



Safe Schools Agenda

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Route to:
_ Superintendent
_ School Business Off.
_ Athletic Director
_ Supt. Bldgs/Grounds
_ Site Administrators
_ Transportation Dir.
_ Lunch Director
_ Classroom Teachers
_ _____

A monthly service provided to help you with your efforts to make your school safe for students, staff and the public

Safety Group 491 Declares 20% Workers' Comp Dividend!

Safety Group 491 and the State Fund have declared a **20%** dividend for the 7/01/2002 – 7/01/2003 policy period, marking the 31st consecutive year of dividends to participants in the Workers' Compensation program. Over **\$89.3 million** in dividends have been returned to Group 491 policy holders since the inception of the program.

In addition to the 20% dividend, the maximum up-front discount for qualified risks has been increased to 20%, effective with the 7/01/2004 policy year.

The Group 491 Workers' Compensation program represents the most secure, cost effective fully insured option available to New York's public and private elementary and secondary schools. "We are all very proud of the strides this program has made during the past year", stated Mr. Richard Gillespie, Chairman of the Group 491 Workers' Compensation Executive Committee. "The State Insurance Fund and our members worked together in a partnership that made it possible to overcome some difficult periods." "This joint venture", Mr. Gillespie continued, "has culminated in fully insured, first-dollar coverage that will always be available for New York's educational institutions".

For more information and a no-obligation quotation, please contact the Group Manager at 1-800-833-8822, ext.119.

Why Investigate Cause of Loss?

A secretary is injured when a file cabinet begins to fall on top of her; she pulls several stomach muscles in an attempt to stop the falling cabinet. No lost time, but tremendous discomfort for several days. *No investigation conducted.*

Three months later, the same thing happens in another office. This time, the injury is far greater; the employee fractures her clavicle and arm.

Securing the file cabinet to the wall or to another file cabinet would have provided the stability needed to keep them from toppling over. *Why investigate?* By the way, are your file cabinets secure? Are top drawers fitted with warning signs?

Are Your Children Riding in 15-Passenger Vans?

On this past New Year's Eve, a basketball team from a private school on Long Island, New York was traveling in two 15-passenger vans to a tournament in Charlotte, North Carolina. The driver was a 22 year old teacher. She lost control of the vehicle, and the van rolled three times, ejecting eight of its nine passengers, one of whom died.

School officials were apparently unaware that federal law prohibits the sale of motor vehicles with a capacity of more than ten persons for school-related activities and that New York State prohibits the use of such vehicles for use by private as well as public schools for transporting

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students to and from school and for extracurricular activities. In this case, the van had been purchased used by the church which runs the private school, and was not registered as a school bus.

Fifteen passenger vans have been involved in so many rollover accidents and deaths that 29 states have laws or regulations that prohibit the use of vans for transporting public school students to and from school and school-related activities. Twelve states prohibit the use of vans for transporting public school students to and from school, but allow the use of vans for school activity trips. Nine states allow the use of vans. In many states, the laws and regulations that apply to public schools may not apply to private and church-sponsored schools.

School and college administrators should be aware that between 1990 and 2001, 1,441 vans were involved in fatal crashes, killing 1,924 people. A good number of those deaths were of children and college athletes.

Fifteen passenger vans are commonly used by churches, daycare centers, Head Start, and other public and private organizations, as well as schools. *Federal and state laws do not apply to non-school use of 15 passenger vans at this time, so you may want to inquire whether your children are being put at risk in those situations.* Fifteen passenger vans are three times more likely to roll over than passenger cars. According to Public Citizen, a non-profit public interest organization, "when five or more passengers are riding in these vans, the likelihood of rollover increases dramatically. Because the rear of these vans extend 4 to 5 ½ feet beyond the rear wheels, any loading of five or more people or luggage/equipment cause instability during emergency maneuvers such as sudden turns to avoid a pedestrian or vehicle".

Along with a wide array of transportation safety experts, we recommend that you take your 15-passenger vans out of service and use small school buses for student transportation. Be sure that you know exactly what your state law permits. If state law permits use of these vans, and if you need to temporarily continue to use them, take steps to reduce the rollover risk:

- Screen and qualify all drivers. Require drivers to be at least 25 years of age, and preferably possess a commercial driver's license. Above all, require that the driver have extensive experience handling 15-passenger vans.
- Remove the rear seat to reduce loading behind the rear axle.
- Limit the capacity to 9 persons including the driver.
- Load forward seats first at all times.
- Do not load the roof. The van is already top-heavy.
- Conduct a full safety inspection, especially of tires.
- Require all passengers and the driver to wear safety restraints at all times on penalty of being left at home. (Eighty per cent of people killed in rollover crashes in 15-passenger vans were unbelted.)
- Have safety items on board (cell phone, first-aid kit, fire extinguisher.)
- Schedule trips as much as possible during daylight hours and require drivers to be well rested.
- Make sure that coaches and advisors are aware that the prohibitions and rules apply even when renting vehicles at airport destinations.