PASSENGER VANS—HAS ANYTHING CHANGED?

There are a few requirements for a school bus, cannot be used to transport students to and from home and school. It may only be used for activity transportation such as: field trips, athletic events, etc. MFSAB does not require the driver to have a CDL (commercial driver’s license) if the seating capacity is under 15. If the traditional school bus is used, no matter what the seating capacity, a CDL is required for those driving the bus. Driving the MFSAB is an alternative to school buses because a CDL is not necessarily required. One question we frequently receive is: “How can I tell if this bus is a MFSAB?”

The manufacturer must sell a sticker or placard to the inside driver’s door or a conspicuous location, certifying the bus meets MFSAB standards. Providing a vehicle identification number (VIN) will not provide sufficient information. The VIN only provide information concerning the manufacturer, the make and chassis, and not the passenger body. This must be provided by the bus body manufacturer. This is because major vehicle manufacturers, such as: Chevrolet, GMC, and Ford do not manufacture passenger bodies. This is accomplished by an aftermarket vendor that is certified to manufacture bus passenger compartments. When looking for an alternative to 11 to 15 passenger vans, there is a simple way to shop for an activity bus. Talk to a sales representative, let them know that you are looking for a MFSAB that complies with the following four (4) Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS):

1) FMVSS #111: Fuills the safety requirement for the rear view and cross view visibility
2) FMVSS #220: Establishes requirements for school bus body structure in roll-over accidents
3) FMVSS #221: Regulates the strength of body panel joints in school buses
4) FMVSS #222: Establishes occupant protection requirements for school bus passenger seating and barriers.

While still more expensive than the 11 to 15 passenger vans, the prices of the above vehicles are becoming more competitive. Also, due to the changes in federal and state rules, more of the activity buses are on the market and used ones are becoming available as well. What is of paramount importance is the safe transportation of our youth to their activities. As with any job, this is accomplished by using the right tools. In this case, the Multifunction School Activity Bus. As always, if you have any questions or need assistance, your Catholic Mutual Representative will be able to get you the answers you need.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

According to the Cellular Telecommunications & Internet Association, approximately 321.7 million people have a cell phone compared to an estimated 48.7 million in 1997. Approximately 184.3 billion text messages are sent each month, increasing versus 12 million in 1997. With ever increasing demands on our personal and professional time in today’s busy society, learning to juggle multiple tasks at once is something we all face daily. As a result, a traffic safety epidemic has emerged on America’s roadways that demands immediate attention: distracted driving.

In 2010, 3,092 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver. One of the most alarming and widespread forms of distracted driving is cell phone usage. According to a Carnegie Mellon study, driving while talking on a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent. This is true even with the use of hands-free devices! A report from the National Safety Council found that more than one out of every four traffic accidents is caused by people talking on cell phones or sending text messages.

Text messaging is of heightened concern because it combines three types of distraction: visual, manual and cognitive. In other words, texting involves taking your eyes off the road, your hands off the wheel, and your mind off the task of driving. To tackle this ever-increasing problem, NHTSA is focusing on ways to change the behavior of drivers through legislation, enforcement, public awareness, and education.

Several states currently ban the use of handheld cell phones while driving, and many states are contemplating certain measures to address this issue. While state laws do not specifically address employer liability, there are unique exposures created for employers who have employees in cell phone related accidents. In one case, $2 million in damages were awarded to a child’s family after an employee hit and killed the child. The family sued the employee’s company after cell phone records re- vealed the employee was talking to a client at the time of the crash. The church is not immune to employer-related liability suits. Consideration should be given to the implementation of sound workplace policies which prohibit the use of cell phone or similar devices for business purposes while driving. As responsible individuals, we should take to heart the case studies and statistics on our personal responsibility. For more information about your state requirements, you may visit the Governor’s Highway Safety Association at www.statehighwaysafety.org.
Catholic schools take great pride in the safe, caring environments provided to their students. However, recent events serve as a reminder that wide-scale violent acts can occur anywhere, at any time. Catholic schools are not immune from this type of violence. The following guidelines should be followed to ensure your students, faculty and staff are kept safe.

Monitored Entrances
All secondary entrance doors to the building should remain locked. The main entrance to the school should be monitored at all times by qualified personnel or a buzz-in system should be in place. When possible, security cameras are recommended at each entry point. All visitors are required to sign in/out at the main office and visitor badges should be provided. Staff members should be instructed to be on alert and use caution when spotting an unknown individual in the building not wearing a Visitor Badge.

Developing Lockdown Procedures
Schools are strongly encouraged to develop written lockdown procedures. In addition to having a plan, it is critical that the plan be put into practice with drills conducted on a regular basis.

Identifying Means of Communication
To begin, identify the system you wish to warn faculty, staff and students to lock down the school. A public address system that can be heard throughout the school is recommended. Test your communication system in each room of the building (include restrooms and lounges). Be sure your communication system can reach every area of the building, as well as the areas outside of the building where students or faculty may be present. Ideally, this would include any neighboring parish buildings.

In addition, the Principal and another designee should keep a group contact list on their mobile device to send a quick text message to the group such as “lockdown in place.” The contact list should include the pastor and other primary contacts.

Developing a Script
Use simple language to make emergency announcements. The Federal Emergency Management Agency discourages using codes and signals as these can be confusing, especially for substitute teachers, school visitors, or contractors.

Meet with Local First Responders
A positive, collaborative relationship with local first responders is critical. The school administration should be familiar and comfortable with the local law enforcement agencies and fire departments. The school should ensure that these first responders may be present during drills throughout the school year. The sight of law enforcement officials on school grounds may cause parents to be alarmed.

If the Assailant is in the Building
Take refuge in the nearest class room, office, or other room. If students are in the hall, bring them to a secure location.

Identifying Means of Communication
- Lock and/or barricade the door using whatever is available – desks, table, file cabinets, bookcases.
- After securing door, stay behind objects and away from door.
- If it is safe to do so, allow others to seek refuge with you.
- Reduce your vulnerability – Close blinds.
- Block windows.
- Silence cell phones.
- Keep people/students calm and quiet.
- After securing room, people should be positioned out of sight and behind items that might offer additional protection – walls, desks, file cabinets, etc.
- Take attendance to account for students and staff in your class.

Remain in lockdown and do not communicate with anyone at your door until you hear official instructions from a recognized administra- tor or law enforcement.

Confronting Assailant
Consideration should be given as part of your plan on whether to confront the assailant. Law enforce- ment has indicated in many instances, this can be successfully done. Be sure to work with your local law enforcement agency if this option is being considered.

Tales from the Catholic Mutual Loss Control Corner!
In September 2012, a Loss Control inspection was conducted at Holy Rosary Church in Bozeman, MT. This church had just completed a beautiful $5M renovation and addition. As part of the inspection and preventative maintenance, an electrical audit was completed and an infrared laser thermometer was used to scan all the electrical panels throughout the facility. Part of the renovation project was to install new electrical panels and wiring in the lower level of the church. Upon examination of the new panels, there was a group of 5 circuit breakers with evidence of excessive heat ranging from 124 degrees to 145 degrees. As you would assume, any panel emitting excessive heat at those temperatures would indicate a problem. The Loss Control Representative urged the parish to contact their electrical contractor immediately to address and correct the problem. Unfortunately, the electrical company representative was unavailable on this day. The parish employee was persistent and contacted the general contractor on the project requesting immediate action. Arranges- ments were made to have the electrical contractor come out the next day to inspect the breakers. The next morning, the electrical contractor was able to examine the panel and found an alarming problem. With the panel only being activated a few weeks earlier, one of the breakers was found to be extensively damaged with stains due to extreme heat. As seen on the connector portion of the breaker switch, the charring sug- gests it was moments away from failure and a potential catastrophic fire loss to this new $5M renovation and addition. Ironically, had the fire occurred inside the panel, the possibility of the other breakers tripping would likely occur. If so, this may have deactivated any alarm system notifying emergency services or, affected any fire sup- pression system. As a result, the diocese has asked all locations to purchase and utilize an infrared laser thermometer which was used in this event to detect the heat from these breakers. As part of your electrical preventive maintenance program, electrical panels should be examined frequently with an infrared thermometer to help reduce the poten- tial for major electrical failures and/or fire losses.