

Nine-passenger limit on minibuses on the cards

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Abu Dhabi: Abu Dhabi has stopped issuing permits to new 14 seater minibuses which often cause deadly accidents, a senior official told *Gulf News* on Tuesday.

“We are preparing stringent rules and regulations to control them,” said Masoud Mohammad Hashim, Director of Regulation, Licensing and Compliance Division at TransAD, the taxi regulatory authority in the emirate.

“We have not issued no-objection certificated to new 14 seater minibuses since June 2009 and we will only permit new such vehicles on the road after making the new regulations,” he said. But the official said the authority is renewing the no-objection certificate of about 2,500 minibuses which were registered before June 2009.

“They are plying on several routes in the emirate, without the burden of any strict regulations, and they cause serious accidents,” he said. “We are considering to make seatbelts mandatory for all passengers and reducing the number of seats from 14 to 9 to ensure safety.”

The TransAD was given the mandate to issue the no-objection certificate for 14 seater minibuses last year, he said.

Earlier that authority was with the Traffic Police Department of Abu Dhabi Police which transferred it to the Department of Transport (DOT), Hashim said.

The DoT delegated the authority to TransAD which has engaged a consultant to study all aspects of minibuses including demand from passengers, tariff, qualification required for drivers etc, he said.

“We are trying to finalise the new regulations within six months under the supervision of DoT,” the official said.

An official from the Traffic Department of Abu Dhabi Police told Gulf News yesterday that three people died in accidents involving minibuses in 2008 in Abu Dhabi. “The nine accidents involving minibuses also left 18 people injured (moderate or minor injuries) and three others received serious injuries in the same year,” he said.

In 2009, nine accidents involving minibuses were recorded without any deaths but 38 people were injured and two received serious injuries, the official said.

The TransAD official said the regulation on minibuses which run as sharing taxis all over the emirate has been a grey area. “The existing rules and regulations are not clear, so they are running everywhere in the emirates and making a lot of money,” he explained.