

HANDin HAND



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A church van carrying teenagers from a birthday party... four members of the Prairie View A&M University track team... a group of Long Island high school students and their teacher-driver...



They all have one thing in common. All were riding in 15-passenger vans that crashed with all too tragic—and common—results. Many were killed, many others maimed and disfigured in what are among the most lethal vehicles on the road today.

Rollover Rate

On May 26, 2005, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) published its fourth 15-passenger safety advisory in five years. NHTSA and the National Transportation Safety Board studies have shown that 15-passenger vans are three times more likely to rollover when carrying 10 or more passengers—than when carrying a lighter load. They have a high center of gravity. They tend to be unstable when operated at high speeds or with more than 10 occupants.



Tire Inflation

NHTSA's latest study focused on tire condition. (See Table 1). NHTSA

reported that 74% of 15-passenger vans had significantly mis-inflated tires. By contrast, 39% of passenger cars had significant inflation problems. Improperly inflated tires can change handling characteristics. This increases the prospect of a rollover crash in 15-passenger vans.

Vehicle	Mis-inflated by 25% or More	Underinflated by 25% or More
15-Passenger Vans	74%	57%
Other Vans	68%	54%
All Vans	72%	56%
Light Trucks From TPSS	39%	29%
Passenger Cars from TPSS	39%	27%

TABLE 1: Source: National Center for Statistics and Analysis, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Passenger Restraints

Passenger restraint effectiveness was the focus of earlier national studies. (Refer to Table 2). Nearly 80% of those who died in 15-passenger van roll overs were not buckled. Wearing safety belts saves lives.

Restraint Use	Number	Percent
Unrestrained	517	75.6%
Restrained	95	13.9%
Unknown	72	10.5%
Total	684	100.0%

TABLE 2: Source: NCSA, NHTSA, FARS 1990-2001 (Final), 2002 (ARF) Files. Data from 1990 to 2003.

the Heart of Partnership goes Hand in Hand

“...15-passenger vans have a higher center of gravity... they tend to be unstable at high speeds, or with more than 10 occupants...”

Safe Operation of 15 Passenger Vehicles *continued*

Unacceptably Elevated Rates

Consumer alerts and educational efforts are apparently working. From 1992-2002, the rollover fatality rate of 15-passenger vans decreased 26%. Collaborative efforts need to continue. Despite the good news, more needs to be done. Improvements still leave consumers with a vehicle that has an unacceptably elevated rate of fatalities in relation to other vehicles.

Preventive Measures

What is needed are increased controls. Below is a list of nationally accepted prevention measures that can be implemented today. Contact Great American Specialty Human Services or your insurance agent for risk control services to reduce risks within your operations.



CONDITIONS

POTENTIAL RESULTS

PREVENTION MEASURES

DRIVER'S

Poor Health

- Inattentive driving
- Faulty decision making
- Delayed response

- Driver application & interview
- Pre-hire & random license checks
- Personal & professional reference checks
- Drug testing: job requirement and random

Fatigue

- Inattentive driving
- Delayed response
- Falling asleep at the wheel

- Driving time limitations
- Long trip trained/qualified relief drivers
- Scheduled rest breaks on long trips
- Defensive driver training

Distractions

- Cell phone
- Maps
- Unfamiliar/unadjusted equipment
- Food

- Emergency cell phone usage only
- Use speaker phones or 2-way radios
- Pre-trip map study—pull off road if needed
- Pre-trip vehicle familiarization/equip adjustment
- Consume food/drinks when stopped

VEHICLE'S

Tire

- Blow out
- Rollover

- Pre-and post-trip vehicle inspections (cracked, worn, over and mis-inflated tires)
- Maintenance program (tire replacement/rotation)
- Limit number of passengers to 10
- Passengers & cargo forward of rear axle
- Require proper seat belt/child restraints usage
- No roof cargo storage, do not haul cargo

Occupant/
Cargo Load

- Rollover

Information within this article has been extracted from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board. Further information maybe obtained from their websites.

For more information on safe operations of large vans, visit www.hsd.gaic.com.

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