

# SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF 15-Passenger Vans



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CANADIAN COUNCIL OF MOTOR TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATORS  
CONSEIL CANADIEN DES ADMINISTRATEURS EN TRANSPORT MOTORISÉ

# SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF **15-Passenger Vans**

◆ PERSONAL USE OF 15-PASSENGER VANS

◆ COMMERCIAL USE OF 15-PASSENGER VANS

◆ TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS



### Tires

It is important to inspect the van's tires before each use and to check tire pressure monthly. Tire pressure is different for each vehicle and is based on its weight and design. For some vehicles, the required tire pressure can be different for the front and rear tires.

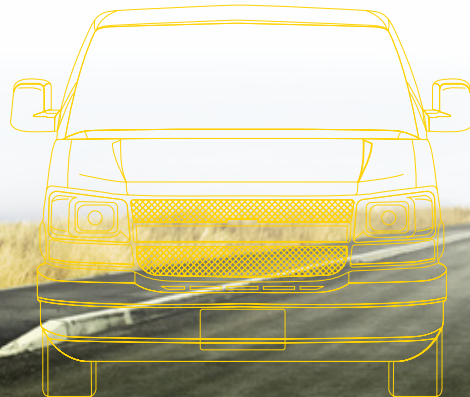
To find the required tire pressure and the best tire type for your vehicle, you can look in the following locations:

- » your owner's manual;
- » on the tire information label located on the driver's door;
- » inside the driver's door frame, or;
- » inside the glove compartment door.



Some vehicles are equipped with tire pressure monitoring systems that inform the driver when the tire pressure is too low. Even if your vehicle is equipped with this technology, you should manually check your tire pressure at least once a month.

Tire condition is important for safe vehicle control and to reduce the risk of rollover. Check to ensure your tires are in good condition and have sufficient tread depth. Equip the vehicle with the appropriate tires for weather and road conditions. Some jurisdictions require the use of winter tires, so check with your provincial/territorial governments' highway traffic acts for details.



### Driver Training and Licensing

When operating a 15-passenger van, it is important to recognize that these vans handle differently than passenger vehicles especially when fully loaded with people or luggage/equipment.

### Driver Requirements and Safety Tips

All drivers should avoid distractions from within the vehicle and be well rested when operating a vehicle. Most jurisdictions prohibit the use of handheld devices such as cell phones, wireless devices, or GPS systems. Drivers should limit conversation and distraction while driving and plan for regular breaks to keep alert.

Drivers should not exceed the posted speed limit and they should operate the vehicle at a safe speed based on the driving conditions (e.g., slow down if the roads are wet or icy). Fifteen passenger vans are large vehicles and do not respond well to abrupt steering and require additional braking time. They also require reliance by the driver on side and rear view mirrors.

### Vehicle Maintenance and Inspections

All drivers and owners of 15-passenger vans should ensure that the vehicle is maintained in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. Vehicles should be inspected regularly by a technician as well as the driver prior to operating the vehicle.

All drivers should avoid distractions from within the vehicle and be well rested when operating a vehicle.

## Loading Passengers and Cargo

The way a van is loaded and the distribution of the weight can change how it handles. It is important to follow the loading instructions in the van owner's manual.

### The easiest way to know how much weight your van is designed to carry is to:

- a. find the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) on the driver's door post or in your owner's manual;
- b. find the weight of the empty van (net weight) in your owner's manual, then;
- c. subtract **b** from **a** and the remainder is how much weight you can add (i.e., people, fuel and cargo).

If you cannot find your owner's manual, you may be able to find one online (i.e., manufacturer's website) or alternatively, you can get a new one from your local dealer.

### A 15-passenger van should be loaded from the front to the back:

- » never allow more than 15 people to ride in a 15-passenger van;
- » when the van is not full, passengers and cargo should be loaded in front of the rear axle;
- » fill the front passenger seats first and then put cargo in empty seats or on the floor to the front of the vehicle or evenly distribute it throughout the vehicle;
- » roof racks, rear cargo boxes and tow trailers should be avoided as they will negatively affect the handling and control of the vehicle:
  - If you do use them, ensure that the heavier cargo is inside the vehicle and never exceed the recommended weight limitations.

## Electronic Stability Control (ESC)

Vehicle testing has proven that there are many benefits to the use of an Electronic Stability Control System (ESC) which can improve vehicle handling and help prevent loss of vehicle control and reduce rollovers. In Canada, 15-passenger vans have been manufactured with ESC since 2005/2006. Check your owner's manual to confirm whether your van is equipped with ESC. If your van does not have ESC, it cannot be retrofitted.

As of September 2011, all of these vans were required by federal regulation to be manufactured with ESC (as of September 2012, all vehicles under 4,535 kg GVWR that are built in two stages, such as school buses and multifunctional activity buses will also be required to have ESC).

Now, if you are purchasing a new 15-passenger van or renting one, it is recommended that you get a van that is equipped with an ESC system to reduce the chance of collision or rollover.

## Seat Belts and Child Restraints

Your chances of surviving a motor vehicle collision increase dramatically if you are wearing your seat belt properly and children are properly seated in child restraints appropriate for their weight and height. All seating positions within 15-passenger vans are fitted with seat belts.

In most jurisdictions, individuals 16 years or older are legally required to wear a seat belt at all times and drivers are legally required to ensure all children under 16 are properly restrained based on their height, weight and age. In Manitoba, this applies to passengers 18 years of age or under and in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon, this applies to passengers 15 years or under. All jurisdictions have fines for non-use of seat belts and child restraints and most assign demerit points.

For more information on which child or booster seat you should use and when a child can use a regular seat belt, visit Transport Canada's website under *Child Safety* or your provincial/territorial Ministry of Transportation's website.

### Seat Belt Tips and Facts:

- » Seat belts must be in proper working condition:
  - seat belt itself is not twisted or cut;
  - buckle is in good working order, and;
  - retractors should work smoothly when pulling out the seat belt and should retract easily when not in use.
- » A seat belt won't protect you if it is not worn properly. Take a few seconds to position the lap portion of your seat belt snug to your body and low on the hips. Never wear the shoulder strap under the arm where it could injure your ribs during a crash;
- » A seat belt keeps the driver behind the wheel and in control during a collision. It helps keep your head and body from hitting the steering wheel;
- » A seat belt keeps you inside the vehicle during a collision, rather than being thrown through a windshield or door onto the roadway;
- » Without a seat belt, passengers become high-speed projectiles in a collision, injuring themselves and other passengers.



## COMMERCIAL USE OF 15-PASSENGER VANS

Fifteen passenger vans are considered to be commercial vehicles when they are not used exclusively for personal use. When operated commercially, additional requirements must be followed. Please check with your provincial/territorial governments for the requirements that apply to your jurisdiction.

### Driver Training and Licensing

Drivers of 15-passenger vans who are operating the vehicle commercially are required to have a minimum of a Class 4 driver's licence in most provinces/territories. You should check with your provincial/territorial government's highway traffic acts for details as to what licence is required. A list of jurisdictional websites is provided at the end of these guidelines. Drivers who are operating 15-passenger vans commercially should consider taking a recognized commercial vehicle training course prior to obtaining their licence.

### Commercial Driver Requirements and Safety Tips

Commercial drivers of 15-passenger vans must comply with a number of requirements under the National Safety Code. Commercial drivers of 15-passenger vans are subject to Hours of Service requirements that limit the number of hours that they can be on-duty and driving. In some cases, drivers are required to keep a log documenting their activities to ensure that they are getting sufficient rest in order to meet the Hours of Service Requirements. For more information, see *National Safety Code 9 Hours of Service* on the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators' website and your provincial/territorial governments' highway traffic act for details.

Drivers of 15-passenger vans who are operating the vehicle commercially are required to have a minimum of a Class 4 driver's licence in most provinces/territories.

## Vehicle Maintenance and Inspections

Commercial use of 15-passenger vans is subject to a number of vehicle inspection requirements:

1. **Twice yearly inspections:** Vehicles should be inspected twice a year by a licensed technician in accordance with *National Safety Code 11B "Periodic Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspection"*;
2. **Daily Inspections:** Drivers are required to inspect specific features of the vehicle each day the vehicle is driven according to *National Safety Code 13 "Trip Inspection"*. The driver is also required to record any vehicle defects and determine if the vehicle can be operated safely;
3. **Roadside Inspections:** *National Safety Code 12 "CVSA On-Road Inspections"* may require 15-passenger vans to be subject to roadside inspections by provincial and territorial commercial vehicle inspectors.

Motor carriers must obtain a Safety Fitness Certificate which permits the operation of commercial vehicles, including 15-passenger vans on public highways. This certificate acknowledges that the motor carrier maintains a safe operation and fleet of vehicle(s). The motor carriers receive a safety rating based on their performance with respect to:

- » Collisions;
- » convictions resulting from driver or vehicle infractions;
- » vehicle inspections;
- » site visits and inspections including facility audits.



## TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS

School buses are the recommended vehicle for transporting students to and from school or to extra-curricular activities. Under the National Safety Code (NSC) Standards, a vehicle with 10 or more passengers is considered a bus and therefore a commercial vehicle. Operators of 15-passenger vans for the purpose of transporting students must comply with the same NSC standards included in the previous section on Commercial Use of these vehicles and follow the guidelines for the safe operation of these vehicles noted in the Personal Use section.

### Driver Training and Licensing

The driver who is responsible for transporting students should be trained, experienced and have a safe driving record. Large passenger vehicles handle differently especially when fully loaded, so choose an experienced driver who operates this type of vehicle on a regular basis.

Based on the vehicle or use of the vehicle, a higher class of drivers' licence maybe required. Ensure that the driver has an appropriate and valid driver's licence. Check your provincial/territorial government's licensing requirements for transporting students.

### Develop a Plan for Transporting Students

There are a number of activities that should be included in a plan for transporting students:

- » School Boards should develop guidelines, policies and regulations for the safe transportation of students and monitor compliance with them;
- » Each school should develop a plan to ensure that the above recommendations are followed including a process to ensure that a well maintained vehicle and qualified driver are selected;
- » Weather should be monitored prior to travel, including the weather at the destination and projected weather for the trip home;
- » An itinerary of the trip should be made available to parents;
- » Development of contingency plans by each school board should be prepared for poor weather or other unplanned situations that require travel to be cancelled;
- » Chaperones and supervisors should be equipped with a cell phone and contact information in the event a decision to cancel or suspend travel is required or if plans are changed.



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Canadian provinces/territories are responsible for all matters relating to road safety, driver licensing, vehicle registration and taxation and commercial vehicle regulations and enforcement. The federal government is responsible for road safety, new vehicle standards, transportation of dangerous good and plays a complimentary role in motor transport administration. As a member of the general public, should you have inquiries regarding the above please contact your province/territory.