**PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD**

**ABBREVIATED BUS ACCIDENT REPORT**

1. **CASE:** 9249
2. **PROPERTY NAME:** Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CENTRO)
3a. **ACCIDENT TYPE:** Bus Fire (Mechanical)  
3b. **Accident Severity Index:** 0
4a. **DATE:** January 12, 2007  
4b. **TIME:** 8:50am
5. **ACCIDENT LOCATION:** Dorwin Avenue & Valley Drive
6. **TOWN/CITY/BOROUGH:** Syracuse, NY
7. **SUMMONS:** None
8. **BUS NUMBER:** 9972  
8a. **YEAR:** 1999  
8b. **MAKE:** Orion
9. **NUMBER OF INJURIES:** 0  
10. **FATALITIES:** 0
11. **HOURS OF SERVICE:** Not Related
12. **SYNOPSIS:**

At approximately 8:50am, Central New York Regional Transportation Authority (CENTRO) bus #9972 was traveling eastbound on Dorwin Avenue, approaching the intersection of Valley Drive, when the bus operator was informed by a vehicle operator who was following the bus that there was a problem in the rear of his bus. The bus operator noticed smoke and flames coming from the upper left rear of the bus’s air conditioning (A/C) compartment. The bus operator stopped, secured the bus, and evacuated one passenger. The bus operator grabbed the onboard fire extinguisher and extinguished the flames in the upper A/C compartment. The bus operator and one passenger claimed no injuries. The Syracuse Fire Department responded to the scene. The bus was towed to CENTRO maintenance facility and secured.

The environment did not play a role in this incident.

Bus #9972 is a 1999 Orion transit type bus with a seating capacity of forty four passengers. Preventive Maintenance Inspections (PMI) are conducted every 4 months or 6,000 miles in accordance with the System Safety Program Plan and the manufacturer’s recommended service intervals. The most recent PMI was completed on November 6, 2006 and the bus had traveled 2,225 miles at the time of the incident. There were no safety sensitive defects noted in the last sixty days maintenance records prior to the accident that were considered causative to the accident. A post accident inspection of bus #9972 was conducted by NYSDOT motor vehicle inspector and CENTRO fleet manager of maintenance. The inspection revealed that it is most likely that the fire started at the battery stud nut which appeared to be loose and caused excessively high amperage, which shorted out the wire harness leading to the four solenoids that control the hi/low speed for the condenser and the evaporator motors. Bus #9972 is equipped with a fire suppression system.

The bus operator was hired by CENTRO on June 17, 1991 and completed it’s standard new bus operator training program. A review of the driver’s New York State Department of Motor Vehicle’s records showed no violations or suspensions. New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law, Article 19-A records were complete and up-to-date.
A review of the driver's CENTRO record for the last three years revealed two preventable accidents; one on 11/4/2005 (bus struck pedestrian, suspended 51/2 days), and on 10/16/2006 (right side mirror struck telephone pole, written warning). A post accident drug and alcohol test was not administered to the bus operator due to the nature of the incident.

In an interview, the operator stated that he was traveling eastbound on Dorwin Avenue, approaching the intersection of Valley Drive when the driver of a car that was following the bus motioned to the bus operator that there was a problem at the rear of his bus. The bus operator said he noticed smoke and flames coming from the upper left rear of the buses air conditioning compartment. The bus operator stopped, secured the bus and evacuated one passenger. The bus operator stated he grabbed the onboard fire extinguisher and extinguished the flames in the upper A/C compartment.

In response, CENTRO maintenance department implemented a fleet wide campaign to check fleet vehicles with the same wiring configuration on 101 buses which began January 12, 2007 and completed the campaign January 22, 2007. Of the 101 buses all battery terminal studs were cleaned, reconnected and torqued. The bus fire which occurred on January 12, 2007 was found to be an isolated incident.

All CENTRO maintenance personnel have been instructed to include, at each six month HAVC inspection interval, a check of the battery terminal stud nut and the wiring harness as stated in their procedures and the System Safety Program Plan (Appendix G, H Inspection).

The Public Transportation Safety Board staff finds that the most probable cause of the bus fire was the loose battery stud nut which caused high amperage and in turn, shorted out the wiring harness leading to the four solenoids.

CENTRO reviewed the accident on January 17, 2007, and found it to be non-preventable.

Based on the actions taken by CENTRO in this case, the Public Transportation Safety Board staff makes no further recommendations.

INVESTIGATOR: M. F. Gluskin

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CHIEF, ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION SECTION   DATE

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DIRECTOR, PCSB, NYS DOT   DATE