

Are **12-passenger** vans an acceptable alternative to the 15-passenger van?

ARM will not comment on specific 12-passenger vans, per say. However, what they have told us is that most 12-passenger vans are on the same **chassis** as the 15-passenger vans, and the **chassis** is where the safety problems arise.

Therefore, you must research to find a 12-passenger van whose chassis IS NOT the same as the 15-passenger van. Be very careful that you are not choosing a vehicle that is identical to a 15-passenger van, except for the seating configuration.

ARM has answered that the safety concerns are the same, regardless, if it is the identical chassis, 15- or 12-passenger. As per ARM's site, copied verbatim, with emphasis added by ARM:

"There may have been safety improvements in the newest vans including options such as stability control, tire pressure monitoring systems, full passenger side airbags, traction control, anti-lock brakes, rear view camera, and improved safety glass. However, these safety features *still* do not address the fundamental problems.

1. The 15-passenger vans are **not balanced**. The "walkway" to the rear seats goes along one side of the van. There will be less weight on the aisle side, and the weight of passengers will be on the other side of the van, so the vehicle bears its weight to one side. Unequal weight distribution causes uneven wear on the tires. Combine the imbalance with deferred maintenance (tires are rarely rotated or replaced as often as needed) and these vans are at greater risk of tire blowouts and rollovers.
2. The **center of gravity for passengers** is higher than for cargo (Fifteen-passenger models were designed to haul cargo, not people). The center of weight higher up in the van, than would otherwise be the case, puts an already imbalanced and possibly unevenly worn vehicle at greater risk of rollover.
3. Add to these issues **the unknown of who is driving these vehicles**. Driving a 15-passenger van is NOT the same as driving a car or regular passenger vehicle. Many states require the driver of a 15-passenger van to have the appropriate CDL license and experience with vehicles of this size/weight.

In many states, laws prohibit the use of 15-passenger vans by schools for bus services. These laws vary by state for private schools. If the vans are considered unsafe for use by public schools to transport children, why would we use them to carry our children or our members? We should apply the highest standard for those in our care. "

4. Acceptable alternatives: "Alternatives to 15-passenger vans include: minivans and SUVs, mini-school buses, 15-passenger buses with dual rear wheels.
  1. Be sure you only carry as many people as seat belts, and always wear your seat belts.
  2. Make informed choices regarding drivers. Review their record and experience level before they get behind the wheel.
  3. Conduct pre-trip inspections to be sure your vehicle is in good condition for the road.

Remember, the actions of a local church that chooses to operate outside of the guidelines of the greater organization can have a profound effect on the entire conference of churches. We need to focus on saving lives and treating people with dignity and respect for life. " <https://adventistrisk.org/en-us/safety-resources/solutions-newsletter/2017/january/15-passenger-vans-what-is-the-danger>

I do hope this information helps guide you as your Pathfinder club plans. Thank you for being proactive in your search. May your trip be amazing, and less stressful!

With kind regards,

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