



## Tips for 15-Passenger Van Safety

Organizations should look to retire and replace their 15 passenger vans because of serious safety concerns associated with these vehicles. In the meantime good practices can be enhanced by following these safety tips suggested by the [National Highway Transportation Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#).

**Tire Pressure** - Inspect the tires and check tire pressure before each use. A van's tires need to be properly inflated and the tread should not be worn down. Excessively worn or improperly inflated tires can lead to a loss of vehicle control and possibly a rollover. Pressure for front and back tires may be different, and pressure is likely higher than that required for car tires. A placard on the driver's side B-pillar or the owner's manual lists manufacturer recommended tire size and pressure.

**Spares** - Avoid using old spares when replacing worn tires since all tires, even unused tires, weaken with age. Used 15-passenger vans may come with new looking spare tires that are many years old and could be dangerous.

**Driver** - 15-passenger vans should only be operated by trained, experienced drivers who operate these vehicles on a regular basis. The driver needs to possess a valid driver's license for state of residence (a commercial driver's license is preferred). 15-passenger van drivers need additional training since these vehicles handle differently than passenger cars, especially when fully loaded.

**Attention** - Driver should be well-rested and attentive to driving at all times. Cell phone use by the driver while the van is in motion should be prohibited. Driver should also limit conversation with other passengers, and drive time should be limited to eight hours per 24-hour period.

**Size** - A 15-passenger van is substantially longer and wider than a car, and thus requires more space to maneuver. It also requires additional reliance on the side-view mirrors for changing lanes.

**Speed** - Drive at a safe speed based on driving conditions. Driver should never exceed the posted speed limit. Always slow down if the roads are wet or icy because 15-passenger vans do not respond well to abrupt steering maneuvers and require additional braking time.

**Occupancy** - Never allow more than 15 people to ride in a 15-passenger van. When the van is not full, passengers should sit in seats that are in front of the rear axle.

**Cargo** - Cargo should be placed forward of the rear axle and placing any loads on the roof should be avoided. Do not tow anything behind the van. See the vehicle owner's manual for maximum weight of passengers and cargo and avoid overloading the van.

**Seat Belts** - All occupants need to wear seat belts at all times. Inspect seat belts regularly and replace any missing, broken or damaged belts and/or buckles. An unrestrained 15-passenger van occupant involved in a single-vehicle crash is approximately three times as likely to be killed as a restrained occupant.

More information on transportation safety is available from the [NHTSA](#) and in the [Safe-Wise Consulting Online Resource Library](#)