



**BOSTON --** Are those cheap rides to New York and back a risky ride? Team 5 Investigates went under cover.

NewsCenter 5's Sean Kelly reported Wednesday that when a Fung Wah bus rolled over in September, NewsCenter 5 was first to report that the company's safety record was among the worst in the industry.

But something else that happened that day made us dig deeper. State police cited the driver of the second Fung Wah bus that arrived to pick up stranded passengers because the driver could not speak English.

Kelly got in line, in New York City, under cover with \$15 one-way tickets to Boston. The driver checked the engine before leaving, and NewsCenter 5 checked to see if he could speak conversational English. It's a law that federal regulators said Fung Wah hasn't been following.

Immediately, Kelly noticed a language barrier. Later, Kelly tried to make casual conversation with the driver during a 10-minute break in the trip. The driver struggled with simple questions about how long he's been driving and if he knew the driver of September's Fung Wah bus rollover in Auburn, Mass.

Kelly had as much trouble understanding him as he did Kelly. Once the bus arrived at Boston's South Station, Kelly's questions were more direct.

"I'm a reporter with Channel 5 here in town. I want to know if you think you know enough English to get people off this bus if there was ever an emergency?" Kelly said. He didn't appear to understand.

"I want to know if you think the driver knows enough English to direct people off this bus," Kelley said to a woman the driver directed him to.

Fung Wah's owner never responded to NewsCenter 5's repeated requests for an interview. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration fined the bus company more than \$31,000 after September's crash, in part, for letting non-English speaking drivers carry its passengers. The driver sent to pick up the remaining passengers that day could not speak English, so police called in another company.

Fung Wah recently hired a transportation consultant to get them back on course. "There were some language issues and, maybe, not a complete understanding of the regulations but whatever the reason, the regulations must be met and they're very aware of that," said Fung Wah consultant Joe Mokrisky.

Fung Wah isn't the only violator.

In the last 18 months, Massachusetts State Police cited drivers from three of the cheap trip bus companies because they couldn't answer basic inquiries in English.

Language didn't cause a problem last year when a Fung Wah driver safely got passengers off a bus before it caught fire.

But back in 2001, it was a Kristine Travel bus driver at the wheel during a terrible crash in Nova Scotia. Four middle school students from Newton, Mass., died. The driver needed an interpreter to talk with police. His wife said he didn't speak English.

"If you're a passenger on a bus, you need to know that if there's an emergency that the driver there is qualified and has the knowledge to instruct you what to do in case of an emergency," Mokrisky said.

Team 5 tracked down what could be part of the problem.

In the past 18 months, every single bus driver cited in Massachusetts for not speaking English got their commercial driver's license in New York -- a state that offers the CDL test in foreign languages.

"It does frustrate me if Massachusetts citizens are in jeopardy, and in this case, especially where there was a crash, that's a problem," Massachusetts Registrar Anne Collins said.

Massachusetts offers the test in English only. They say it's the only way to prove drivers can speak enough English to keep you safe.

The language barrier isn't the only problem. On the rainy Friday that Team 5 investigates went under cover, the Fung Wah driver to New York wore no seatbelt and sped well over a 50 mph limit for buses.

Fung Wah's new consultant said that he will take the results of NewsCenter 5's undercover investigation to the company's drivers. He's holding his first meeting with them on Friday.