

SAFETY ADVISORY

Phasing Out 15-Passenger Vans & Using 12-Passenger Vans

In response to well-known safety concerns involving the use of 15-passenger and 12-passenger vans, including the risk of injury or death to passengers, the University has implemented the following safety measures to reduce potential risk and liability.

The safety measures apply to all University departments that may **own**, **rent** or **borrow** 15-passenger and 12-passenger vans, and to all faculty, staff, students, and volunteers who may drive these vans on behalf of the University.

The safety measures are **effective immediately**.

Phasing out 15-Passenger Vans

"15-Passenger Van" is an extended version of the 12-passenger van and designed to accommodate up to 15 seats. The wheelbase is around 155". It is subject to the rollover warnings by the National Traffic Highway Safety Administration (NHTSA). Examples include the Ford E-350 or Club Wagon, Chevy Express and GMC Savanna. Sometimes a 15-passenger van is disguised as an 8, 10 or 12-passenger van because of its seating configuration, so please be cognizant of that. University departments may contact Motor Pool or Risk Management for advice on what constitutes a 15-passenger van.

The University will:

- Discontinue the new purchase or long-term lease of 15-passenger vans for passenger transport.
- Phase out use of owned 15-passenger vans for passenger transport by March 31, 2007.
- Discontinue short-term rentals or borrowing of 15-passenger vans for passenger transport. EXCEPT:
 - Departments with existing rental van reservations with local rental vehicle agencies may honor them until March 31, 2007.

Until use of 15-passenger vans is phased out on March 31, 2007, the following safety measures apply:

- The existing and *new* 12-passenger van safety measures outlined below on page 3 also apply to 15-passenger vans. EXCEPT:
 - 15-passenger vans drivers must be University employees who are at least 25 years old and have at least 5 years driving experience.
 - The rear bench seat must be removed.
 - Occupancy must be limited to 10 people.

The University will allow the use of 15-passenger vans that are physically converted to non-passenger use, such as cargo or maintenance. All seats must be permanently removed, except driver and front passenger seats and one bench seat directly behind. Maximum seating will be 5. All newly purchased vans used for this purpose will include the optional electronic stability control (ESC) feature, if not already a standard feature. If after-market ESC should become available, installation in currently owned vans is strongly encouraged.

Options to 15-Passenger Van Use for Passenger Transport: Options for University departments no longer using 15-passenger vans for passenger transport may include the following:

- **Motor Pool.** The University's Motor Pool provides a selection of vehicle options including hybrid and standard sedans, min-vans and 12-passenger vans. Website: www.wvu.edu/depts/fm/Help/MotorPool.html
- **Rental Cars.** The state rental car contract is currently with Enterprise Rent-A-Car, which provides a selection of vehicle options including hybrid and standard sedans, mini-vans, 12-passenger vans and sport utility vehicles (SUV's). Website: www.ga.wa.gov/pca/contract/05104c.doc
- **Charter Buses.** The University's Purchasing Department establishes contracts with local charter bus operators who must meet certain safety and pricing standards. These operators offer professionally driven vans, mini-coaches and buses. Website: www.wvu.edu/depts/purchasing/
- **Multiple Privately-Owned Cars.** The Washington State Patrol disputes the notion that using multiple privately-owned cars instead of 15-passenger vans increases the chance of accidents (Loss Prevention Review Team Report, Assessment of 15-Passenger Van Rollovers, Oct. 2005).

The University acknowledges the possible increased use of multiple privately-owned vehicles. If such vehicles are used, the University recommends that faculty and staff simply tell vehicle owners where and when to meet, leaving the transportation arrangements to vehicle owners, rather than arranging car pools, designating drivers and other travel details.

The University discourages "caravanning" of multiple vehicles. Following another vehicle diverts a driver's attention from traffic conditions and road hazards, and may cause drowsiness at night. Instead, drivers should plan travel routes in advance and equip themselves with adequate maps and directions to their destination. Meeting at predetermined points along the way, such as rest stops, is encouraged.

- **4X4 SUV's.** University acquisition of four-wheel drive SUV's is prohibited under the Governor's Executive Order (EO) 05-01 – Establishing Sustainability and Efficiency Goals for State Operations. University departments seeking exemptions from EO 05-01 must obtain written approval by the department's Vice President before purchasing or long-term leasing. Short-term rental of these vehicles by departments under the state rental car contract to meet programmatic needs is not prohibited. Website: www.governor.wa.gov/execorders/eoarchive/eo_05-01.pdf

Using 12-Passenger Vans

"12-Passenger Van" is a full-size van with a maximum seating capacity of 12. It is normally configured with 8 to 12 seats and has a wheelbase of around 135". University departments may contact Motor Pool or Risk Management for advice on what constitutes a 12-passenger van.

The following existing and *new* van safety measures apply to 12-passenger vans used for passenger transport:

- All van drivers must complete the state basic driver safety program, the University's van safety awareness training and continue operating in compliance with the University's existing van safety measures for large passenger vans, including the completion of state required documentation.
- Passengers shall be seated toward the front of the van, if possible.
- The driver and all passengers must wear seat belts at all times.
- Tire conditions and pressure must be checked before each trip. Refer to the vehicle owner's manual.
- Weather must be considered in pre-trip planning. Trips should be suspended or cancelled for hazardous driving conditions like fog, heavy rain, snow, ice and high winds.
- ***New*** - All newly purchased 12-passenger vans will include the optional electronic stability control (ESC) feature, if not already a standard feature. If after-market ESC should become available, installation in currently owned vans is strongly encouraged.
- ***New*** - All drivers must be University employees, students or registered volunteers who are at least 21 years old and have at least 5 years driving experience.
- ***New*** – Travel routes must be pre-determined and approved by appropriate department heads or driver supervisors when the trip is to a new or unfamiliar location for the driver.
- ***New*** – Vans may not be operated between 12 midnight and 6:00am without special permission from the department head or driver supervisor.
- ***New*** - For every 150 pounds of gear placed in the van, one occupant must be removed to avoid overloading. Gear must be safely stored.
- ***New*** - Towing and roof loads are not permitted.
- ***New*** - Speeds should be kept at or below posted truck speed limits on freeways and 50 MPH or posted speed limit, whichever is less, on rural roads or highways.
- ***New*** - K-12 aged and younger passengers are not permitted.

If you have any questions about the Safety Advisory, please contact Paul Mueller, Risk Management, at x3065 or paul.mueller@wwu.edu