

## CATHOLIC UMBRELLA POOL II 10 to 15 Passenger Van Use Policy

Effective July 1, 2003, the Catholic Umbrella Pool II has adopted the following policies governing the use of 10 to 15 passenger vans (whether owned, leased, or borrowed).

- The use of non-owned (borrowed) or short-term leased 10 to 15 passenger vans to transport children or adults is prohibited beginning July 1, 2003.
- **The use of 10 to 15 passenger vans to transport children or adults is totally prohibited beginning July 1, 2004.** Beginning July 1, 2004, 10 to 15 passenger vans may be used for cargo hauling **only if** all but the two front seats are removed.
- Mini-vans may continue to be used to transport children or adults. A mini-van is defined as a passenger vehicle **designed** to transport no more than **8** total occupants.
- 10-15 passenger vans should be replaced with either a school bus or a Multifunction School Activity Bus (MFSAB). An MFSAB is a vehicle which complies with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) applicable to school buses for crash survivability and mirrors, but does not meet the FMVSS which applies to crash prevention (warning lamps, stop arms, etc.). If used for the transportation of children, these vehicles **must** meet FMVSS 111; FMVSS 220; FMVSS 221; and FMVSS 222. (see below). Catholic Umbrella Pool II recommends that these guidelines also be followed when selecting vehicles for adult transportation.

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When selecting a replacement vehicle for the 10 to 15 passenger vans, the following Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards **must** be included in the vehicle when used for the transportation of children:

FMVSS 111 – Fulfills the safety requirement for the rear-view and cross-view visibility.

FMVSS 220 – Establishes requirements for the school bus body structure in rollover accidents.

FMVSS 221 – Regulates the strength of body panel joints in school buses.

FMVSS 222 – Establishes occupant protection requirements for school bus passenger seating and barriers.

Catholic Umbrella Pool II also recommends that these standards be included in vehicles used for the transportation of adults.

## CATHOLIC MUTUAL'S 10 TO 15 PASSENGER VAN USE POLICY

Since 1999, the National Transportation Safety Board has issued a safety recommendation regarding the use of these vans and the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration has issued two safety advisories regarding the use of 10 to 15 passenger vans. Additionally, many states are issuing new transportation rules and regulations regarding the use of these vans.

Why are 10 to 15 passenger vans so dangerous? The experts say for many reasons, including the following:

- They are designed to carry cargo, **not people**, and so they do not comply with many of the basic safety requirements that apply to passenger cars or the stricter federal requirements that apply to school buses. For example, 10 to 15 passenger vans have fewer emergency exits (the back door is blocked by the back seat in many vans).
- They become top-heavy and prone to rollovers when fully loaded or occupied.
- 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 most 10 to 15 passenger vans are made of tempered, not laminated, glass. Tempered glass is much cheaper and since 10 to 15 passenger vans were designed to carry cargo rather than people, the vehicle manufacturers have tended to use tempered glass for side windows. The problem with tempered glass is that it is far less likely to keep occupants from being ejected in an accident than laminated glass, which contains a middle layer of plastic.
- The risk of rollover increases sharply when drivers make sudden maneuvers. This risk is quite common, since there are many conditions that may cause a driver to swerve suddenly, including something falling off a truck in front of the van, a person or animal darting out onto the street, or a tire blowout.

Many of the 10 to 15 passenger van accidents cited by the media and others involve children. Recent safety recommendations, advisories, rules, and regulations generally apply to the use of these vans to transport children. But the transportation of adults in 10 to 15 passenger vans is also potentially dangerous. While we certainly want to protect children from an inherent danger, we should also protect the adults from potential danger.