

(2) (i) In DORCHESTER, Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties, unless it fails to meet the applicable school bus and motor vehicle safety standards, a school vehicle may be operated for 15 years.

(ii) A school vehicle operating under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph shall be maintained as provided in subsection (c) of this section.

(3) Any school vehicle in operation or accepted before July 1, 2004, or under contract to be purchased before July 1, 2004, that meets the specifications of the Department and of the Motor Vehicle Administration for transit style school vehicles may be operated for 15 years.

(c) Notwithstanding the 12-year limitation in subsection (b)(1) of this section, a school vehicle may be operated for additional years if:

(1) The school vehicle is maintained under a preventive maintenance plan approved by the Motor Vehicle Administration and the Automotive Safety Enforcement Division of the Department of State Police that includes an inspection at the end of the 12th year and a minimum of 2 inspections by the Motor Vehicle Administration each year thereafter;

(2) Any structural repairs to the school vehicle necessitated by accident, metal fatigue, or any other cause are certified by an independent expert approved by the Motor Vehicle Administration to meet or exceed the manufacturer's original manufacturing standards;

(3) The school vehicle is equipped with:

(i) The body originally placed on the chassis by the manufacturer;

(ii) An 8 light warning system;

(iii) A left side stop arm;

(iv) A fire-retardant driver's seat;

(v) Fire-retardant barriers in the case of a school vehicle with a front engine; and

(vi) A fire-retardant rear seating area in the case of a school vehicle with a rear engine; and

(4) The State Superintendent grants approval.