

CSU Office of Environmental Health & Safety **Van Safety Guidelines**

Driving a van is much different than driving a passenger car, and for many people it is a new experience. Vans are much larger in size and weight, and have much larger blind spots on each side and to the rear of the van. Their center of gravity can also shift more significantly, which can increase risk of rollover. Therefore, a van handles differently than a car and requires extra caution at all times. As a University van driver, you have a responsibility to your passengers, the university, and to the general public with whom you share the highway.

The following are some Van Safety Information Tips from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) that you should be aware of prior to driving a van. Please note that the rental of 15 passenger vans is no longer approved due to high rollover and safety risks.

Please read the following information carefully. It is the responsibility of all approved drivers to review and adhere to the following guidelines.

Before leaving: Always inspect van to make sure all equipment is working properly. Vans not operating properly should not be utilized until proper maintenance is obtained.

Load the van with care.

- Never overload the van with either equipment or people.
- Load vans as evenly as possible and spread out passenger load evenly.
- Luggage/equipment should be placed in the rear behind the last seat and secured.
- Avoid loading anything heavy or ill-fitted on the roof as this could shift the center of gravity to the top and increases rollover risk.

Driver Adjustments:

- Vans have larger blind spots to the sides and rear than a passenger car.
- Always adjust your seat and mirrors for optimal view of angles prior to leaving.
- If unfamiliar with the vehicle, take note where lights, windshield wipers, air-conditioning & emergency signal controls are located, as well as gas tank door.
- Secure any loose or miscellaneous items in the front driver area (ie. purses, cd's, etc.)
- Pre-program radio stations or have front passenger control radio/cd's/tapes.
- **Always wear seatbelts!! – (Passengers Too!)**

Seatbelt Safety and Information:

- Only transport as many people as there are seatbelts.

- The Driver and ALL passengers should be seated in recognized seats and must wear seat belts properly.
- Seatbelts reduce risk of death in rollover accidents by 75%!
- Failure to wear your seatbelt will reduce your work comp benefits.
- The Driver should make sure all passengers have seatbelts on before leaving.

Practice if Possible

- If unfamiliar with driving vans, it is recommended the driver take time to practice backing, turning, and parking with the van in a safe and non-congested area such as an empty parking lot.
- Take note of turning capacity/ radius around curbs and the extra height of the van for parking in a parking garage.

Safety Tips While Driving:

1. Avoid driving practices that lead to loss of control – **Such As:**

- Sharp Turns – (Take Corners and Exit Ramps slow and easy).
- Excessive Speed – (Note the speed limit and weather conditions).
- Abrupt Maneuvers (Change lanes slowly – do not jerk the wheel).
- Driving while fatigued (Change drivers or stop to rest every 2 – 3 hours).
- During extreme windy or hazardous weather conditions.
- Following too closely (at *least* a 4 second following distance).
- Avoid Sudden stops or panic stops (Look ahead & signal early- slow down gradually)
- Avoid distractions such as eating, excessive radio volume, cell phones, searching/reaching for items, etc. - **Never text or Email while driving!!**

2. Vans require a longer stopping distance! – Allow more time and distance between vehicles to compensate – Consider weather and road conditions – Avoid sudden stops and never tailgate!

3. Check Blind Spots frequently – especially when changing lanes & backing.

- Change lanes slowly.

4. Backing:

- The greatest blind spot is to the rear when backing up.
- Many accidents occur while backing out of parking areas.
- Look to rear, sides and front of your vehicle in addition to using your mirrors.
- As an added caution- use your emergency flashers while backing up & turn down radio.
- **Before backing up, make sure all is clear behind you! – Do not rely solely on mirrors.**
- **When in doubt – check it out: (G.O.A.L. –Get Out And Look!)**
- Back up slowly.

5. Turning and Changing Lanes:

- Use turn signals well in advance.
- When turning a corner, you must make a wider swing with a van than with a car.
- Always watch for pedestrians, small vehicles, & motorcycles in intersections when turning.
- **When changing lanes- double check blind spots.**
- Take it slow when turning or changing lanes.

6. Intersection Safety:

- Scan ahead at least 1 block as you come upon intersections.
- Before entering the intersection, scan left-right-left before entering.
- Scan mirrors frequently.
- Check for pedestrians and bikers entering the intersection area.
- Do not assume anything....
 - The person with blinker on may not turn
 - The pedestrian on corner may decide to run across intersection
 - The light may not change when you expect it to
 - The vehicle or bike in front of you may stop suddenly
- Cover the brake with your foot as you enter into the intersection (this helps reaction time if need to stop suddenly).

7. Parking and Loading/Unloading:

- **Use extra caution and drive *slowly* whenever driving through a parking lot or other congested areas.**
- Watch carefully for pedestrians and other vehicles pulling in and backing out.
- If you are loading/unloading passengers or equipment, make sure you do so in the safest possible area.
- Avoid unloading passengers in areas where they would have to cross through traffic after exiting the vehicle.
- Always lock the van when it is unattended.

8. If vehicle should go off roadway or wheel drop off pavement:

- Avoid abrupt maneuvers (panic-like steering or overcorrecting).
- Gradually reduce vehicle speed.
- Ease vehicle back onto roadway.

9. Reduce distractions:

- Have a passenger assist with navigation, radio, and cell phone calls.
- NEVER Text or Email while driving!!
- Pull over to a safe area if cell phone use or other involved activities are necessary.

Important Info about 12 and 15 Passenger Vans

As a general safety rule, due to the rollover risk, Stetson has a policy to refrain from using 15 passenger vans. Sometimes allowances have been made for the use of **12** passenger vans, because there is less weight in the back, but in many cases, these are often 15 passenger vans with the rear seat removed, however, they still have a high center of gravity. The later models (2007 and over) are now required to include the new ESC (Electronic Stability Control) and most now have shoulder type seatbelts. Some have the advanced air bags and tire pressure monitoring systems, but you must ask the rental company if their vans include it. Because there are still many older models in use out there, asking if the van is 2007 or newer is a good idea since these models are supposed to have some added safety features.

IMPORTANT!!

- If you are ever in an emergency position where you have no other choice but to rent a 15-passenger van, or you sometimes must rent a 12-passenger van, please review the precautions and safety tips on the website link below, as well as Stetson's Van Safety Guidelines attached (all drivers must read and sign).
- **Ask the rental company if their vans are at least 2007 or newer and if they include the new safety features noted above.**
- **Please also note the tire pressure precautions** in the Link below. This is important as 57% of rollover crashes resulted from improperly inflated back tires.
- Note: 15 & 12 passenger van specs for the tire pressure Psi is often different for the back tires than the front tires. **The Van specs should be used for tires, *not* what is written on the tires. Van tire specs can be found on the Driver's side doorjam or the manual.**
- **When renting, ask the rental company to double check that the tire Psi is correct and make sure the tire tread is not worn.**

http://www.thesilverlining.com/NSI/Documents/NM0135_15PassengerVans.pdf

Please Keep This Information For Your Reference

Van Safety Acknowledgement Quiz

True or False:

- _____ Vans have larger blind spots than cars, specifically to the sides & rear.
- _____ A van's center of gravity can shift more significantly which can increase risk of rollover.
- _____ If I overload the van with people, its ok if they don't have a seatbelt as long as they sit in the middle and can hang on to the seat in front.
- _____ Seatbelts reduce the risk of death in rollover accidents by 75%.
- _____ The driver is responsible for making sure all seatbelts are on before departure.
- _____ When backing up the driver just needs to check all mirrors first.
- _____ The proper following distance is at least 4 seconds.
- _____ Tailgating is ok as long as the driver covers the brake at all times.
- _____ Many accidents occur while backing out of parking areas.
- _____ Vans have the same stopping distance as cars.
- _____ Thorough vehicle inspections is a key way to avoid breakdowns, delays and accidents.
- _____ Exceeding the passenger or gross vehicle weight rating of the van can increase risk of roll-over accidents.

Circle the correct answer:

Stacking baggage above seat level is not recommended because it:

- Restricts the driver's view through the rear window.
- Adversely affects the vehicle's center of gravity.
- Could injure passengers in the vehicle if the vehicle comes to a sudden stop.
- All of the above.

Which of the following will NOT help to reduce the risk of roll-over accidents?

- Scanning the roadway ahead for hazards
- Avoiding distractions
- Driving at a conservative speed, especially in curves and around corners
- Exceeding the gross vehicle weight rating of the van

Name _____ Dept _____ Date: _____

VAN SAFETY GUIDELINES ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have thoroughly read and acknowledge the preceding information regarding van safety guidelines, and understand the hazards, safety precautions, and guidelines specified and agree to abide by them. I also understand that failure to adhere to the van safety guidelines could be detrimental to my safety, the safety of others, the university, and could impact my driving duties and/or result in corrective action.

Date

Signature of Driver

Print Name

Department

This driver has departmental authorization to rent

Supervisor or Club Advisor Signature

Print Name

(PTS will forward a copy of this page to Risk Management- Unit 8420)