

VEHICLE SAFETY PROGRAM

The Church has a significant exposure to loss due to vehicular accidents. It is important to have a written motor vehicle policy implemented throughout the Church. An effective program begins with the identification of the exposures, analyzing the methods available to minimize these exposures, implementation of the techniques chosen and last, but not least, continuous monitoring of the program in order to make necessary adjustments and changes.

There are three basic elements that are essential to a successful vehicle safety program:

- Driver Selection and Training
- Preventative Maintenance
- Accident Reporting, Recording and Analysis

Driver Selection and Training

A great deal of care should be exercised in selecting individuals that will be required to operate Church vehicles on a full time or occasional basis. An application form should be obtained that provides information on the applicant's drivers license, driving experience (accident record, traffic violation convictions and forfeiture for the past three years), past employment, education and physical history.

A copy of the Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) should be obtained from each state where a driver holds a license to ascertain that the applicant has a valid license and to review the driver's past record. An up-to-date listing of all authorized drivers should be maintained with all pertinent background information on the driver (e.g. social security number, date of birth, etc.).

A road test is one of the ways to indicate if a driver can safely operate the vehicle. Also, consideration should be given to having each driver take a written test.

Another major item of consideration should be training that is provided to individuals operating motor vehicles within the Diocese. Each Diocesan driver should be trained in safe driving habits. One of the best methods of accomplishing this particular measure is through the use of the National Safety Council's "Defensive Driver Course". This course, at a minimum, should be given to each driver at least once every three years, in order to maintain a high degree of skill and proficiency in the driving habits of each Arch/Diocesan driver. The defensive driving course teaches various skills which include:

- Defensive driving measures
- Split-second decision making
- Rules of backing up
- Safe traveling distances
- Passing and being passed
- Weather related driving conditions
- Hazards at intersections
- Hazards of driving under the influence of alcohol

The previous section mainly dealt with regular or occasional drivers who operate a church owned vehicle. However, there are many times that a school or parish may rely on volunteers or employees using their own vehicles. Generally, automobile insurance follows the automobile. Therefore, if any employee uses his/her car for church business, his/her auto insurance would be primary. This is also true with a volunteer.

If you find yourself utilizing employees' or volunteers' cars, then the following information should be obtained:

- Name of driver:
- Address:
- Driver's license number: State issued:
- Year, make, and model of vehicle:
- Insurance company name:
- Policy number:
- Agent's name:

Also, the Volunteer Driver's Form must be completed by any volunteer driving on behalf of the church.

Whether the vehicle belongs to the parish, a volunteer, or is rented, make sure there is adequate insurance coverage for the vehicle. Do not overload the vehicles. Make sure that there are enough seat belts for every passenger in the vehicle. Do not allow students to drive. **All drivers must be 25 years of age or over** to transport students to and from activities. Situations do arise where the availability of parish approved drivers for offsite activities is inadequate. Often, the best, and only solution is to have parents/guardians responsible to take and pick up the youth member from the activity site.

Preventative Maintenance

To ensure that all Diocesan vehicles are being adequately maintained, a preventative maintenance program should be instituted. The groundwork for a good preventative maintenance system usually starts with the manufacturer's recommendations concerning necessary maintenance and the time or mileage at which it should be performed. This should provide some assurances that the vehicle is in good operating condition, as well as to receive the most economical service from the vehicle. Thorough records should be kept on each vehicle for all repairs and routine maintenance work. Also, a formal periodic inspection should be made of the vehicle and a record kept of such inspections.

Additionally, each vehicle should be inspected on a daily basis by the operator before and after operation of the vehicle.