Applicability

These guidelines apply to all Portland State University (PSU) employees, students, volunteers or anyone acting at the direction of and on behalf of PSU while operating large capacity (7 – 12) passenger vans.

Due to safety concerns, 15-passenger vans are not allowed to be used while on University Business.

Introduction

Large capacity passenger van is different than driving a passenger car, and require additional vehicle introduction and driving experience. Large capacity vans are larger in height, width, length, and weight, and have much larger blind spots on each side and to the rear of the van. The vehicle’s center of gravity, which is higher than most cars, may also shift more significantly, which can increase risk of rollover. Large capacity vans also require a longer stopping distance, van drivers must allow more time and distance between vehicles to compensate.

The University does not own 15-passenger vans, which makes this rule easy to follow. If it is necessary to rent a van from a third party, the University recommends renting/leasing the appropriate number of 7-passenger vans or contracting with a professional transit service for transporting larger groups more than 12 passengers.

As a University van driver, the driver has a responsibility to your passengers, the University, and to the public with whom they share the highway. The following are some Van Safety Information Tips from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) that you should be aware of prior to driving a van.

Guidelines for safe operation of large capacity (7 – 12) passenger vans

Please read the following information carefully. It is the responsibility of all approved drivers to review and adhere to the following guidelines.

Before leaving:

- Inspect the van prior to any trip. Make sure all vehicle equipment is working properly. Vans not operating properly should not be utilized until proper maintenance is obtained.
- Load the van with properly. Do not overload the van with either equipment or people.
- Load vans as evenly as possible and spread out passenger load evenly.
Luggage/equipment should be placed in the rear behind the last seat and secured
Avoid loading equipment on the roof as this can shift the center of gravity to the top and increases rollover risk. Roof racks and carriers are not recommended for these vehicles.
Do not tow a trailer with a large capacity van.

Driver Adjustments:
- Vans have larger blind spots to the sides and rear than a passenger car.
- Always adjust your seat and mirrors for optimal view of angles prior to leaving.
- If unfamiliar with the vehicle, take note where lights, windshield wipers, air-conditioning & emergency signal controls are located, as well as gas tank door.
- Secure any loose or miscellaneous items in the front driver area (ie. purses, cd’s, etc.)
- Drivers and all passengers must always wear seatbelts

Seatbelt Safety and Information:
- Only transport as many people as there are available seatbelts.
- The Driver and ALL passengers should be seated in recognized seats and must wear seat belts properly (Seatbelts reduce risk of death in rollover accidents by 75%)
- The Driver should make sure all passengers have seatbelts on before leaving.

Practice if Possible:
- If unfamiliar with driving vans, it is recommended the driver take time to practice backing, turning and parking with the van in a safe and non-congested area such as an empty parking lot.
- Make note of turning capacity / radius around curbs and the extra height of the van for parking in a parking garage.
- Use a spotter outside the van while maneuvering, especially in tight spaces of if visibility is restricted.

Safety Tips While Driving:
Avoid driving practices that lead to loss of control, such as:
- Sharp Turns: Take Corners and Exit Ramps slow and easy
- Excessive Speed: Note speed limits and weather conditions
- Abrupt Maneuvers: Change lanes slowly – do not jerk the wheel
- Driving while fatigued: Change drivers or stop to rest every 2 – 3 hours
- During extreme windy or hazardous weather conditions
- Following too closely:
  - Allow at least a 4 second following distance
  - Avoid Sudden stops or panic stops
  - Look ahead and signal early and frequently.
  - Slow down gradually
• Avoid distractions such as eating, excessive radio volume, cell phones, searching/reaching for items, etc. – Never text while driving
  o Oregon’s Distracted Driving Law states it is illegal to drive while holding or using an electronic device (e.g. cell phone, tablet, GPS, laptop). ... It is NOT legal to use the device when stopped at a stop light, stop sign, in traffic, etc.
  o If a cellphone or GPS device needs to be used, safely pull over to a complete stop and use the device, prior to re-entering the roadway.

• Backing:
  o Understand the blind spot is large in the rear of the van
  o Consider using emergency flashers when backing turn down radio and have passengers assist with ensuring all is clear behind the van.
  o Back up Slowly

• Turning and Changing lanes
  o Use turn signals well in advance
  o When turning a corner, you must make a wider swing with a van than with a car
  o Always watch for pedestrians, small vehicles, motorcycles and bicycles in intersections and to either side of the van when turning
  o When changing lanes, double check blind spots – ask passengers to assist
  o Take it slow when turning or changing lanes

• Intersection Safety:
  o Scan ahead at least 1 block as you approach intersections
  o Before entering the intersection, scan left-right-left before entering
  o Scan mirrors frequently
  o Check for pedestrians and bicycles entering the intersection area
  o Cover the brake with your foot as you enter the intersection. This helps reaction time if need to stop suddenly.

• Parking and Loading / Unloading:
  o Use extra caution and drive slowly whenever driving through a parking lot or other congested areas.
  o Watch carefully for pedestrians and other vehicles pulling in and backing out
  o If you are loading/unloading passengers or equipment, make sure you do so in the safest possible area.
  o Avoid unloading passengers in areas where they would have to cross through traffic after exiting the vehicle.
  o Always lock the van when it is unattended – double check door and window locks throughout the van.
  o If vehicle should go off road way or wheel drop off pavement:
    ▪ Avoid abrupt maneuvers (panic-like steering or overcorrecting)
    ▪ Gradually reduce vehicle speed
    ▪ Ease vehicle back onto roadway