

PASSENGER VAN TRANSPORTATION SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Large passenger vans, especially those that seat fifteen people, are a popular method of transportation for many nonprofits because they are size-efficient and cost-effective thereby causing passenger vans to be more of a high demand. Because of their size these vehicles can pose a safety risk to inexperienced van drivers and other road users. While passenger vans are convenient, they do not drive like other vehicles. Drivers must use caution to minimize the risk associated with operation.

Vans should be inspected daily. It is recommended that van drivers insist that all occupants wear seat belts at all times; that drivers of passenger vans are trained and experienced; tires are checked at least once a week, using the manufacturer's recommended pressure levels; and no loads are placed on the roof of the vehicle. Prior to operating, inspect seatbelts and seats to ensure that they are in good working condition and not frayed or jammed.

BEST PRACTICES FOR PASSENGER VAN SAFETY

Experience

- Passenger vans should only be driven by experienced, licensed drivers who regularly operate passenger vans.

Occupancy/Cargo

- Never exceed the occupancy level of a passenger van. Fill the seats from front to back. When the van is not full, passengers should sit in seats that are in front of the rear axle. Check strategic placement of cargo (forward of rear axle, nothing on roof, no trailer, etc.)

Seatbelts

- All occupants must wear a seat belt at all times. Inspect seat belts regularly and replace any missing, broken, or damaged belts and/

or buckles. An unrestrained passenger-van occupant is more likely to be injured and/or killed than a restrained occupant (nhtsa.gov).

Attention

- Drivers should remain focused on the task of safe driving by being well rested and attentive. The use of handheld electronics and phones should never be utilized at the wheel. Limit conversation with other passengers, and avoid eating while driving

Speed

- Obey the speed limit and reduce speed as needed based upon weather and road hazards. Remember that passenger vans require additional braking time because they cannot handle abrupt maneuvers. This includes maintaining a safe cushion of space around the vehicle and driving in the right lane when possible.

Ensure that the vehicle is turned off, keys removed, and doors are locked when left unattended.

Resources:

- <https://nonprofitrisk.org/resources/articles/safety-is-not-a-luxury-understanding-the-risks-of-passenger-vans/>
- <https://nhtsa.gov>