

## UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, FAYETTEVILLE

### VAN SAFETY ADVISORY & USE OF 15-PASSENGER VANS

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recently reported that passenger vans with ten or more occupants had a rollover rate in single vehicle crashes of nearly three times the rate of lightly loaded vans. In most of the severe accident cases, an inexperienced driver was behind the wheel. Driving too fast for road conditions was also deemed a contribution. Consequently, Risk Management would like to remind you of the following safety precautions intended to reduce the likelihood of being involved in a serious accident while operating a passenger van:

1. **Vans are more likely to tip over due to their higher center of gravity.**
  - Reduce your speed BELOW the speed limit posted for all turns. In addition, try to avoid steering with sudden or jerky motions.
2. **Passenger vans have larger blind spots than passenger cars.**
  - Adjust your mirrors so that you can see the side of your van in your side mirrors and use convex (bubble) mirrors (if available) to increase your field of view.
  - Before changing lanes, you should always check for blind spots by first leaning forward in your seat to change your sight angle and then by turning your head.
3. **Vans are heavier than passenger cars especially when loaded with passengers.**
  - Allow more time and distance when pulling into traffic than you would if operating a passenger car.
  - Use a 4-second following distance between the van and the rear of the vehicle ahead.
4. **Passenger vans are taller and longer than passenger cars.**
  - When exiting a tunnel or being passed by a large truck, grip the steering wheel firmly and be prepared for the van to be pushed by the wind.
  - Check the height of your van before attempting to enter any parking deck to ensure that there is enough room to fit.

In addition to the above precautions, the following **Use of 15-Passenger Vans** policy is applicable:

1. Vans should be operated by experienced drivers (minimum age of 21 years) who understand and are familiar with the handling characteristics of a loaded van. When renting vans from the University's fleet, drivers must either watch a 10-minute video at least once or have a commercial driver's license.
2. Seatbelts must be used by all occupants.
3. Vehicles must be equipped with good quality and properly inflated tires.
4. With the exception of vans that have been retrofitted to accommodate up to twelve (12) passengers, loads should be limited to a maximum of ten (10) occupants. **DO NOT ALLOW PASSENGERS OR HEAVY STORAGE BEHIND THE REAR AXLE.**

5. An authorized backup driver should be available for all trips over four (4) hours one way, or if a trip is expected to extend later than 2:00 a.m. Rest stops every two (2) hours are also recommended.
6. Drivers shall maintain adequate distance between vehicles since additional braking/stopping distance is required for loaded vehicles that size.
7. Towing trailers and using roof racks for storage should not be utilized.
8. Van drivers shall not use a cell phone unless the van is safely stopped off the roadway.
9. Cruise control should not be used on rainy, snowy, or icy roads. Vans should be operated at or below posted speed limits.

Risk Management recommends that, whenever possible, smaller vans, mini-vans or mini-buses be used instead of 15-passenger vans.