simply a desire to resell product to the same customers who purchased in the past. Either way, the end result is customers will often be required to purchase completely new systems at full cost as outdated equipment is of no value to the new product manufacturers.

American Bus Video inc. is the only mobile video solutions provider, I am aware of, at the time of this writing who actually rewards past customers with a 50% trade in allowance on past purchased DVRs as a reward for customer loyalty under their "DVR Technology Upgrade Program."

In effect, this provides customers with a 50% reduction in cost on new DVR technology when their previous ABV purchased DVR is traded in for replacement for the latest 100% Solid State ABV solutions.

When out of warranty DVRs fail, you can now upgrade to the latest technology mobile DVRs from ABV at a small fraction of the cost of the new DVR. Mobile DVRs sold over the last 10 years are eligible for this "DVR Technology Upgrade Program."

4 – Protect Children Identities via Mosaic Zone Blurring

This feature permits the user to select areas on the quad view or full screen display view to select for "blurring". Once the area is selected the persons in those selected areas will be provided a level of privacy should the video be presented to others for viewing. This is especially important when school bus video is shared with others' as video evidence of children should be protected from non-authorized review. Proper incorporation of this feature along with a third party movie screen capture program can provide a permanently "blurred" video clip if needed.

5 – Protect School District From Dangerous Driving Behaviors

This feature provides sequential impartial documentation of potential dangerous school bus driver behaviors that can adversely affect your transported children, school bus fleet equipment investment or drivers safety and help provide a driver risk management safety tool that can be used to highlight and document Dangerous Driving Behaviors so that corrections may be made prior to an accident.

- Hard Braking is recorded on the Sensor charting, as distracted drivers potentially violate DOT Safe Driving Mandate and could not only endanger the lives of the children transported but will also incur unnecessary liability for the district.
- Dangerous Hi-Speed Turns increase driver safety risks, increase liability, and risk

- company assets, by greatly increasing the risk of accidents.
- Crash & Impacts recorded for review in case of liability lawsuit whether driver reports them or not.

6 - System Warranty Is A Pre-Paid Built In Cost

Knowledge is power. Information and perspective are required to make educated choices.

Warranty offered by a supplier is a pre-paid built in cost of a product that customers must bear. But, why spend hundreds on a pre-paid warranty for a 100% Solid State DVR?

Past experience with solid state DVR's indicate approximate 2% fail rate over the manufacturer warranty period, so why waste funding on expensive built in extended warranty costs?

Some of the largest companies in the mobile digital solution industry have gone bankrupt, sold out to larger companies or closed. The customers of those products who pre-paid for the extended warranties may now be left without any support or warranty when those companies fail.

The only thing more disappointing than losing all support from a company that provided your system, is to have pre-paid for built in extended warranties you will never get any value from.

Freedom of choice should always be provided to the customer to select the level of Extended Warranty on the purchased product so they can determine if the hundred or more paid per system is worth the difference in cost.

In the end should the customer choose to purchase: 3-Year, 5-Year or industry leading 10-Year Warranty it should be with full transparency as to the actual cost of this extended coverage, not buried in the cost of the product.

7 - Memory Warranty

The best memory warranty we know of is the Limited Lifetime Warranty.

All of our flash memory cards include a limited lifetime warranty provided. We provide this extended warranty to you at *no charge*. Your memory cards are warranted for life to be free from defects, and will be replaced if returned in good condition, without signs of: damage, tampering, or abuse if found defective for as long as the memory manufacturer continues to provide this product and ABV is activity selling them in this market.

8- False Specifications & Fraud

Impressive esthetical features or specifications that salesmen insist are "must have items" are sometimes either of questionable value, misrepresentations or simply false. So many games are being played with product specifications regarding: "G" ratings of fragile Hard Drives, temperature rating, resolution and shock or vibration buffering that it might be possible those selling those products may be unaware they are misrepresenting their own products to your district.

While some may not be aware of their deceit, under law "Ignorance is no excuse", some have been informed by me and still choose not to correct their false specifications or bogus claims, so be warned.

Search for claims in their literature (PDF) or on their web site such as:

- ✓ Hard drive rated at over 3 "Gs"
- ✓ Hard drive operating temperature below freezing without a heater
- ✓ Their cameras are waterproof
- ✓ Their cameras are vandal proof

The above claims are my first clue that at best I may not be getting accurate or factual information on the product, and at worst I am being played for a fool by a deceptive salesperson or company only interested in separating my school district from their budget funds.

When I believe I am being deceived about those basic aspects of the products, I can only imagine how many other areas that I may not be getting full disclosure or being provided accurate information in good faith. True Capitalism demands honest exchange of value, without deceit, deception, or initiation of force, anything less is fraud, immoral or possibly criminal.

Should you suspect or realize that you are not being provided accurate and factual information in good faith, "Run don't walk" to the next product vender in the hope of an honest description of the product capabilities.

9- Installation of Pupil Transit Surveillance Systems

Contrary to popular opinion these systems are simple to install for professional school bus trained service technicians. I have almost no reported incidence of them destroying their own district buses or our equipment as about 95% of customers have their shop technicians install the products to save the thousands in labor and high cost of travel from those who manufacturer and sell these systems.

By requesting installations you eliminate those best trained to work on your district buses...your own professional service technicians.

While at the same time opening the door for an installer with no proven track record of 10+ years of bus video installations, to abuse, damage and violate the integrity of your buses and possibly damage and or render the warranty on the equipment they are installing unserviceable through their improper installations.

Just because a manufacturer authorizes a dealer to sell and service a product, that does not mean that dealer has a sufficient level of skill or experience doing that to insure they do the job right the first time. Some manufacturers only qualification for dealer setup and authorization are they can fill out the form correctly and pass a credit check. The wrong time to find this out is after they have butchered your bus video installation.

Installation price is a direct measure of the value of the installer's skill level, experience in this industry and professionalism. Low price installations reflect the installer does not value their own work, so why would you value it?

If you must have the systems installed by someone other than your district shop technicians, it is in the districts best interest to have your high tech legal liability protection installed by the most qualified and professional digital bus video installers available with a proven installation and service track record of at least 10 years in school digital bus video installs and service.

10- Do You Want To Use This Video In Case of Bad Accidents?

This is not a rhetorical question, but an intellectual reality that the choice of DVR memory storage device will be the primary determination of the reliability & integrity of the stored video files.

Imagine a hard disk platter spinning at 7,000 RPMs with a read/write head hovering 5/1,000,000 of an inch over the surface (millionths of an inch), when the vehicle impacts another object at high speed. Then imagine this fragile mechanism bouncing on the steel springs that support the bus as it runs over speed bumps, storm drains, curbs, potholes and gravel roads.

Car Airbags deploy in accidents at about 3 "G"s of impact, or as slow as hitting an object while your car is moving about 7-12 miles per hour.

A conventional hard drive can survive about 3 "G"s, which explains why so many of them have crashed the hard drive when the bus hit a large bump, big pothole, storm curb or other object even at slow speeds.

When you are purchasing a video system to protect your district from liability and act as an expert witness in the worst case scenarios, it seems a wise idea to make sure the one you invest district budget dollars into, will not fail you when you need it most, such as in the case of a bad accident. This is the type of decision that separates those of vision and career advancement from those who might look back in hindsight after losing the lawsuit due to a failed hard drive system that was damaged in the crash.

ABV's Best Value & Best Selling School Bus Video Solution

Compare other School Bus Video Surveillance systems to ABV's best value School Bus Video Solution. Download a high resolution SD4mX Product PDF.

(Large High Resolution file, may take a minute on a slow server)

<http://www.americanbusvideo.com/sd4mx-features-abv-2.pdf>

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25 Years of Mobile Digital Solutions Experience

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