

Safety Procedures and Policies for Driving Vans and the Mini Bus



Course Objective

The objective of this presentation is to increase the safety awareness of passenger van drivers, thus reducing the risk of accidents, especially rollovers.



Cause for Concern:

National Highway Transportation Safety Administration Report

Multi-passenger vans have an increased rollover risk under certain conditions.

The risk of rollover increases dramatically as the number of occupants increases from fewer than five occupants to over ten passengers.

15-passenger vans (with 10 or more occupants) had a rollover rate in single vehicle crashes that is nearly 5 times the rate of those that were lightly loaded.

INTRODUCTION



Many people, when they hop into the driver's seat of a multi-passenger van or bus, expect to drive it just like they do their own car. Unfortunately, this belief puts them and their passengers at risk, because these vehicles don't handle like passenger cars. Driving them requires certain safety precautions. Understanding why these types of vehicles need special care will get you and your **STUDENTS** to your destination safely.

Van & Bus Safety

Factors that contribute to safety:

- size
- design
- safety measures/practices
- driver training
- regulatory compliance

Safety Guidelines

The first thing to remember when driving a van is that it isn't simply a big car.

A van handles differently, especially when fully loaded. Drivers should be trained and experienced.

As a comparison, federal law requires a commercial driver's license to transport 16 or more people for commercial purposes.

Driving Safety Tips

- General driving tips
- Loading and unloading
- Dealing with aggressive drivers
- Backing the vehicle
- Highway driving
- City driving
- Emergency situations
- Vehicle accidents

General Driving Tips

- Obey all laws, signs and speed limits
- Stay in the right lane unless passing slower vehicles, then return to right lane
- Drive with courtesy



General Driving Tips

- Be calm when driving
- Be alert when driving and stay focused
- No cell phones, Ipods, blackberrys or other hand held devices or action that could cause distraction while driving
- Check on road conditions prior to departing
- Know where you are going before leaving
- Drive defensively

General Driving Tips

- Don't tailgate; leave more space between you and the vehicle in front of you than you would if you were driving a car. A van requires much more braking distance.
- On the highway, be mindful of your blind spots. Allow more space and use side-mirrors when changing lanes.

Most rollovers are a result of sudden steering maneuver while traveling at high speeds.

Therefore:

- Do not follow other vehicles too closely
- Avoid changing lanes abruptly

Loading



Loading

- Never overload a van
- Never exceed gross vehicle weight. GVW is the maximum allowable weight of the vehicle, including all passengers, cargo, and fuel
- Consult the owner's manual for the gross vehicle weight
- Never stack items above the level of the seat backs
- Cargo should be:
 - ◆ evenly distributed
 - ◆ packed as closely to the floor as possible
 - ◆ properly restrained and secured

Loading and Unloading (continued)

Picking up and dropping off passengers is more than opening and closing the door.

Do it right every day, and no one will remember or care.

Do it wrong **once**, and no one will ever forget.

Loading and Unloading (continued)

- ▶ Fill in the front seats first
- ▶ If possible, have passengers and cargo forward of the rear axle
- ▶ If the van is loaded to capacity, remind yourself that the center of gravity has shifted and the van will handle differently than when you are driving alone or with just a few people
- ▶ You should never have more than the maximum # of people riding in the van
- ▶ Avoid placing loads on the roof of the van, doing so increases the risk of a rollover

Loading and Unloading (continued)

- Put the van in park
- Set the parking brake
- Do not unload passengers on the traffic side of the van

Loading and Unloading (continued)

- Instruct passengers who ***must*** cross the street to cross *at least* 10 feet in front of the van/bus
- Wait for traffic to stop ***before*** you allow passengers to exit the bus
- Don't move the van/bus until all passengers are safely across the street and accounted for

Dealing with Aggressive Drivers

- Avoid eye contact
- Don't cut in front of other drivers
- Allow fellow drivers to merge
- Don't aggravate fellow drivers with hand gestures
- Don't tailgate
- Use your horn sparingly



Backing Up the Vehicle

- Use a spotter
- Back to the left (driver's side)
- Avoid backing up if you miss a ramp/exit.
- Use outside mirrors (adjust ahead of time, practice adjusting)
- Park in an area, if possible, where you do not have to back-up

Highway Driving

- Lane changes and signals
- Merges
- Blind Spots
- Slow moving vehicles

EVERYTHING takes more time and space than you may be used to in your car!



Common Causes of Rollovers

- Hitting a Ditch or Embankment
- Running into soft soil
- Running into or over a curb or similar object
- Over-correcting the steering when:
 - A wheel drops off the pavement
 - Having a panic reaction to an emergency
- Over-correcting, referred to as over-steering, especially at high speeds

Minimizing Rollover Risks

- **Ensure that all drivers are trained for safety of vehicle**
- **Perform pre- and post-trip maintenance checks**
- **Ensure that seatbelts are worn by all occupants**
- **Drive conservatively**
- **Check quality of tires and tires pressure**
- **Do not exceed the passenger/load capacity of the van**
- **Fill the front seats first**
- **Do not pull trailers**
- **Never load items on the roof**
- **A full gas tank has a lower center of gravity**
- **Carry out routine maintenance checks**
- **Ensure that data is recorded**

Emergency Situations

- Encountering emergency vehicles
- Headlights go out
- Tire blow out
- Engine failure
- Break Failure
- Plan B for your passengers?
- **BE PREPARED- HAVE A PLAN!**

Driver Qualifications

The driver:

- Must have a valid, state-issued driver's license
- Must have an acceptable MVR (meets District's written policy for vehicle usage)
- Must have completed driver training or behind-the-wheel training for mini-bus
- Must be physically and emotionally prepared for the job

Basic Awareness/Training

All drivers must be competent and have a clear understanding of:

- proper mirror adjustments
- turning
- backing
- overhead clearance
- hazard avoidance
- defensive driving
- skidding

Basic Awareness/Training (continued)

- night driving
- stopping distance
- loading/unloading
- safe emergency exiting
- communication devices
- safety equipment
- incident reporting

Basic Awareness/Training (continued)

- Please check out the van and drive it prior to picking up students
- Take the time to “test your ability” before driving students!

Tips on Safe Driving

- Drive during the day if possible
- Have someone stay awake in the front seat with you to help keep you alert
- Take breaks often, especially if feeling tired
- Never drive after drinking or taking drugs, which includes some prescription and over-the-counter medications
- Drive at a safe speed for the weather and road conditions
- Remember, the speed you normally drive in a car may be too fast for a van or mini bus!



Vehicle Accidents

- **Relax! Do not panic.**
- **Check on passengers.**
- **Remain at the scene of the accident.**
- **Call police and wait for them to arrive.**
- **Gather all of the facts:**
 - ◆ **summary of events, while they are fresh in your mind;**
 - ◆ **date of accident;**
 - ◆ **time of accident;**
 - ◆ **location of passengers inside vehicle;**
 - ◆ **contact information for all parties involved;**
 - ◆ **photos of the scene, if possible.**
- **Refer to “The Trust” Vehicle Insurance Card located in the glove compartment.**
- **Report the accident to school authorities.**

Vehicle Accidents, Collision or Mechanical Difficulty

- **During regular business hours, immediately call Sandy Thompson or Maria Parillo at the District Office**
- **If the accident occurs outside of business hours, call your supervisor immediately.**
- **When traveling you must be prepared with the following:**
 - **a cell phone**
 - **your supervisor's phone # and cell #**
 - **a credit card in case of emergency or incident requiring roadside assistance or vehicle repair**

In the event of damage or loss to vehicle, the District will need the following:

- **description of vehicle (year, make, model, VIN, license plate, mileage)**
- **date and time of loss**
- **cause of loss**
- **name of person involved in damage/loss to vehicle**
- **person to contact and phone # regarding accident**

Responsibilities of Person In Charge

The PIC is responsible for:

- Verification of driver training (Elsa, HR)
- Verification of each driver's acceptable MVR (Elsa, HR)
- Inspection and service of fleet (Sven, HS)

Responsibilities of Person In Charge (continued)

- Verification of credit card agreement-
Margie Jones,
Admin Asst. to Superintendent
- Assignment of appropriate vehicle-

Vans-Athletic Dept/HS, Ext. 8412

Mini-bus-Jill Falkoff/CS, Ext. 7547

Checkout Procedures

1. Driver submits paperwork to be an approved driver
2. Driver signs credit card agreement
3. Driver requests a PO to be put into place for gas card
4. Driver makes a reservation for the date needed (can be same day or day before)
5. Driver picks up gas card
6. Driver picks up keys from Sven or Martha (Athletic Dept)



Checkout Procedures (continued)

7. Pick up vehicle and make sure you are comfortable with the driving (can test drive it, first!)
8. A pre-trip inspection takes place
9. The trip occurs
10. A post-trip inspection occurs
11. Notify Sven or Facilities of any maintenance or repair items needed

Which vehicle do you need?

- 2016 Transit = 10 Students
(no students in front seat!)
- Chevy Van = 9 + Driver
- Old Ford Van = 6 + Driver
- New Ford Van = 10 + Driver
- Mini-Bus = 14 Passengers

Need Behind-the-Wheel Training to drive!

