



Type III Vehicle Information

Released September 5, 2023

(Updated January 21, 2025)

Purpose

This document combines information from Iowa Code, Iowa Administrative Code rules, United States Code, and new information from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration ([NHTSA](#)) and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration ([FMCSA](#)) to provide information on Type III vehicles, including the purchase of new or used vehicles, and seating capacities, including alteration.

Type III Vehicle Definition

Type III vehicles are those used to transport students in a school-related context, but are not regular school buses. Type III vehicles include passenger cars (including a minivan, sport utility vehicle (SUV), or station wagon), vans, or pickups, and may be marked as a “school bus”. The difference between a family automobile and an equivalent Type III vehicle is not the vehicle itself, but rather its use: Type III vehicles are used for purposes of pupil transportation.

Type III vehicles are limited to a maximum of 12 passengers, including the driver, and the vehicle must weigh 10,000 pounds or less. **Vehicles with a seating capacity of 10 passengers or less may be purchased either new or used, while 11 or 12 passenger vehicles may only be purchased as used vehicles, as defined later in this document.**

Seating Capacity

The seating capacity of the vehicle is set at the time of manufacture, by the manufacturer. The seating capacity rating may not be changed or modified except by the OEM, dealer, or remanufacturer. Seating capacities which vary from the OEM are required by NHTSA to be identified by an alterer’s certification and information label, as pictured below, affixed to the frame of the driver’s door.

The label is titled "TIRE AND LOADING INFORMATION" in bold black text on a yellow background. To the left of the title is a small image of a tire. Below the title, a black bar contains the text "SEATING CAPACITY | TOTAL 8 | FRONT 2 | REAR 6" in white. Below this bar, a line of text states: "The combined weight of occupants and cargo should never exceed 751 kg or 1655 lbs." Below this text is a table with three columns: "TIRE", "ORIGINAL SIZE", and "COLD TIRE PRESSURE". The table has three rows: "FRONT", "REAR", and "SPARE". The "FRONT" row shows "P265/70R17 S" and "210 kPa, 30 PSI". The "REAR" row shows "P265/70R17 S" and "210 kPa, 30 PSI". The "SPARE" row shows "P265/70R17 S" and "240 kPa, 35 PSI". To the right of the table, a yellow box contains the text "SEE OWNER'S MANUAL FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION". To the right of the entire label, a vertical black bar contains the text "1GKFC13YX8R217594" in white.

TIRE	ORIGINAL SIZE	COLD TIRE PRESSURE
FRONT	P265/70R17 S	210 kPa, 30 PSI
REAR	P265/70R17 S	210 kPa, 30 PSI
SPARE	P265/70R17 S	240 kPa, 35 PSI

Per Iowa Administrative Code r. [281-44.5\(1\)](#), alteration of a Type III vehicle, following manufacture by the OEM, is prohibited. While this includes the addition or removal of seats, the Department will grant an exception for seats which are added or removed as long as the seating capacity does not exceed the capacity as certified by the OEM or on the installed alterer’s certificate and information label as referenced above.

9-Passenger or Less

This category includes most minivans, station wagons, cars, SUVs, and pickups. This capacity of vehicle may be purchased either new or used, and may be operated as an activity vehicle or, when properly marked, may be operated as a school bus.

10-Passenger

This category includes larger vans and SUVs. This capacity of vehicle may be purchased either new or used, and may be operated as an activity vehicle or, when properly marked, may be operated as a school bus.

11- or 12-Passenger

This category includes large vans. It may be operated as an activity vehicle or, when properly marked, as a school bus. **A vehicle with this seating capacity may only be purchased used.** Consistent with [49 U.S. Code § 30112](#), the rules set forth by the NHTSA do not allow schools to purchase new vehicles of 11 passengers or more in capacity, unless they meet the construction guidelines for school buses. Type III vehicles do not meet these construction guidelines. However, the NHTSA rules do not apply to “used” vehicles.

Definition of “Used” Vehicle

Per Iowa Code section [322.2\(28\)](#), “used motor vehicle” or “second-hand motor vehicle” means any motor vehicle of a type subject to registration under the laws of this state which has been sold “at retail” as defined in this chapter and previously registered in this or any other state.

Use of Safety Belts or Safety Harnesses

Under all circumstances, a Type III vehicle shall not carry more passengers than there are safety belts or safety harnesses as installed by the manufacturer. Additionally, when in use, there shall be no persons or passengers present in the bed of a pickup.

Driver Licensing and Training

Driver licensing and training shall follow the requirements that pertain to the use of the vehicle. Activity vehicles allow, at a minimum, the use of a standard driver's license. When operated as a school bus, the driver of a Type III vehicle shall comply with the qualifications, licensing and instruction requirements found in Iowa Code sections [321.375](#) and [321.376](#), other than the requirement to obtain a commercial driver's license.

Questions

Questions relating to the use of these vehicles can be directed to your local school bus inspector: West Region – Codie Kellen (codie.kellen@iowa.gov or 515-326-1022), Northeast Region – Chris Errthum (chris.errthum@iowa.gov or 515-669-4994), or Southeast Region - Joe Funk (joe.funk@iowa.gov or 515-669-4987).