



Utica National Insurance Risk Management Department Bulletin

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Two deadly crashes late last year involving 15-passenger vans bear grim reminder to the safety issues involved with these vans, specifically their incidence of single-vehicle, roll-over crashes, which tragically occur more frequently when the vans are full and experience a tire blowout at interstate speeds.

If your religious institution is still using a 12- or 15-passenger van, you need to be aware that officials from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) recently sent a letter to all 50 states' motor vehicle administrators to remind them that 12- or 15-passenger vans should not be used to transport students because "they do not provide the same level of safety as school buses meeting NHTSA's safety standards." They also remind DMV commissioners that federal law *prohibits* the sale or lease of a new 12- or 15-passenger van if it will be used to transport students.

Even if you are transporting adults and not children using a 12- or 15-passenger van, you may want to consider either taking the vehicle out of service or, if this is not possible at this time, employing some *very strict* risk management protocols to minimize the likelihood of a tragic accident.

Some of these practices include:


- Tire replacement – and not just when they are worn. Don't allow tires on the vehicle to become too old (*even spare tires deteriorate with age*);
- Experienced drivers only – allow *only* an experienced driver to operate the vehicle;
- Speed – stay at or *under* the posted speed, allow extra space in congested stretches of traffic and be sure to take roadway conditions and weather into consideration;
- Second axle rule – do not fill the vehicle to capacity and keep the majority of the load (people and cargo) *in front of* the rear axle.

Again, if it is impossible to replace these vans at this time, please visit the Web site of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for more information:

<http://www.safercar.gov/Vehicle+Shoppers/Passenger+Van+Safety>

For additional assistance, please contact your local Utica National Risk Management Specialist.

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