

**VIRLINA DISTRICT BOARD - CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN, INC.**  
**SAFETY POLICY REGARDING DISTRICT OWNED VANS**

**Updated October 2016**

**[with OMC suggested edits in brackets 04/01/2017]**

Many churches own 15-passenger vans, and most use them exclusively to transport children and adults on church-approved trips. The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration has warned that the rollover rate of 15-passenger vans increases significantly with 10 or more occupants.

Why are 15-passenger vans dangerous?

- The rollover rate increases dramatically during emergency maneuvers, such as panic response to a tire blowout.
- Most drivers do not have a commercial driver's license and have received no formal training on the use of such vehicles.
- The side windows of 15-passenger vans before 2008 were made of tempered, not laminated glass, which is far less likely to keep occupants from being ejected in an accident.
- Nearly 80% of those killed in 15-passenger van rollovers in 2000 were not wearing seatbelts.
- They lack many of the basic safety requirements for school buses.

## **I. REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. Vehicle**

1. Tires should be inspected before each use for wear and proper inflation. Worn or improperly inflated tires increase the risk of a blowout. 57% of 15-passenger vans have, at least, one significantly under-inflated tire.

Tires should:

- (1) Be load range "E" or higher.
  - (2) Be less than 5 years old by the date code [or pass inspection within 1 month of use].
  - (3) Show no irregular wear patterns.
  - (4) Have the correct pressure according to the tire manufacturer.
  - (5) Have pressure monitors. (Can be added if not factory installed.)
2. Each occupant is required to wear a seat belt at all times. There is never an exception to wearing a seatbelt. It is the #1 thing that churches can do to reduce the fatalities associated with a 15-passenger van rollover. (NOTE: 80% of the people killed in rollover crashes in 15-passenger vans over the last decade were unbelted.)
  3. Load occupants and luggage from the front to rear of the van.
  4. If not a 2006 [2005] or newer extended wheelbase van [such as a Chevy Express Van or Ford Transit], remove the rear-most seat and allow no more than 11 passengers, including the driver. [2005 was the first year for extended wheelbase vans to have stability control.]
  5. Absolutely nothing should be loaded on the van roof.
  6. Van maintenance should be performed according to the manufacturer's schedule by a professional technician. One person should be responsible for keeping a logbook of maintenance performed. Copies of the logbook should be kept in the van and in the church office.
  7. Prohibit the towing of multi-axle trailers or another vehicle. No towing in excess of the rated capacity of the van.

### **B. Drivers**

1. Drivers should be at least 21 years of age.
2. Drivers must obtain a record of their driving from the State Division of Motor Vehicles and present it to the church.
3. All drivers carrying more than five passengers are required to complete specific training on the use of fifteen passenger vans. A current CDL is [also] acceptable. Drivers can also receive this training from one of several organizations offering training courses. The Virlina District sponsors an online course through ARI – contact the District Office for details.
4. Drivers are responsible to see that all passengers are using seatbelts anytime the van is in operation.
5. Drivers should be well rested, observe posted speed limits and drive cautiously (maintain a speed that is safe under the conditions, and be especially careful on rural and curved roads).
6. Drivers should be prohibited from driving for more than eight hours in any twenty-four-hour period (unless a shorter limitation is provided under an applicable law or regulation).
7. More than one qualified driver should be used on trips of over 4 hours and rotated [or rested] accordingly.

8. Drivers should not use cellular phones while operating the vehicle. However, a fully charged cell phone should be on board for use in emergencies.
9. Use of sedating prescriptions or over-the-counter antihistamines (or other medication) by the driver should be strictly prohibited.
10. Drivers should have a list of emergency phone numbers. This emergency phone list should include numbers for:
  - State police or local police
  - Church or owner of vehicle
  - Pastor
  - Church Board Chair
  - Insurance company

## II. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Each church that has a 15-passenger van immediately develop a policy regarding use of the van and require all drivers to be approved pursuant to church policy.
2. If possible, select at least 2 individuals who will receive the proper training and will serve as regular drivers.
3. Drivers must have the appropriate class of license, and the church should conduct a check of each driver's record for traffic offenses or license restrictions to determine if the driver is suitable. This should be updated annually.
4. Have the policy statement on van use reviewed by the church's insurance company and attorney (if appropriate) and approved by the Church Board.
5. The policy statement should be posted in the van and given to each driver before departing. Each driver should sign a statement indicating that the van policy statement was received, read and will be adhered to.
6. Try to not use van after 12:00 midnight and before 6:00 A.M. Overnight trips should be an option only if a professional transportation company is used that provides both the vehicle and the driver.
7. When purchasing a new 15-passenger van, consider 2006 **[2005]** or newer extended wheelbase models with laminated side glass, tire pressure monitoring systems and Stability Control.
8. Vans owned or rented by the church should be used only for activities that have been authorized by the Church Board.
9. A reverse beeper should be installed, or horn used, when backing.
10. When children are transported, an adult other than the driver accompany them to maintain discipline. This reduces the number of children that can be carried by one.
11. Hang the attached tag from the van's rearview mirror. Copies can be obtained from -----
12. **[When children are transported, we recommend a voluntary drug screening for the driver.]**

This document updated by Marc Wilson, Disaster Response Van Coordinator October 2016. The following page lists some summary information and resources:

See this link for printable safety documents: <http://www.safercar.gov/Vehicle-Shoppers/Passenger-Van-Safety>

See this link for Tire-specific information: <http://www.safercar.gov/tires/index.html>

Insurance related info: <http://www.brotherhoodmutual.com/index.cfm/resources/ministry-safety/article/van-accidents-spur-safety-focus/>

Info from The American Automobile Association: [http://exchange.aaa.com/safety/roadway-safety/passenger-van-safety/#.V-5TF\\_X6t9M](http://exchange.aaa.com/safety/roadway-safety/passenger-van-safety/#.V-5TF_X6t9M)

Excellent 15 passenger online training information: [http://www.safetyworksmaine.gov/training/online\\_classes/15passvan.pdf](http://www.safetyworksmaine.gov/training/online_classes/15passvan.pdf)

See section IX for van safety recommendations:

[http://www.brethren.org/bdm/files/checklist\\_for\\_a\\_church\\_emergency\\_management\\_plan.pdf](http://www.brethren.org/bdm/files/checklist_for_a_church_emergency_management_plan.pdf)