

## Tragic Bus Wreck Highlights Need for Legal Worker Programs

### *Bus that crashed was not associated with the H-2A Program*

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**Lacey, WA** - On early Tuesday morning, a serious bus accident occurred on Highway 99 between Merced and Turlock in California's central valley. The California Highway Patrol said that a white charter bus carrying 30 people struck a highway sign pole, and there were at least five fatalities at the scene. The bus is registered to Autobuses Coordinados USA Inc., of East Los Angeles, according to the California Department of Motor Vehicles.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and all those affected by this tragedy. While details about the accident remain subject to investigation, we can confirm that the occupants of the bus were not H-2A guest workers nor was the bus associated with any H-2A or wafla program," said Dan Fazio, wafla Executive Director.

Other reports were that this bus was operated by a company that caters to Hispanic customers and provides scheduled bus services from California to Washington state.

Wafla does not work with the company involved in this tragic crash. Wafla uses data provided by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to screen and monitor the charter bus companies we hire. FMCSA is a federal agency who regulates charter buses and provides safety records to consumers and associations like wafla. Wafla has had an accident-free driving record for its buses since their H-2A program's inception in 2007.

Wafla members have embraced the H-2A legal worker program, which requires employers to transport workers from home – whether it is California or Mexico - to the farm. The legal worker program is a vast improvement from days gone by when workers crossed the border themselves or paid coyotes to smuggle them across the border and traveled north in personal vehicles, often sleeping in cars or fields. In the wake of this tragedy, wafla will explore ways to further increase worker safety and thus better serve our farmer members who rely on seasonal workers.

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