

JOB AID

15-Passenger Van Safety

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If you drive a 15-passenger van the same way you would drive a car, you are putting yourself, your passengers and everyone else on the road at risk for dangerous accidents.

Driving a 15-Passenger Van vs. Driving a Car

15-passenger vans are longer, wider and heavier than cars. As a result, they:

- Are more likely to roll over or fishtail
- Make wider turns
- Require more space to change lanes
- Have bigger blind spots
- Require more time to stop, slow and speed up

Before Driving a Van

Inspect the van to make sure everything is in good working condition. Pay particular attention to:

- Lights
- Wipers
- Horn
- Mirrors
- Tires

Loading a Van

- Load cargo and people in front of the rear axle, if possible
- Distribute passengers evenly on each side
- Secure loose items
- Make sure everyone wears seat belts, including you
- Make passengers aware of how to exit the van in the event of an emergency
- When transporting children, make sure they are restrained according to law
- Do not transport anything on top of the van or tow a trailer
- Do not load more than 15 people in a 15-passenger van (driver + 14 passengers)

Driving a Van

- Move slowly, steadily and predictably
- Signal earlier than you would in a car
- Know your vehicle's height
- Try to drive in the center of your lane
- Be aware of your vehicle's length

Turning

- Make wide turns at corners and roadway curves to accommodate the van's width and length
- A right turn should not begin until the rear wheels have reached the pivot point of the turn
- Move slowly while turning

Following Distance and Braking

It takes longer to stop in a 15-passenger van; increase your following distance and begin braking early. When braking:

- Use light, gradual pressure
- Give yourself plenty of time and distance to slow down
- Add additional time and distance in wet and inclement weather conditions
- Use your brakes periodically when driving on descending grades

Backing and Parking

Avoid backing up whenever possible. Park in a place where you can pull forward so you don't have to back into or out of a parking space. When driving an unfamiliar van, practice backing in a safe location.

When you have to back up:

- Use a spotter
- Take your time
- Stay away from barriers around you
- Back to the driver's side (left) for better visibility
- Be aware of blind spots

Changing Lanes

- Signal well in advance
- Be aware of your blind spots
- Account for slower acceleration/deceleration
- Allow room for the length of your vehicle

Hazardous Conditions

Slow down when:

- Weather includes rain, snow, fog or ice
- Conditions are windy
 - Be prepared for heavier wind and gusts near open fields, overpasses, bridges and tunnels
 - Large trucks and buses can also cause strong winds as they drive by
- Roads curve
- Roads are rural or unpaved

If you make a mistake, avoid hard braking or panicky steering.