



DIOCESE OF TUCSON RISK MANAGEMENT ADVISORY

January 2010

As of July 1, 2010, Vans built upon these chassis; whether 10, 11, 12, or 15 passenger vans; or utilized as cargo, maintenance, or work vans will not be insured through the Diocesan insurance plan.

Ford E-150, 250, 350



Chevrolet Express 1500, 2500, 3500



Dodge Ram B1500, 2500, 3500



The above pictures are common samples. Other models built on 15-passenger chassis from these manufacturers or other car manufacturers in any model year will also not be covered.

DO NOT PURCHASE, RENT, LEASE OR USE 15-PASSENGER VANS OR MODIFIED 15-PASSENGER VANS TO TRANSPORT PEOPLE OF ANY AGE

To: All Pastors, Pastoral Administrators, and Principals, Religious Education Directors
Subject: School/Religious Education Transportation Vans/15-Passenger Vans

There have been more accidents involving 15- passenger vans which has prompted me to resend this advisory. I have included articles of two such incidents. Please read them and then my memo below.

Arizona 15-passenger Van Rollover Accident Leaves Two Dead

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Two people are dead and two are critically injured after a 15-passenger van rollover accident Sept. 12 on Interstate 10 near Benson, Arizona. According to an [Associated Press news report](#), the multi vehicle crash happened when the 15-passenger Dodge van lost control and overturned after its driver swerved to avoid a dog on the highway.

Two people -- Richard Spettigue, 56, of Casa Grande and Brandon Spettigue, 22, of Surprise – who were following the van in an Acura sport utility vehicle died after a big rig hit them from behind. The SUV braked to avoid the passenger van. The van's driver, 47-year-old Elizabeth Zazueta and cheerleader Tyler Cline, 16, both suffered critical injuries. Other passengers in the Dodge van including seven students and two coaches were also injured and taken to an area hospital. The students were all from San Manuel High School near Tucson. Sally Spettigue, 41 the driver of the SUV and a passenger in the big rig were also hospitalized.

It is unbelievable that high school administrators would put their beloved students and coaches in a 15-passenger van, notorious for its tendency to roll over and cause catastrophic injuries and fatalities. Despite repeated warnings from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, community groups and organizations, high schools, colleges and even child care centers continue to transport groups of people in these "death traps."

NHTSA's research shows that there is a significant rollover risk in 15-passenger vans when the van is fully loaded. In 2006, 50 percent of occupant fatalities that occurred were in vans that were fully loaded. Other factors that usually contribute to 15-passenger van rollover crashes include improperly inflated tires, defective tires and inexperienced drivers.

At least 8 hurt in church van rollover west of Buckeye

06:20 PM Mountain Standard Time on Sunday, October 19, 2008

azfamily.com

BUCKEYE – At least 8 people from a church group were injured after a van rollover.

It happened just before 3 p.m. on Sunday near Baseline Road and Palo Verde Road just west of the town of Buckeye and south of Interstate 10.

According to church members, there were 13 passengers on board, among them teenagers and children. It appears a blown tire may have caused the van to roll.

Most on board suffered cuts, bruises, and scratches although two individuals were transported to the hospital with serious injuries.

The group was reportedly traveling eastbound on Baseline Road near Palo Verde heading towards Buckeye before the wreck. They were reportedly returning from Tonopah church service. A pastor who was driving was uninjured but shaken up.

Many of you have inquired about the use of 15-Passenger Vans for the transportation of students. These vans are not safe for transporting students or parishioners. **In fact, our insurance company, The Ordinary Mutual, will no longer insure any existing vans built upon a 15-passenger chassis in your fleet beginning July 1, 2010 for transportation of anybody or even to use as a work or cargo van. Furthermore if you are contemplating purchasing, leasing, or renting a new or used 15-passenger van, it will not be insured.**

The Federal Government and the Arizona Department of Public Safety do not recommend these vans for transporting students (Please see link below). In fact it is illegal for dealerships to sell or lease vans for the transportation of 11 or more students. Some dealerships have gone as far as removing one row of seats to reduce the seating capacity to make them 10 and 12 passenger vans. They may have a lesser seating capacity, however they are built on the same chassis as 15-passenger vans. Even though, you are transporting only 10 or 12 students, the back of the vans may be loaded with equipment causing a variance in the center of gravity. The change in center of gravity affects the handling of the vehicle, which has been the cause of many roll-over accidents.

For the safe transportation of students, the Diocese of Tucson recommends utilizing federally approved buses. Though busses in the short-term may cost more, safe transportation of students always takes precedence over finances. National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services states the following:

The State Directors Association believes that it is appropriate to require higher levels of safety in vehicles that transport children to and from school and school-related activities. Accordingly, the State Directors Association supports the position that school children should be transported in school buses which provide the highest levels of safety, not in 12- and 15-passenger vans which do not meet the stringent school bus safety standards issued by the Federal government and recommended by the National Conference on School Transportation, an organization of state school transportation officials.

I have also included the following link to the Arizona Department of Public Safety regarding this topic:

[Arizona Department of Public Safety - Student Transportation](#)