



Risk Management for 4-H Youth Development Work: Transportation¹

Dale Pracht, Marilyn Norman, Kate Fogarty, and Jean Hink²

This is the seventh of an eight-part series that explains Risk Management for 4-H Youth Development Work. This publication will focus on risk management as it applies to transportation within the 4-H organization.

In many 4-H activities, it is important to recognize the possibility of risks occurring. The goal of any 4-H experience is to successfully conduct educational events and activities that coincide with the 4-H mission and mandates while protecting participants. The safety of participants, sponsors, property, finances, and the goodwill/reputation of the 4-H name can be at risk. Although risk may sometimes be avoided, other times it is inevitable or worth the trade-off for the activity planned. This risk management guide has been created to prepare for activities that may involve risk and outline ways to deal with the risk.

Transportation

Transportation can be a risk because accidents occur frequently. It is important that the driver is responsible and has a good driving record. Fifteen-passenger vans are no longer the suggested

mode of transporting youth and require a special knowledge and certification through the University of Florida. Seven-passenger and twelve-passenger vehicles are now required because of the risks involved in transporting too much weight in the top-heavy fifteen-passenger vehicles.

4-H faculty, staff, and volunteers should be aware of county requirements related to transporting youth. Parents and volunteers need to be well-versed on which insurance coverage is responsible (in an accident) based on the ownership of the car, the reason the car is being driven, who was driving, and the passengers being carried. If an accident occurred in a private vehicle, the driver's personal insurance policy would have primary coverage. Please review the Auto Coverage Responsibility Information sheet attached to this document.

Personal transportation to and from 4-H program activities is the responsibility of the 4-H member, youth participant, parent/guardian, or volunteer. Drivers transporting youth must be at least 18 years of age with at least two years of successful driving experience, a valid driver's license, and automobile insurance.

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2. Dale Pracht, assistant professor; Marilyn Norman, associate professor and State 4-H Program Leader; Kate Fogarty, assistant professor; Jean Hink, extension agent, Pasco County, Florida; Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences; Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences; University of Florida; Gainesville 32611.

When 4-H youth development staff members are arranging for youth transportation, be very cautious of the driver's age, driving experience, a valid driver's license, and liability automobile insurance. Driving personal vehicles for 4-H events is the least recommended transportation option for 4-H youth development staff and volunteers as personal insurance will be primary. The state and/or county will provide excess liability coverage depending on the situation.

When renting vehicles or chartering buses for transporting participants, it is recommended that insurance be purchased from the rental agency. Rentals should be in the name of the 4-H club or county extension program. Insurance offered by the rental dealer may be secondary coverage. Additional coverage may have to be purchased. For assistance on rental of vehicles, please see http://www.purchasing.ufl.edu/main_contracts-vehicles.asp.

15-Passenger Vans

The University of Florida adopted a policy with the objective to reduce the risk of accident and possible injury or death associated with the operation of 15-passenger vans. Risk reduction is achieved through assurance that vans will only be operated by safe and knowledgeable drivers, that vans are in proper and safe working order, and that all passengers use passenger restraint systems when the vehicle is in operation. —

Fifteen Passenger Vans Policy,
UFEHS-VAN-09/10/01, Environmental Health & Safety, Administrative Affairs, University of Florida

Studies conducted by the National Highway Safety Transportation Administration (NHSTA) of the US Department of Transportation reveal that loaded 15-passenger vans have significantly higher risks of rollover than passenger cars and light trucks. Loading the vans raises the center of gravity and shifts it towards the rear, greatly affecting the handling characteristics. When heavily loaded, the steering characteristics and responsiveness are very different from light passenger vehicles. This can cause serious consequences in an emergency situation when an untrained driver expects the vehicle to respond like a car. (UFEHS)

Driving large vans requires a skill and experience from the operator with little or no margin of error. The vehicles must also be in proper working order to reduce the likelihood of involvement in an accident. The vehicles must receive a formal operational inspection by the operator to demonstrate due diligence. Each vehicle must undergo an annual inspection by a mechanic to ensure hidden defects are identified that could contribute to the risk of the vehicle accident. (UFEHS)

All operators of UF owned, leased, or non-owned 15 passenger vans shall possess a valid drivers license and maintain a good driving record. Operators must attend an approved van operators training session prior to operating a 15 passenger-van (exception: operators that possess a valid Commercial Drivers License, CDL, may not need to participate in the training). Contact UF Environmental Health & Safety at (352) 392-1591 for more information or to schedule an appointment for training. (UFEHS)

References

Fifteen Passenger Vans Policy,
UFEHS-VAN-09/10/01, Environmental Health & Safety, Administrative Affairs, University of Florida.
<http://www.ehs.ufl.edu/General/15VanPol.htm>.

Risk management frequently asked questions. (2005). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin-Extension. Retrieved October 28, 2006, from Wisconsin 4-H youth development website at <http://4h.uwex.edu/resources/mgt/documents/RiskManagementFrequentlyAskedQuestions12-05.pdf>.