



Georgia Tech Van Safety Advisory

During the past two years, higher education institutions experienced several serious vehicle crashes involving 15-passenger vans that resulted in seven fatalities and forty-one serious injuries. 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 nearly three times the rate of lightly loaded vans. Consequently, the Environmental Health & Safety EH&S Department is issuing this advisory as a precursor to a new policy on usage of passenger vans. The policy will include new procedures that have been developed to protect the safety of all members of the Georgia Tech community that operate and ride in these vehicles.

- ✓ **No more than nine people, including the driver, will be allowed to ride in a passenger van.**
- ✓ **Roof racks may not be used for any type of cargo.**
- ✓ **Individuals who are authorized to drive passenger vans should attend a special van-safety driving course offered by the EH&S Department. A schedule of upcoming classes is available online at www.trainsweb.gatech.edu/mastcal.asp or by calling 404-385-0263.**

The safety of the Georgia Tech community is of the utmost importance. Therefore, compliance with any forthcoming policy and this advisory is mandatory and extends to all passenger vans owned, leased, and rented in Georgia Tech's name for any university sponsored program or event. EH&S Department also take this opportunity to remind you of the following safety precautions intended to reduce the likelihood of being involved in a serious collision while operating a passenger van:

Danger #1: Vans are more likely to tip over due to their higher center of gravity

- Reduce your speed to **BELOW** the speed limit posted for all turns. **The posted limit is safe for cars, not vans.** In addition, try to avoid steering with sudden or jerky motions and **always** wear your seat belt when operating a passenger van.

Danger #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 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.

Danger # 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. This compensates for the slower acceleration of the passenger van.
- Use a 4-second following distance between your van and the rear of the vehicle ahead. This is done by starting to count when you see the rear bumper of the vehicle ahead of you pass a fixed object such as a signpost. Count "one-one thousand, two-one thousand, three-one thousand, four-one thousand". Your van should not reach the fixed object before you reach a count of "four-one thousand". If you do, slow down and increase the distance until you can count to "four-one thousand" before reaching the fixed object.

Danger #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. Try to keep the area to sides of your vehicle clear of other vehicles.
- Check the height of your van before attempting to enter any parking deck to ensure that there is enough room to fit.

PLEASE DRIVE SAFELY AND ALWAYS REMEMBER TO WEAR YOUR SEAT BELT

Additional Notes:

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has issued a cautionary rollover warning to users of passenger vans that provide seating for a driver and up to fourteen passengers. These so-called 15-passenger vans have a risk of rollover that increases dramatically as the number of passengers increases from fewer than five to the maximum number. Fifteen-passenger vans with ten or more occupants had a rollover rate in single vehicle crashes that was nearly three times the rate of lightly loaded vans. NHTSA-sponsored research showed that loading a 15-passenger van shifts the center of gravity upward and rearward leading to an increase in the likelihood of rollover. Shifting the center of gravity increases the potential for loss of control in panic maneuvers.