

15-Passenger Van Users Warned of Increased Risk of Rollovers

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The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is issuing a cautionary warning to users of 15-passenger vans because of an increased rollover risk under certain conditions.

15-passenger vans with ten or more occupants had a rollover rate in single vehicle crashes that is nearly three times the rate of those that were lightly loaded.

Analysis Results

The results of a recent analysis by NHTSA revealed that 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 rises dramatically as the number of occupants increases from fewer than five occupants to more than ten passengers.

NHTSA's analysis revealed that loading the 15-passenger van causes the center of gravity to shift higher and toward the rear, thus increasing the likelihood of rollover. The shift in the center of gravity also increases the potential for a loss of control in panic maneuvers.

Precautions and Recommendations

Because of these risks, 15-passenger vans should always be operated by experienced drivers. A person transporting 16 or more people for commercial purposes is required to have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), which requires certain specialized knowledge and driving skills. Although the drivers of not-for-hire 15-passenger vehicles are not required to possess a CDL, they should still understand the handling characteristics of their vans, especially when the vehicle is fully loaded.

NHTSA's analysis also stresses the importance of seat belts. Eighty percent of those who died last year in single vehicle rollovers nationwide were not buckled up. Wearing seat belts greatly increases the chances of survival during a rollover crash. NHTSA urges that institutions using 15-passenger vans require seat belt use for all occupants at all times.

NHTSA made this information available because of these findings and because of several highly publicized rollover accidents involving 15-passenger vans loaded with college students (often driven by a fellow student rather than a professional driver). While federal law prohibits the sale of 15-passenger vans for the school-related transport of high school age and younger students, no such prohibition exists for vehicles to transport college students or other passengers.

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Marsh Risk Consulting encourages clients with passenger vans to review their van safety programs. We are advising our clients of these problems and can provide training to help keep driver and passenger safety a priority for fleet operators.

Contact Us

Marsh Risk Consulting's Fleet Specialty Group can help train operators in defensive driving techniques, such as Marsh's P.A.C.E. (Plan ahead - Analyze your surroundings - Communicate with others - Execute safety.)

For assistance in fleet-related issues, contact your local Marsh Risk Consulting professional or Client Executive.

Call toll free at **1-877-MRC-7799**; or visit us at our Web site: www.marsh.com.

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