

Car Pooling - Part 1

Environmental concerns, traffic congestion, convenience, desire to relieve driver stress, poor public transportation, lack or expense of parking are all factors that contribute to commuters forming driver groups or car pools. Parents use such arrangements to transport children to school, sports events and extracurricular activities. It is also common for a student owning a car to carry classmates back and forth between home and school.

Regardless of the name, driver groups, share-the-ride arrangements or car pools are a permanent part of the American scene. Typically, several drivers take turns assuming the responsibility for driving their companions. It's common for the turns to last a week and may be done on a rotating basis. These people frequently live in the same area and work in the same office or plant, taking turns driving or regularly riding in one car and paying the owner a reasonable fee to help pay for gasoline, maintenance and wear and tear.

The practice of a parent taking a group of children on an outing, to a Little League baseball game, and the like is commonplace. Other examples of group driving exposures are plentiful:

- church group activities
- book club members driving to their regular meeting or outing
- coaches taking players to practices or games
- employees traveling together to league games or practices, etc.

Liability Insurance Exclusion

Drivers involved in car pools and other group arrangements may wonder if the situation is covered under their auto policy. This concern is valid as many auto policies have restrictions. Typically, liability coverage under personal automobile policies does not apply to "...liability arising out of the ownership or operation of a vehicle while it is being used as a public or livery conveyance." (A public conveyance is a vehicle used indiscriminately in transporting the public without being limited to certain persons or occasions. A livery vehicle is one that is offered for rental). There is slight variation in language among policies issued by various insurers, but the intent is the same: to exclude the use of a personal auto for transporting people or property for income. However, this exclusion does not affect coverage for car pool, driver group, and share-the-ride arrangements.

Please be sure to read Car Pooling - Part 2.

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