

VAN SAFETY EDUCATION REFERENCES

- WSU *Safety Policies and Procedures Manual (SPPM)* 7.10: Requirements for Driving Vehicles on University Business
- *SPPM* 7.20: Motor Vehicle Accidents
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration websites for van safety:
<http://www.nhtsa.gov/Driving+Safety> **and/or**
<http://www.safercar.gov/Vehicle+Shoppers/Passenger+Van+Safety>
- Washington State Office of Financial Management *15-Passenger Van Drivers Basic Loss Prevention Guide* website at:
<http://www.ofm.wa.gov/rmd/loss/passenger.asp>
- To review all other policies, as needed, pertaining to the authorized, safe, and efficient operation of vehicles used on official state business, see Washington State Department of Enterprise Services (DES), Enterprise Wide Transportation Policy (12.30.40(13)).

SAFE MANEUVERING TIPS FOR FULL-SIZE VANS

- The **stopping distance** for a passenger van is always greater than the stopping distance for a car due to the increased weight of the van (especially with a full load of passengers and/or equipment).
- **Passenger Vans vs. Sedans Stopping Distance**
 - ♦ The passenger van weighs more and takes longer to stop than a car especially when loaded with passengers or equipment.
 - ♦ A four second following distance between a van and the vehicle in front of the van is a recommended minimum.
 - ♦ Greater stopping distances must be used when traveling in adverse weather conditions or on poor roads.
- **Making a lane change or merging** into traffic is challenging when driving any vehicle, but even more so with passenger vans. The following are general safe practices for changing lanes or merging into traffic with a passenger van:
 - ♦ Create more space around the passenger van by reducing or increasing van speed.
 - ♦ Signal intentions by engaging blinkers early.
 - ♦ Use the mirrors as needed.
 - ♦ Yield the right-of-way when necessary.
 - ♦ Ask for passenger assistance if needed to verify maneuvering for merging.
- The **turning radius** on a van is greater than that of a regular vehicle due to its length. As a result it takes more room to turn corners in a van. The passenger van driver may practice turns before driving on the road in order to become familiar with the dynamics of this maneuver. Drivers should consider the following safety practices when turning.
 - ♦ When turning left:
 - Start the turn farther toward into the intersection. Due to the length of the van, the van has a tendency to take the turn in a diagonal direction.
 - Plan plenty of room in the intersection to avoid striking the vehicle waiting to enter the intersection from the left.
 - Make a square turn by moving the vehicle just far enough to the left so when the right turn is made, the rear of the vehicle won't run over the curb.

SAFE MANEUVERING TIPS FOR FULL-SIZE VANS (cont.)

- **Turning (cont.)**
 - ♦ When turning right (cont.):
 - Signal turning intentions farther in advance than normal to alert other drivers of the intention to turn or the turn direction.
 - Complete a check to ensure there is no oncoming traffic. On a four-lane road, check the mirrors before merging left to ensure traffic is clear when preparing for the right turn.
 - Start the right turn as far into the intersection as possible to avoid interfering with oncoming traffic to the right.
 - Do a "last glance at the right-side mirror" to avoid a situation where a pedestrian, bike, or another automobile may have "squeezed" in between the van and the curb when more space was made for the wider turning radius.
- **Backing** a van is also different from a sedan, and often requires practice. Drivers should ask passengers for assistance during the backing maneuver when necessary to prevent injuries or damage to the agency van or other vehicles.
 - ♦ If the route is planned in advance, give consideration to parking the van in a spot that allows it to be pulled forward to avoid backing. If backing the vehicle is unavoidable, drivers should consider the following safe backing tips:
 - Back towards the driver's side.
 - Use spotters if needed. Spotters should be sure they are positioned so the driver can see and hear them. Drivers must ensure they maintain visual contact with the spotters during the entire backing process.
 - Use the mirrors.
 - When the situation dictates or there is a question about obstructions (particularly if the obstruction involves pedestrians, workers, etc.), the driver should get out of the van and briefly survey the area where the van is to be backed.
- Drivers are to exercise extra caution and consideration when **picking up or dropping off passengers**. Drivers are to ensure that passengers safely exit the vehicle. The following are tips for increasing safety during passenger pick-up or drop-off.
 - ♦ Position the van out of traffic or the travel lane.
 - ♦ Turn on hazard flashers.
 - ♦ Park the van on a level surface and apply emergency brake.
 - ♦ Never leave the driver's seat when the engine is running.
 - ♦ Assist riders to enter or exit safely if assistance is requested or required.
 - ♦ When loading passengers, ensure that the number of passengers does not exceed the number of seats with seat belts.
 - ♦ When unloading passengers, remind exiting riders to walk behind the van and to be cautious of traffic.
 - ♦ Check to make sure that the passenger door is securely closed.
 - ♦ Before pulling forward, make sure that all passengers have cleared the forward path of the van.
- The following are tips for **safely parking** the passenger van:
 - ♦ Select a parking place with plenty of room on the sides and which, if possible, enables to driver to pull forward rather than having to back out.
 - ♦ On a hill, turn the wheels so that the van rolls against the curb.
 - ♦ Always set the parking brake.
 - ♦ Place the transmission gear in "park."
 - ♦ Turn off all electrical accessories.
 - ♦ Close all windows.

SAFE MANEUVERING TIPS FOR FULL-SIZE VANS (cont.)

- **Before leaving** the van unattended, the passenger van driver should ensure that:
 - ♦ The engine is shut off and the keys removed.
 - ♦ All doors are locked.
- In preparation for driving a passenger van, drivers should check the position of the **mirrors** to ensure they are adjusted properly for maximum vision. If needed, the driver may ask one of the passengers to assist as mirror adjustments are made. It is important to ensure that there is unobstructed visibility in the area alongside of the van to minimize creating a blind spot.
 - ♦ Properly adjusted mirrors enable the driver to apply to the basic defensive driving practice of scanning mirrors every five to ten seconds, and looking at the roadway in front and behind while driving. This enables the driver to spot traffic hazards or other conditions and respond to them in a controlled, rather than potentially panicked, manner.
 - ♦ Using mirrors allows the driver to be alert to road hazards, traffic, pedestrians or bicycles, and changing weather conditions.
- Washington state laws require **seatbelt use**. Fines for non-use may be issued to the University driver (and are driver's responsibility to pay). The importance of seatbelt use for driver and passenger safety is stressed in all National Highway Traffic Safety Administration advisories. The driver is to ensure that all passengers buckle their seatbelts. The best time to check to see if all passengers are buckled in their seatbelts is before the van is started.
 - ♦ Seatbelt check
 - Verbal reminder for passengers to "buckle up."
 - Quick check to see that all passengers have their seatbelts fastened before moving the van.
- **Driving defensively** pays off. It's worth the courtesy and effort of giving the other driver the "right-of-way." Courteous driving practices minimize citizens' complaints, and may also help deter potential road rage incidents.
- If forecasts predict snow, ice, or other **adverse conditions** for a planned trip, departments may consider the option of cancelling or postponing the trip. This is an easy way to avoid risk.
 - ♦ Reducing speed is a simple but important safety practice when driving in rain, snow, ice, fog, or other severe weather conditions. Set the driving speed at the posted speed limit *only* when the most excellent road conditions are present. It is always advisable to reduce speed if unsure about whether a specific condition calls for lower speeds.
 - ♦ Driving in adverse conditions requires close attention to what's happening all around. In addition to the car directly ahead, drivers need to be aware of what is happening with the next several cars ahead. Other drivers may be reacting to a situation that is not yet in the van driver's view. The practice of continually scanning the traffic as far ahead as possible helps in determining if there is a situation that requires a reaction or an adjustment in order to safely maintain control in maneuvering the passenger van.
- The van's boxy non-aerodynamic shape, combined with a high center of gravity, can make driving difficult in **windy situations**. This is especially difficult if a blast of wind hits the side of the van. Another wind source to be cautious of is the wind vacuum that is created by large trucks and buses. The van may be "rocked" when alongside of such vehicles, with the wind coming from any direction. These conditions require the driver to keep both hands on the steering wheel and carefully watch of the road ahead. Depending on overall conditions, it may be necessary to lower the speed to keep the van in its lane. Extra caution is required when driving on curves. Observe posted or lower than posted speed limits on curves.
- **Impaired driving**, whether caused by driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs or falling asleep at the wheel due to lack of rest may result in a vehicle gradually drifting out of its lane onto the shoulder or into the median of the roadway. This is all too often followed by the driver panicking and overcorrecting to bring the vehicle back under control. Oversteering and other jerky, quick maneuvers contribute significantly to potential passenger van rollover.

A habit of driving alert and without impairment contributes significantly to the safety of the passenger van driver, his or her passengers, and the driving public over all.