

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PERSONAL VEHICLES AND VANS

15-passenger vans have a rollover risk that is similar to other light trucks and vans when carrying a few passengers. However, the risk of rollover increases dramatically as the number of occupants increases. 15-passenger vans cause the center of gravity to shift rearward and upward increasing the likelihood of rollover. The shift in the center of gravity will also increase the potential for loss of control in panic maneuvers. Wearing seat belts dramatically increases the chances of survival during a rollover crash. Traveling van passengers should wear seat belts at all times.

Blind Spots

Vans generally have larger blind spots on the sides and to the rear, adjust mirrors properly.

Weight

Vans are heavier than a car, especially when loaded with cargo or passengers. When pulling out in traffic, allow more distance to compensate for a van's slower acceleration.

Size

Vans are wider, longer and higher than a car, which makes them more susceptible to high winds. A van's height also requires more overhead clearance. When coming out from under an underpass, anticipate the wind may "move" the van. Keep both hands on the steering wheel.

Center of Gravity

Vans have a higher center of gravity, which can cause them to tip more easily. Use caution when entering or exiting a highway.

Driving Environment

As opposed to a car, the van driver's position over the front wheels changes his/her perspective of the driving environment. Also, the overhang of the van (distance between the rear tire and bumper) is important to consider when backing.

- Scan the area for obstacles behind, below and above the van.
- When backing, make sure there is enough overhang clearance.
- It may be necessary to use a spotter outside the van.
- Back slowly and check the mirrors.

Adverse Conditions

- Reduce your vehicle speed and increase your following distance in adverse weather.
- Hydroplaning can occur at speeds as low as 30 mph. When the road is wet, increase the stopping distance.

Cushion of Safety

A "cushion of safety" is the area around your van that you should try to keep free of other vehicles and pedestrians. Maintaining a safe following distance for vehicle control is perhaps the most critical part of the "cushion of safety."

- Scan 12-15 seconds ahead, which is about 1 to 1½ blocks in the city and ¼ mile on the highway. Know what is going on ahead of your vehicle.
- Maintain at least a 4-second following distance in ideal conditions. Increase the following distance in adverse weather or road conditions, driving at night, or if you have a tailgater.