



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



PASSENGER BUS & VAN OPERATIONS BEST PRACTICES

If your agency chooses to operate a bus or van service for youth programs, senior programs, or any function, that agency must establish a comprehensive program to protect the riders, the employees, and the community. This bulletin details risk management considerations and reviews questions for consideration and identifies actions that are to be addressed.

Questions to Ask When Creating a Program

1. **Is this a program that should be undertaken?** Or can the agency partner with an established program such as the County or State, NJ Transit, or even a private entity? Instead of busing seniors to lunch, could lunch be brought to the seniors? Should the agency hire a private bus company to transport residents, thereby transferring risk?
2. **What restrictions will be placed on riders?** Will users of the bus or van be responsible for boarding or exiting the vehicle without assistance from the agency's driver/attendant? Will riders with special needs be responsible for providing their attendants? If riders with special needs are to be serviced, to what level of assistance will be provided?
3. **What mechanical aids, equipment, training, etc., will be provided to support patrons with special needs?** Will the van be equipped with wheelchair lifts, tie-downs, etc.?
4. **Will the wheelchair be used for seating while in motion, or will the person be lifted from the wheelchair to a seat?** Many wheelchairs are not rated by ANSI/RESNA WC19 to be used as a seat while a vehicle is in motion. Who will verify which wheelchairs are compliant and which are not?
5. **There are significant ADA considerations and requirements that will need to be evaluated.** Consult with the municipal attorney, ADA officer, and your local risk management consultant.
6. **Who will be responsible for developing and implementing the written program and policies?** A written policy manual should be developed that addresses the items in this bulletin. Contact your Safety Director for sample programs.

Questions to Ask About the Vehicle

1. **What size bus or van will be used?** Vehicles that have a Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) of 26,000 pounds, or are rated at more than 15 passengers (even if fewer than 15 will be on board), will require a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to operate. Specific requirements are given in the [New Jersey CDL Manual](#).
2. **How will the maintenance be performed and documented?** Establish an Inspection & Maintenance schedule:
 - Written Pre-Trip Inspections are required for CDL vehicles and are strongly recommended for all vehicles in your fleet. Drivers must be trained and physically able to perform the inspection.

- Most Department of Public Works already use CDL Pre-Trip Inspection Forms and may have other resources you can use to establish your Inspection & Maintenance Program.
- Other routine inspections must be performed by the State inspection station or a qualified automotive technician. Vehicles with air brakes must be serviced by a certified air brake technician. THE [NJ MVC Bus Inspection Form](#) can be used, or contact our JIF Risk Control Consultant for additional resources.

3. What form of communication will be provided for the drivers to report emergency conditions?

Driver & Attendant

Depending on the decisions made, the driver selection, duties, and training may be significant risk management considerations:

- CDL Driver
 - They must meet the physical requirements under 49 CFR 391. Please note there are additional physical requirements for CDL Drivers who hold a 'P' (Passenger) endorsement.
 - They must pass a background check.
 - They must be included in the agency's [Controlled Substances & Alcohol Use and Testing Policies for CDL Drivers](#). A copy of the policy should be given to the driver along with training on the policy.
 - Supervisors should receive training on CDL Reasonable Suspicion.
 - The driver must register with the [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse](#).
- Non-CDL Driver
 - Conduct annual [Motor Vehicle Record Check through the NJ MVC Customer Abstract Information Retrieval Program](#).
 - Develop a written job description with physical capabilities identified.
- Attendant
 - Conduct a background check.
 - Develop a written job description with physical capabilities identified.

Depending on the job description, additional training may be required:

- Proper use of equipment that may be utilized to assist passengers.
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- CPR, AED, & First Aid
- Safe Handling of Oxygen Cylinders, Compressors, & Other Medical Equipment.
- Patient Lifting & Handling
- HIPAA & Other Privacy Training

Please be sure to contact your risk manager and agency attorney before implementing any bus and/or van operations. If operating a bus or van for over 15 passengers, please see the MSI Safety Bulletin – 15 Passenger Vans Best Practices at [MSI Bulletins](#).