

15-Passenger Van Safety Tips

Organizations commonly use 15-passenger vans, as they are convenient for transporting students, seniors, sports groups, or other members; however, these vehicles are more likely to be involved in a single-vehicle rollover crash than any other type of vehicle, according to the National Highway Traffic Administration (NHTSA). It is critical for organizations that use 15-passenger vans to be aware of the associated risks and the NHTSA's recommendations for reducing the chances of a rollover crash.

The NHTSA recommends that 15-passenger van safety precautions include the following:

1. Keep your passenger load light. NHTSA research has shown that the rollover risk for 15-passenger vans increases dramatically as the number of occupants increases from fewer than five to more than ten. The rollover rate of 15-passenger vans (with 10 or more occupants) in single-vehicle crashes is nearly three times the rate of those that are lightly loaded. Furthermore, it is imperative that organizations never allow more than 15 people to ride in a 15-passenger van.
2. Check your van's tire pressure frequently — at least once a week. Improperly inflated tires can change handling characteristics, increasing the prospect of a rollover crash in 15-passenger vans. According to the NHTSA, 11% of fatal 15-passenger van rollover crashes are attributed to tire failure. Check tire pressure at least once a week using the manufacturer's recommended pressure levels.
3. Require all occupants to use their seat belts or the appropriate child restraint. An unrestrained 15-passenger van occupant involved in a single-vehicle crash is approximately four times more likely to be killed than a restrained occupant, reports the NHTSA. Wearing seat belts increases the chances of survival during a rollover crash.
4. Whenever possible, seat passengers and place cargo forward of the rear axle, and avoid placing any loads on the roof. To lower the vehicle's center of gravity and reduce the chance of rollover, fill the seats from front to back and avoid overloading the van or placing any loads on the roof. When the van is not full, seat the passengers in front of the rear axle. Follow the manufacturer's guidelines for maximum weight of passengers and cargo.
5. Be mindful of speed and road conditions. NHTSA analysis of 15-passenger van crashes also shows that the risk of rollover increases significantly at speeds over 50 miles per hour and on curved roads. Keep in mind that 15-passenger vans require additional braking time and cannot handle abrupt maneuvers the way cars can. Always obey the posted speed limit, and reduce speed as needed based on road and weather conditions.
6. Only qualified drivers should be behind the wheel. Ensure drivers of 15-passenger vans have a valid driver's license, preferably a commercial driver's license. Ensure drivers are experienced and operate this type of vehicle on a regular basis, and, that they only operate these vehicles when well rested and fully alert.

For more information, including free copies of 15-passenger van safety hangtags, as well as the latest NHTSA research and analysis, please visit the agency's web site at <https://www.nhtsa.gov>. Hangtags can also be ordered at no cost by contacting NHTSA's Vehicle Safety Hotline directly at 888-327-4236.

References

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (n.d.). 15-Passenger Vans. Retrieved on September 11, 2018 from <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/15-passenger-vans>

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