



The Road To
Safer Church
Transportation



BusGroup realizes that a church is not simply brick and mortar. A church is a body of believers who may gather in more than one place to worship, praise and spread the good word.

If your active church is planning a trip across the country or just across town, it is wise to plan with safety in mind. Remember, the keys to avoiding accidents are in the hands of both the driver and passenger.

The purpose of this booklet is to define some of the problems that can occur whether you're driving a group by car to a skating party in town, busing a choir to a performance miles away, or transporting a van full of campers to some remote location.

Outlined here are some steps you can take to avoid problems on the road. It is not intended to be a complete safety manual. We hope you'll combine the information inside with qualified driver education programs and your own good judgment to make traveling with your group as safe and enjoyable as possible.

May God grant you travel mercies,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Dunn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Doug Dunn
President
BusGroup

Move toward safety

Many of us don't realize the importance of taking safety precautions until it's too late. Each year, about 50,000 lives are lost in transportation-related accidents. Sadly, most of these accidents can be attributed to basic safety violations or to poor vehicle maintenance practices. Of course, there's no foolproof formula to ensure your group's safety on the road. But there are steps you can take to reduce the possibility of accidents.

Remember, this booklet is not to be used as a substitute for comprehensive driver training programs. But by following the tips in this booklet, you'll have a head start in keeping your church group activities accident free.

Safety is in the driver's hands.



The lives of your church group members should be entrusted only to the most capable drivers. So, drivers of church vehicles must be selected carefully. This checklist can be helpful in finding a driver with the best qualifications. We strongly suggest that you ask for and check references of all drivers.

GOOD

POOR

Attitude

Age (*minimum age of 21 is recommended*)

Driving Record

Experience (*references*)

Physical Condition (*physician's report*)

Possession of commercial drivers' license and experience operating larger vehicles (*if job entails driving a bus or large van*)

Driver education.

If you can ensure that your church vehicles are always controlled by a well-trained driver, the risks involved in transporting your church group will be dramatically reduced. Although you can't retrain every driver on the road, you can allow your drivers to make their mistakes in a classroom or on a practice drive – without the lives of your passengers at stake.

- Send your drivers to a qualified defensive driving training program.
- Several public agencies are approved by the National Safety Council to provide defensive driving instruction. Call or write the Council at 1121 Spring Lake Drive, Itasca IL 60143-3201. Telephone 630.285.1121. Website: www.nsc.org.
- If possible, engage drivers who are experienced with buses or larger vehicles.
- Contact your state's Department of Transportation (*or a similar agency*) for information on licensing and operational requirements in your state.

Taking care of church vehicles.



No matter if your group is planning to travel out of town or just a few blocks, your church bus, car, or van needs to be checked by the driver before each trip. Establish a maintenance routine for all church vehicles by using this checklist.

Before entering the vehicle

OK	Needs Work	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Look under your vehicle for fluid leaks.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check engine for loose wires, hose connections and belts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check oil level.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check coolant level.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check washer fluid level.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check battery.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check tires for tread wear and air pressure.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure wheel lugs are secure.

Inside the vehicle



With the transmission in neutral and the parking brake on, start the engine and allow it to warm up for the remainder of the inspection.

OK	Needs Work	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Listen for unusual engine noises.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check all gauges and warning lights, oil pressure, amp meter, temperature and fuel.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check all switches.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Test horn.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check fans and defrosters.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Test wipers and washers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check vents.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Examine the cleanliness and condition of interior – steps, floor, seats and seat belts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	On buses, check the operation of emergency door and buzzer light.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Move vehicle slightly and check brakes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check the holding power of the parking brake.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	With the help of an observer, check brake lights, signal lights, hazard warning lights and red flashers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check inside and outside mirrors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Make sure emergency equipment – fire extinguisher, flares and reflectors – is in place.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check first-aid kit.

Important: While the engine is running, recheck the exterior of the vehicle in the following areas:

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Look under the vehicle for fluid leaks.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Check tail pipe and check exhaust system for leaks and to ensure that exhaust pipe extends to bumper or beyond the side of the vehicle.

Remember . . .

A good vehicle maintenance program should include regular brake checks, thorough semi-annual inspections by a qualified mechanic and a continual review of the condition of each vehicle, especially the tires. Vehicle condition reports should be written by the driver after each trip to call attention to malfunctions or suspicions about possible problems.

Use of passenger vans as school buses.

Federal law prohibits dealers from selling or leasing a motor vehicle with a capacity of more than 10 persons for transporting students to and from school or a school-related activity unless the vehicle complies with the applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses. Some states also prohibit the use of such vehicles for school transportation. Whether your state does or does not prohibit their use, consider the safety of your pupils and the increased exposure to legal liability when selecting a vehicle.

Special alert regarding 15-passenger vans.

Insurance companies, such as Church Mutual, have seen an alarming number of serious and fatal accidents involving 15-passenger vans. Most have been initiated by tire blowouts. If you use these large vans, driver selection, seatbelt usage and frequent checks of tire tread wear and inflation are essential.

Responsibilities on the road.

Once it is determined that the vehicle is safe for travel, the driver's responsibility is to drive safely. The following tips can help drivers stay in control at all times.

Defensive driving.



The safety of your passengers depends on things the driver sees and does. Drivers should know what is happening in every direction. Remember the keys to defensive driving:

- Keep your eyes moving.
- Be courteous to other drivers.
- Use caution.
- Plan ahead.
- Maintain proper following distances.
- Be prepared for the unexpected.

Recognize human limitations

Even the best drivers have built-in limitations. And if you're driving a larger vehicle, you may be forced to drive with limited visibility to the rear. Obviously, you can't remove these limitations. But drivers can try to understand them and compensate for them.

Reaction time



Some people may react a little faster or slower than others, but on the average, drivers take one second to realize that a reaction must be taken. Remember that in one second your vehicle travels approximately 60 feet at 40 miles per hour.

Here are some things that may affect reaction time:

- Illness or fatigue.
- Highway hypnosis.
- Anger or preoccupied thoughts.
- Effects of alcohol or other drugs.

Safe driving — weather or not

No matter what time of year it is, your church group may encounter inclement weather. Which means drivers must use extra caution to keep his or her passengers safe. Here are some ways to minimize the effects of foul weather on the safety of your group:

Reduced visibility

- When visibility is reduced, whatever the reason, turn on headlights and clearance lamps.
- Low beams are recommended for driving in fog or snow.
- If you can't see a safe distance ahead, reduce speed or pull off the roadway and stop.
- Use the center line or edge of the roadway as a guide when visibility is reduced.

Wet pavement

- Remember, highways are most slippery just after rain starts to fall.
- Reduce speed
- Increase following distances.
- Keep to the right to allow room for maneuvering to the side of the road if evasive action becomes necessary.
- Don't lock the brakes. Apply brakes intermittently when stopping.
- Make sure the vehicle has good tires with deep tread to maintain traction and maneuverability.

Ice and snow



- Accelerate gently and release the clutch slowly.
- If your wheels start spinning, ease up on the accelerator.
- Shifting to a higher gear may reduce wheel spinning.
- Don't lock the wheels when braking. Locked brakes often cause skidding.
- If possible, stop in clear or sanded patches of roadway to improve traction when you start out again.
- Use the engine and transmission as a brake. Downshifting is often more effective than brake application.
- Increase following distances.
- Drive at a steady, reasonable speed to compensate for reduced vision when snow is blowing.
- Remember, if you have trouble making your stop, other drivers are having the same problem. Consider this before allowing passengers to leave the vehicle or cross the road.

Highway emergencies.

Even perfectly maintained vehicles can break down once in a while. Here, step by step, is the best way to handle emergencies on the road:

- Raise the hood.
- Tie a white handkerchief to the antenna or left door handle.
- Turn emergency flashers on.
- Place traffic warning signals at the following locations:
 - At the traffic side of the vehicle, about ten feet from approaching traffic.
 - Approximately 100 feet to the rear, in the center of the occupied lane.
 - Approximately 200 feet to the rear, in the center of the occupied lane.
 - Use flares at the intervals described above, on the shoulder of the road.
- Stay in the vehicle until help arrives, or send two adult passengers for help.
- Keep a list of local emergency phone numbers in each vehicle, including:
 - Sheriff
 - Police
 - Hospital
 - Mechanic

Especially for bus drivers.



Your church bus driver is faced with certain unique situations that drivers of smaller vehicles don't normally confront. The suggestions below will help maximize your group's safety while traveling in buses.

- Keep doors closed when moving, except when crossing a railroad track.
- Never lock the emergency door when passengers are on board.
- Transport authorized passengers only.
- Prohibit standing. Never transport more than the posted number of passengers.

- Keep children out of the back row of seats, except when the bus is filled, to protect against injury in case the bus is rear-ended.
- Prohibit smoking when children are on the bus.
- Make smooth starts and stops.
- Because of fire hazard, fill the fuel tank only when there are no passengers on the bus.
- Maintain your time schedule, but never at the expense of safety.
- Never leave the bus unattended.
- Keep packages, coats and other objects out of the aisle.
- Watch for clearances (bridges, overpasses, etc.).
- Pick up and drop off passengers in such a manner that they are not required to cross streets.
- Do not load equipment or suitcases on top of the vehicle in such a manner that the vehicle becomes top-heavy.

***NOTE:** A good bus driver would never think of using the size of the bus to gain an advantage in traffic.*

Out of the flow of traffic.



A startling number of accidents occur on the road outside the bus. Here are some tips to pass on to passengers to keep them out of the way of passing traffic:

- Walk on the left shoulder of the road if there is no sidewalk.
- Look carefully before crossing the street.
- Be aware of vehicles around you.
- Stay in a single file line.
- Don't crowd or push.
- Hold the handrail while walking up the steps.
- Go directly to your seat.
- Never stand or play in the loading zone.
- Move away from the bus as soon as you exit.

Maintaining control.



Maintaining discipline and control over a vehicle full of noisy young passengers may be one of a driver's greatest challenges.

Unfortunately, noise and confusion are part of the driver's environment. How that confusion is handled can make the difference between a safe trip and a tragic one.

- Use a positive approach. Let passengers know how to act rather than how not to act. Look for good qualities and make it known when you are pleased with their behavior.
- Maintain a calm attitude. A driver who stays composed in an emotional situation has a stabilizing effect. Shouting or engaging in arguments with passengers soon becomes ineffective. Think before you speak.
- Reprimand in private. Never embarrass or humiliate a youngster in front of friends, or the original problem may be compounded.
- Discipline safely. A driver of a moving bus needs to focus all concentration on the road. If it becomes necessary to discipline children, stop the bus in a safe place off the road. The mere act of stopping may help correct a situation.

Rules for passengers.

Take the time to give your group a review of these important habits that really make a difference in keeping risks to a minimum.

OK	Needs Work	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Always follow the driver's instructions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk quietly.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Stay seated while vehicle is in motion.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Be courteous to the driver, to other passengers and to passing motorists.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Take care not to damage the vehicle.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep head and hands inside windows.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask permission before opening windows.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Help the driver by being extra quiet at railroad crossings.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Always wear your seat belt if one is provided

Transporting people who are disabled.



Transporting people who are disabled requires lots of patience and understanding. Follow these tips to help make their ride safe and comfortable:

- When raising or lowering persons on the power ramp, hold on to the wheelchair. Make sure the wheelchair is locked.
- Secure the wheelchair first, then the occupant.
- Be aware of special health and behavioral problems.
- Practice vehicle evacuation before your departure.
- Have an understanding with parents of minors on their involvement in loading and unloading the passenger at home.

What to do in case of an accident.



You can set up your own emergency procedure and distribute it at the organizational meetings for all church activities. That way, everyone will know what to do if an accident or injury should occur, and the victim will receive help as quickly as possible. In case of serious accidents, even a few minutes can be critical.

- First, make the injured person as comfortable as possible. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MOVE THE INJURED PERSON.** Keep him or her warm. Administer first-aid only if you have the proper training.
- Without leaving the injured person unattended, send someone to call for help.
- Next, call an ambulance and the police or fire departments as necessary. It's best to call directly, rather than dialing the operator. Don't forget to give the location clearly and distinctly.
- Get the names and telephone numbers of any witnesses.
- As the driver involved in the accident, you may be, understandably, upset. To avoid undue panic, call the pastor (or another designated person) and allow him or her to explain the status of the situation to the injured person's family.
- Cooperate with police and fire department investigators. If you are a witness, you can answer questions about the accident. Provide investigators with your list of witnesses.

- As soon as possible after the injured person has been provided for, and a preliminary investigation has been made, inform your insurance agent of the accident. Tell what happened simply and factually. Provide the names of any witnesses. This will facilitate fast, equitable settlement of claims for those injured.

For additional safety information, contact:



The National Safety Council, your local chapter of American Red Cross, or your local police, fire department or state patrol. In most cases, information is free.

Emergency telephone numbers

Keep this list handy in case you have a local emergency.

Police _____
Fire _____
Ambulance _____
Hospital _____
Pastor _____
Emergency Contact _____
Church Mutual Representative _____

Many thanks to Church Mutual Insurance Company for providing much of the information contained in this booklet. You may access Church Mutual's website at www.churchmutual.com.



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