

risk reporter

Summer
2006

Vol. 5
issue 3

A quarterly publication by Church Mutual Insurance Company

Transportation safety within your ministry

From retreats and youth trips to a quick run to the bank, many of the everyday activities performed at your religious organization include some form of automobile transportation. Oftentimes, the vehicles used are not owned by the congregation but by its employees and volunteers.

Karen Metz, casualty claims manager for Church Mutual Insurance Company, stressed the importance of good vehicle maintenance, safe driving practices and proper insurance coverage for all vehicles, not only those owned by the congregation.

Selecting a safe driver

"Selecting qualified drivers is crucial to passenger and driver safety," Metz said. Church Mutual offers guidelines to assist with the driver selection process.

Consider the following qualifications when selecting a driver:

- Attitude
 - Age (minimum age of 25 is recommended)
 - Driving record (Church Mutual customers are eligible to run a Department of Motor Vehicle check through ChoicePoint® for \$3.50)
 - Experience (check driver references)
 - Physical condition
 - Possession of a commercial driver's license and experience operating larger vehicles (if the job requires driving a bus or large van)
- "Confirm that all drivers have a valid driver's license and personal insurance," Metz said. "Make a copy of each license and the personal insurance policy or insurance card to keep on file."

Good driving practices

Even the best drivers are susceptible to accident-causing issues such as distraction and fatigue while driving.

"Driver fatigue is a growing trend in many of our automobile accident claims," Metz said. "Road trips are often too long for one driver, or the driver might be sleep deprived. Multiple qualified drivers should be available on long road trips to switch drivers when necessary."

(See transportation safety, page 2)

inside

Seasonal Spotlight

Heating system should be top of mind in midsummer

Managing Your Risks

Assessing your situation

Q | A

Risk Reporter talks with ATF Agent Eric Kehn



(transportation safety)

“We also process many claims with driver distraction as the cause,” she said.

Take a few minutes to organize and safely stow items before the trip begins and refrain from using cell phones and other electronic devices while driving. Also, familiarize yourself with a new, borrowed or rented vehicle; locate the lights, windshield wipers, defroster, fan switch and other equipment prior to beginning your trip.

Vehicle maintenance

All vehicles should be inspected by the driver before each trip. Establish a regular maintenance routine that includes the following:

- *Exterior vehicle check:* Look under the vehicle for fluid leaks; check the engine for loose wires, connections and belts; check oil, coolant and washer fluid levels; check battery; check tires for wear and air pressure and secure wheel lugs; check lights and mirrors.
- *Interior vehicle check:* Listen for unusual engine noises; check all gauges and warning lights; check fans, defrosters, vents, wipers, washers; check all seat belts and check brakes.

A semiannual inspection by a qualified mechanic also should be part of your vehicle maintenance program.

Proper use of passenger vans

Many religious organizations use 15-passenger vans to transport large groups. However, this type of vehicle is at greater risk for accidents. Passenger vans are especially prone to rollovers, with most accidents caused by tire blowouts.

“People have a false sense of security when they are riding or driving in a large van — they feel protected by the size,” Metz said. “Vans are harder to handle, they are often overloaded, they roll over easily and people generally don’t have experience driving them.”

Church Mutual recommends worship centers take the following precautions when using passenger vans:

- Inspect the vehicle, pay close attention to tire condition
- Select drivers with experience operating large vehicles
- Don’t overload the van
- Always fill the front rows of the seats first, leaving open seats in the rear
- Buckle up
- Obey posted speed limits

Hired and nonowned automobile insurance

Most religious organizations have adequate automobile coverage for vehicles they own, yet their coverage might fall short when employees or volunteers use personal, rented or borrowed vehicles for worship center business. Adding Hired and Nonowned Automobile Liability Insurance to your multi-peril policy helps protect your worship center in the event of an accident involving a hired or nonowned automobile.

- *Hired automobile:* Any vehicle loaned to your organization, leased or rented by your organization or used under contract by your organization.
- *Nonowned automobile:* Any vehicle that is being used on your congregation’s behalf for business and is registered to one of the insured’s employees, volunteers or clergy.

“In the event of an accident involving the personal car of a worship center employee or volunteer, the automobile owner’s insurance kicks in first as the primary policy to cover the damages,” Metz said. “Oftentimes, people only carry the minimum limit for their personal insurance, which generally will not completely cover the damages. Worship centers need to have excess coverage or a hired and nonowned policy in place to cover the remainder of the damages.”

Remember, a business automobile policy your organization might have does not contain coverage for vehicles the organization does not own.

Pastor Terry Carney of Prince of Peace Christian Church in Tomahawk, Wis., understands the importance of excess coverage firsthand. During a recent winter youth trip, a group from the church was traveling using vehicles owned by church members. Weather was a factor during the trip, causing one driver to lose control of the vehicle, cross the centerline and strike another vehicle.

“The accident resulted in the deaths of two children from our parish, as well as multiple injuries to passengers and drivers in the cars involved,” Carney said. “Our church would have been devastated financially by this tragic event if it wasn’t for our hired and nonowned insurance policy.”

“You don’t expect this sort of tragedy will ever happen to your parish,” he said. “Therefore, it is essential for all religious organizations to have this type of excess coverage — it not only protected the assets of our church, but my personal assets as well.”

- **For more information and resources** about automobile insurance and transportation safety, visit www.churchmutual.com, select “Safety Resources” and click on “15-Passenger Vans.”

Insurance coverage on rental cars

Insurance coverage from a rental car company is optional. If you choose to use your personal insurance coverage, review your policy to determine if loss and damage are covered for rental cars. If the rented vehicle is involved in an accident, the renter will be charged a fee for each day the damaged vehicle is unusable, in addition to covering the damage costs to the vehicle.



Managing Your Risks

Assessing your situation

The vast majority of Church Mutual customers I have talked to are concerned with the safety of their facilities and their activities. No one wants an employee, member or guest to be injured while on the premises or during a sponsored event.

Today's congregations are more active than ever before. And while more activities create more risks for injuries and other losses, placing safety in the forefront can reduce the number of incidents as well as the severity of the injuries.

The basic steps to risk management are to identify the hazard, research possible solutions and implement the best solution.

You can identify your risks by reviewing injuries and accidents that have taken place, as well as by creating a list of the activities your congregation is involved in and the locations of the activities.

Start by making a list of the injuries or incidents that have occurred at your facility or at sponsored events over the last couple of years. Ask these questions: Why did it happen? What was the source of the injury or incident? What was the cause of the incident? How could the injury or incident have been prevented?

For example, a volunteer is injured when she slipped and fell in the kitchen. The source of the slip is the liquid that spilled on the floor during cooking. However, the cause of the fall is poor housekeeping rules regarding cleaning spills immediately.

Now, make a list of activities your congregation is involved in and where they take place. Meet with your leaders to discuss safety and to identify injury or incident opportunity. Keep in mind, you should be looking at all areas of your operation.

Identify and discuss the causes of those injury opportunities and how they can be reduced or eliminated. Regarding the kitchen example above, the solution might be to purchase a mop and bucket and have it ready for use whenever the kitchen is being used.

Finally, implement your plan by creating a written plan and sharing it with everyone involved. Don't forget to design a process to evaluate the success of the solution and to make your leaders accountable for following the plan.

Richard J. Schaber, CPCU
Risk Control Manager



seasonal spotlight

Heating system should be top of mind in midsummer

It might be difficult, but as we enter the dog days of summer, your thoughts should turn to maintenance of your heating system.



Ernest Freeman, director of risk management services for Hartford Steam Boiler, recommends organizations begin maintenance checks on heating systems by the end of July or beginning of August.

"Each year in September and October, we see a rise in boiler losses," he said. "It's because the systems were not properly maintained throughout the year, causing them to malfunction during startup."

"A basic level of boiler and furnace maintenance can be performed by congregation staff members," Freeman said.

Freeman recommends worship centers use the following guidelines to help keep boilers and furnaces running properly all year long:

- Properly insulate water lines exposed to the elements to prevent freezing pipes and unnecessary heat loss
- Consult with a competent water treatment company to ensure the boiler water is properly treated
- Maintain a boiler log to keep accurate records of maintenance history
- For steam heat boilers, clean the water level gauge glass to ensure proper water level readings at all times
- Keep the boiler area clean and dry
- Never store items around the boiler — it's a fire hazard

"Contact a competent service company to inspect your boiler or furnace prior to the season's first startup," Freeman said.

A professional should check the following during annual boiler or furnace maintenance:

- Clean and adjust burner equipment for maximum efficiency
- Check to ensure the fuel-to-air ratio is properly set
- Test the safety/relief valve
- Adjust and replace pressure and temperature controls as necessary
- Check and repair any leaky pipes or valves to prevent water loss
- Service fans and pumps for smooth operation and proper lubrication

▪ **For more information** on the maintenance of heating boilers and to download a maintenance log, visit www.churchmutual.com, select "Safety Resources," click on "Risk Alert" and look for "Heating Boiler."

qa

A Perspective

According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), from 2001 to 2005, 38 percent of fires at worship centers were the result of arson. In light of recent arson cases nationwide, Risk Reporter spoke with Eric Kehn, ATF agent and public information officer in the Nashville Field Division, to discuss what steps religious organizations can take to prevent arson. Kehn has a combined 10 years of experience with the ATF and law enforcement.



- For more information on arson and ATF resources, visit www.atf.gov.
- To order Church Mutual's free booklet and video titled *Fire Safety at Your Worship Center*, visit www.churchmutual.com, select "Safety Resources" and click on "Order Safety Material."

Risk Reporter: What actions can organizations take to prevent arson?

Kehn: Most importantly, be aware of who is in the building, know your surroundings and make note of any suspicious activities. Prevention tips also include:

- Light the exterior of the building and surrounding areas; use motion-activated lighting near doors and windows
- Keep shrubs and trees trimmed, allowing the building to be more visible
- Use adequate locks on all outside doors and windows; lock all doors and windows when building is not occupied
- Install an alarm system if possible
- Maintain a list of key holders
- Solicit volunteers to check buildings during periods of vacancy
- Establish rapport with local law enforcement and request regular patrols
- Establish a neighborhood watch program
- Put interior lighting on sequential timers to give the impression of occupancy and activity

Risk Reporter: In your experience, what types of combustible items are most common in worship center fires?

Kehn: Materials readily available at a location might be used. Anything combustible or an ignitable liquid, such as gasoline or lighter fluid, might be the catalyst. In reality, most items can be considered combustible and should be treated as so. Flammable items, such as paint or solvents, should be properly stored.

Risk Reporter: Why do you think worship centers are easy targets for arson?

Kehn: Religious organizations are often left open and unattended, making entry into the building very easy. Location also affects the risk because many congregations are situated in areas that might not have a lot of traffic or activity. There are multiple motives for arson including revenge, dislike, power, excitement or to cover up another crime, such as theft. Some people might have a personal vendetta against the place of worship or pastor, their stance on an issue, the type of religion practiced or dislike for a particular nationality or race.

Risk Reporter: What should religious organizations do to prevent access to the building?

Kehn: It is extremely important that church officials know who has a key to the building and when they come and go from the facility. This makes it easy to track activity and helps neighbors understand what constitutes normal activity vs. what is suspicious, such as a vandal or a homeless person seeking shelter. Buildings are usually busy on weekends or during holidays, leaving the building vacant on weekdays and nights. Windows and doors should be locked at all times when the building is vacant. Religious organizations should rely on people to protect the building by reporting suspicious activity as soon as possible.