

Don't get buried Tips for keeping paperwork under control

If there is one constant in a pupil transportation office, it is the reams of daily paperwork that need constant attention.

You know the drill: Forms that need to be filled out, initialed, filed, updated, copied or mailed to a multitude of federal and state agencies.

By the end of the week, your In Box is no doubt full of training materials, course completion forms, physical examinations, inspection reports, accident reports, drug testing results and fingerprint transmittals and more.

"This job would be almost manageable, if it weren't for all the paperwork," said Pete James, director of the Chautauqua Transportation Service and a NYAPT past president. "If there is one thing that can trip you up, it is managing the mounds of paper."

Transportation officials are required to prepare, submit and retain key documents for state, federal and local agencies. Not only must they update and keep voluminous records, they must be able to access them at a moment's notice.

"When an inspector comes out to conduct the semi-annual inspection, he doesn't want to search in the 19-A files for what he needs. You should have all the required paperwork in order and current," James told attendees of the NYAPT Winter Workshop in February.

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▶ Missing or misfiled forms could cause a transportation office to fail a state DOT inspection. It is essential that required paperwork be handled quickly and efficiently, says Pete James. James is the director of the Chautauqua Transportation Service and a NYAPT past president.

Desk/Office Organization 101

Messy desks can be found in almost every place of business. Organizing your workspace can greatly improve how efficiently you manage your paperwork. Keep your desk clean and set up trays or folders for the different types of information you receive. For example, create separate bins for forms that need to be completed or initialed, notices from state agencies and papers waiting to be filed.

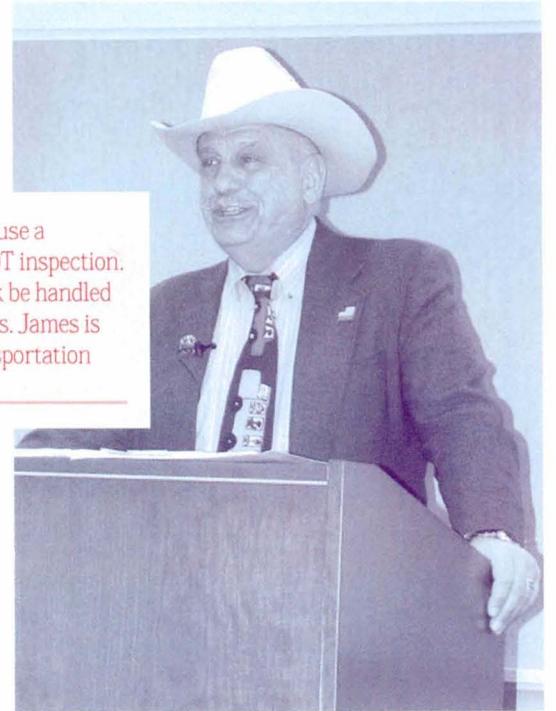
Arrange your office to maximize your working style. If you need to access certain files frequently, move them closer to your desk. You should have a workspace that is comfortable, practical and efficient.

File Effectively

Poor filing systems waste time and slow work. Try to streamline your filing system and keep it simple. It should be understandable even to those who do not use it regularly.

James offered the following tips to keep your filing system organized:

- The information that is used the most should be the most accessible.
- Documentation should be close to, or in the area where it is used.
- Establish a shelf life for each of the different types of files you keep.



- Throw away paperwork, or move it to dead files, when it is no longer relevant. Do not hold it indefinitely, because that can clog the system.
- Keep records of who maintains files and where they can be located.

Through years of trial and error, the Chautauqua Transportation Service has created a filing system that works efficiently. For a glimpse into how that system works, see Page 5.

Staying on top of deadlines

It is not an easy task to keep each file current and complete. James recommends creating standard reminder checklists to keep track of required forms, procedures and due dates. Put a copy of the checklist in each file or in a binder you keep on your desk.

For example, a checklist for a new school bus driver could include:

- A list of the forms required by NYSDMV, NYSDOT, NYSED and USDOT;
- A list of supporting documents;
- The required training certificates;

- All needed road test examinations;
- The physical examination forms;
- Required district approvals (i.e. a superintendents signature);
- Drug testing results;
- The DMV qualification letter;
- Fingerprint cards;
- CDL information (license classification, endorsements, restrictions and expiration date); and
- Any required information specific to your district.

In addition to the new school bus driver checklist, Chautauqua Transportation Service has developed checklists for:

- Post-accident requirements;
- Maintaining school bus driver qualifications (annual and bi-annual requirements);
- Qualifying new school bus attendants/monitors; and
- Maintaining school bus attendant/monitor qualifications (annual and bi-annual requirements).

“The most important thing to remember is that you must know and remain current with the laws and regulations,” James said. “It is your responsibility to stay updated.”

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Efficient filing, the Chautauqua Transportation Service way

The Chautauqua Transportation Service keeps all paperwork relating to DMV 19A requirements for each individual driver in an expanding accordion six-pocket file folder.

Pocket 1: DS-870 application, approvals, disqualifications, re-qualifications, drop/add notices and any other paper work that relates to 19A qualifications;

Pocket 2: Abstracts with DS-872 Interviews;

Pocket 3: DS-873 Defensive Driving Reviews;

Pocket 4: DS-874 Physical/Medical Reports;

Pocket 5: DS-875 Behind-the-Wheel; and

Pocket 6: DS-875Q/DS-875Y Written Exam.

For each driver, CTS also keeps a hanging file with three tabbed file folders.

FILE 1:

- SED Training Certificates
 - Pre-service
 - Basic
 - Refresher
 - Advanced
- Other Training and Certificates

FILE 2:

- USDOT drug/alcohol testing forms
- SED PPT forms
- NYSDOT 9A certification forms
- Accident reports

FILE 3:

- Employment applications
- SED character reference forms
- SED superintendent approval forms

CTS stores “dead files” or outdated materials in manila envelopes, such as 19A recorders that are older than the two cycles required for an audit. He recommends moving records from active files to dead files every four to five years.