October 8, 2019

Dear Pastor,
Church Administrators/ Principals/ Youth Directors/ Institution Directors (CFS, DWC):

Effective January 1, 2012, the Diocese of Amarillo adopted the following policies governing the use of 10-15 passenger vans.

- The use of 10-15 passenger vans to transport children and/or adults is totally prohibited.
- Mini-vans may continue to be used to transport children and/or adults. A mini-van is defined as a passenger vehicle designed to transport no more than 8 total occupants.

Since then, the NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) issued several rulings making them safer which is standard for new models.

- Shoulder safety belts
- Safety standard requiring electronic stability control
- Tire Pressure Monitoring Systems

Texas Transportation
Amended by:
Acts 2019, 86th Leg., R.S., Ch. 943 (H.B. 3), Sec. 3.040, eff. September 1, 2019.

Sec. 34.003. OPERATION OF SCHOOL BUSES.
(a) School buses or mass transit authority motor buses shall be used for the transportation of students to and from schools on routes having 10 or more students. On those routes having fewer than 10 students, passenger cars may be used for the transportation of students to and from school.
(b) To transport students in connection with school activities other than on routes to and from school:
   (1) only school buses or motor buses may be used to transport 15 or more students in any one vehicle; and
   (2) passenger cars or passenger vans may be used to transport fewer than 15 students. 15 includes the driver.
(c) In all circumstances in which passenger cars or passenger vans are used to transporting students, the operator of the vehicle shall ensure that the number of passengers in the vehicle does not exceed the designed capacity of the vehicle and that each passenger is secured by a safety belt.
(d) In this section, "passenger van" means a motor vehicle other than a motorcycle or passenger car, used to transport persons and designed to transport 15 or fewer passengers, including the driver.
(e) "Motor bus" means a vehicle designed to transport more than 15 passengers, including the driver.
The Diocese of Amarillo has amended the 10-15 passenger van policy as a result of the rulings and the amended code.

The Diocese of Amarillo 10-15-Passenger Van Policy, eff. October 8, 2019
- May purchase, lease or borrow 10-15-passenger vans.
- January 2019 or newer

  - 15 Shoulder safety belts
  - Electronic stability control (ESC)
  - Tire Pressure Monitoring Systems (TPMS)
  - Van should only be driven by experienced, licensed drivers who operate this type of vehicle on a regular basis. A commercial driver’s license is ideal. 15-passenger vans handle differently especially when fully loaded.
  - Never allow more than 15 people to ride in a 15-passenger van. Fill the seats from front to back: when the van is not full, passengers should sit in seats that are in front of the rear axle.
  - Cargo should be placed forward of the rear axle; avoid overloading the van or placing any loads on the roof. See the vehicle owner’s manual for the maximum weight of passengers and cargo and to determine towing capability.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Patrick J. Zurek

Patrick J. Zurek, STL, DD
Bishop of Amarillo