United Kingdom Discussion Paper on Emergency Exits

Introduction

In the UK the safety of passengers in buses and coaches has continued to improve as vehicle designs have changed, and other control measures have been introduced. In the event of an incident, risks to passengers remain, including: ejection from the vehicle; contact with the interior of the vehicle; or entrapment following an accident.

Often, the partial or total ejection of the passenger is through a break glass window in the side of the vehicle. The provision of seat belts and improved strength of superstructure should reduce the frequency and severity of injury arising from passenger ejection, but there remains the potential for serious injuries, particularly in the event of rollover accidents.

Emergency exit provision is not unique to road transport. Other modes such as rail vehicles, and aircraft, also make such provisions for the safety of passengers. Comparisons with provisions for these modes may be beneficial.

Emergency Escape from Buses and Coaches

Provisions for emergency exits are included in UNECE Regulation 107 for service doors, emergency doors, roof or floor hatches, and emergency windows. The technical provisions include size of aperture, access to the exit, marking and method of operation.

There are a number of concerns on the requirements for emergency exits:

- The provisions have been developed over many years and now lack clarity and consistency;
- The ease of use of these exits varies;
- The aperture sizes may no longer be adequate to ensure that provision is made for 95th percentile occupants;
- The orientation of the vehicle affects the usability of the exit;
- The nature of some of the exits, in particular break glass windows, introduces further hazards for passengers.

The Informal Group has been given the opportunity to review the provisions for emergency exits contained in R 107, and consideration should be given to:

- The different types of exit and whether all exit types should continue to be permitted;
- Identification, lighting, controls and operation;
- Realistic aperture dimensions;
- Age, mobility, comprehension of passengers;
- Emergency escape by passengers in the absence of outside intervention immediately following an incident;
- Rescue of passengers by emergency services;
- Differences between vehicle classes;

- Expectation of which categories of passenger should be able to use exits;
- location and number of exits, resulting from a usability assessment;

Objectives for January 2010 Meeting

The meeting in Warsaw should set a structure for this project with clear objectives, responsibilities and timescales for delivery. A robust plan needs to be developed, to enable the UK to provide resources for the work.

- 1 Clear definition of the technical requirements for the vehicle to ensure that these meet passenger needs;
- 2 Performance based criteria for exits which recognise the different abilities of passengers;
- 3 Timescales and responsibilities for delivery of the work of the Informal Group;
- 4 Regulatory impact assessment of the proposals.