

BUS/VAN MINISTRY

The church bus/van ministry program can be a rewarding ministry for the church as an extension of the church into the community. It can also present some serious problems if not properly supervised and controlled. These suggestions are given to maintain a safe and successful bus/van ministry program. They are not designed to influence a decision on whether or not to have a bus/van ministry.

Driver Selection

Driver selection is the **number one** task in the development of a successful bus/van program. Up to 90 percent of all bus/van accidents result, at least in part, from driver error. Drivers should be mature, responsible and in excellent physical and mental condition. A flawless personal driving record is very important — no tickets, no violations — and the driver should demonstrate extreme dedication to safe driving.

All potential drivers need to be screened by the bus/van committee to make certain that proper driving tests have been passed with current driving credentials in hand. Van and bus drivers are required to have a **commercial drivers license (CDL)** if they operate vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating of **more than 26,000 pounds** or vehicles designed to transport **more than fifteen (15) persons including the driver**. A few major considerations for drivers are:

AGE — 25 to 65 only.

GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION — Physician's report.

EXPERIENCE — Reference check and road test.

LICENSE — Proper licensing credentials.

DRIVING RECORD — Motor vehicle record checked annually.

ATTITUDE — Capable of dealing with traffic, passengers and emergencies.

NO ONE SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO DRIVE A CHURCH VEHICLE IF THE PERSON HAS TWO MOVING VIOLATIONS OR ONE "AT FAULT" ACCIDENT IN THE PAST 36 MONTHS. THERE SHOULD BE NO EXCEPTIONS.

Vehicle Maintenance

Make sure the bus/van complies with the Kansas or Nebraska requirements for lights, equipment and color. Each bus/van must be given a thorough mechanical and physical inspection by a qualified mechanic prior to operation. The checklist needs to include but is not restricted to the chassis, all lights, body exhaust systems, interior, brakes, tires and steering.

Pre-Trip Inspection

Each time a vehicle is used, the following should be checked: fluid levels, belts, tires, exhaust, lights, brakes, and the interior of the bus.

Safety Equipment

Fire extinguisher, first aid kit, flags, flares, fuses and triangular signs must be carried in the vehicle at all times.

Speed Limit

Be sure the driver is aware of the laws of all states governing the speeds on streets and highways where the bus/van will be operated.

Supervision of Passengers

Control of occupants must include taking action to protect passengers who exit the bus/van. Check to make sure all passengers are safely away from the vehicle before starting up again. **Do not** exceed bus/van passenger limits.

Children aboard a church bus/van must be adequately supervised — check local and state regulations. The driver cannot assist in supervising the passengers and adequately operate the vehicle at the same time.

Church Policy

Each time a vehicle is used, its use must be in compliance with policies and regulations set forth and adopted by the church.

Insurance

Bodily injury and property damage limits should normally exceed state minimum requirements. Limits should be high enough to safeguard the church against financial disaster due to inadequate limits.

Registration with Federal Highway Administration

Some church vehicles and drivers are subject to federal regulations. These regulations require churches to register with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), meet driver qualification standards, and complete annual vehicle inspections, if they: (1) use a vehicle designed to carry more than fifteen passengers (including the driver) or the vehicle is greater than 10,000 pounds, and (2) transport passengers interstate (across state lines).

Even if passengers are not transported across state lines, churches may be subject to similar state regulations. For more information, call the FHWA division office as follows:

Kansas:	Topeka, KS	(785) 267-7288
Nebraska:	Lincoln, NE	(402) 437-5521