



Alternatives to 15-Passenger Vans

With the emphasis in the North American Division (NAD) to remove all use of 15-passenger vans, it is important to be knowledgeable about what vehicles are safe to use as replacement options. The good news is there are a variety of acceptable alternatives available!

The *NAD Working Policy* clearly prohibits the use of 15-passenger vans. Additionally, the policy provides direction regarding alternatives and included useful guidance in the policy voted Fall 2016. The updated policy offers the following alternatives to 15-passenger vans:

- Minivans
- SUVs
- Mini school buses
- 15-passenger buses with dual rear wheels

Why are these vehicles safer than 15-passenger vans?

Minivans and SUVs

Minivans and SUVs are more conventional, often used as private vehicles, and originally designed for passengers. Because of this, more drivers are familiar with the size of these vehicles and how they respond to braking. They carry fewer passengers at a time, which also controls the risk.

School Buses and 15-Passenger Buses

The mini school buses and 15-passenger buses are large

vehicles, but with dual rear wheels and a center aisle they are significantly more stable than a 15-passenger van. Drivers of these larger vehicles should be trained in their use and feel comfortable with their size and braking characteristics before operating them with passengers. Some jurisdictions require drivers to have a CDL (Commercial Driver's License) to operate these buses. If you are considering purchasing a bus, inquire with your local Motor Vehicle Administration to understand licensing regulations.

What about 12-passenger vans?

The NAD Working Policy does not specifically address 12-passenger vans, but caution is urged when considering this type of transportation. Be careful that you are not choosing a vehicle that is identical to a 15-passenger van aside from the seating configuration. There are a range of differences depending on the year, make, and manufacturer.

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Renting Vehicles

When renting a vehicle for your church or school activity, ask your conference for instructions regarding the choice and process of vehicle rental. Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM) recommends purchasing the offered insurance from the rental agency to protect your organization in the event of a loss.

A NOTE ON THE USE OF PERSONAL VEHICLES OR BORROWING VEHICLES

Remember: Auto insurance follows the vehicle.

This means the owner who lends their vehicle for your ministry's use needs to understand that they are responsible for any damage to their vehicle. Their liability insurance would respond first for any damage/injury caused by the accident (primary).

The church entity's coverage could respond to protect the organization, if needed. Discuss with your conference its guidelines and policy on the limits that should be in place when driving a personally owned vehicle on behalf of a church or school activity.

As church leaders, we must continue to oversee the removal of all 15-passenger vans from use. There are safer and less dangerous alternatives available. However, the removal of a 15-passenger van does not mean we can compromise on other risk management best practices. These standards include selection of drivers familiar with the vehicle they will drive, conducting regular maintenance, performance of pre-trip inspections, proper documentation and record-keeping, and valid insurance choices that protect the organization and meet the needs of the risks we face.

For more on best practices for vehicles, review [ARM's Transportation safety resources](#).

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