



Stainless Steel Exhaust

Service Notice #16-05



Just because you see rust...doesn't mean it's not stainless steel

Exhaust on school buses has always been an issue in New York state due to the rigors of the winter combined with the chemicals used on the road to combat snow and ice. New York Bus Sales has for the past few years been selling and installing stainless steel exhaust as an option on new units. We went to the exhaust people in the industry and were told that using t304 grade stainless was preferred...but it also came with a relatively high price when compared to the mild steel or aluminized which was our standard offering.

Generally, regular steel becomes stainless when chromium is added to it. Chromium is an element that allows it to produce a filmy texture. This film serves as a buffer that prevents corrosion and even scratches and cuts. The more chromium added to steel, the more “stainless” it becomes. This means that it becomes even more resistant to corrosion or oxidation. The addition of nickel content to the steel also enhances its resistance.

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The 2 main stainless steel production grades are t304 and t409. Obviously, stainless steel products that do not stain with rust are higher grade “t304” (often referred to as “Medical Grade”) while those that stain and turn rusty have less chromium and nickel content are t409 stainless steel. The t304 system is more expensive because it is made to be more durable and it is a higher quality of stainless steel. The difference between t304 and t409 stainless steel lies in their chromium content. T304 has more chromium than t409, between 18% to 20%. It also has a nickel content between 8% to 10%. T409 has chromium content of 10.50% to 11.75%. Its nickel content is only 0.50%. Because t304 has so much chromium and nickel content and very little ferrous (presence of iron) material, magnets will not stick to it, whereas magnets will stick to t409 as its ferrous material is higher. While t304 grade is a much higher quality, t409 while prone to surface corrosion, is very resistant to “rust through.”

Blue Bird choose to go with t409 grade stainless steel exhaust offering to keep the price of the upgrade reasonable. As stated this will attract a magnet and you will see rust "staining" but it is much more resistant to rust deterioration. New York Bus Sales will continue to offer the t304 grade as an “In-Shop” option.

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