



LARGE PASSENGER VANS

As we continue to see confusion and questions on passenger van use, I wanted to send out the information on federal and state requirements. Studies conducted by the National Highway Safety Transportation Administration (NHSTA) of the US Department of Transportation reveal that loaded 15-passenger vans have a significantly higher risk of rollover than passenger cars and light trucks. According to NHSTA, loading the vans raises the center of gravity and shifts it towards the rear, greatly affecting the handling characteristics. When heavily loaded, the steering characteristics and responsiveness are very different from those of light passenger vehicles. This can cause severe consequences in an emergency situation when an untrained driver expects the vehicle to respond like a car.

WISCONSIN DOT SCHOOL BUS DEFINITION

A motor vehicle that carries 11 (including the driver) or more passengers for the purposes of transporting students to or from school, curricular or extracurricular activities.

Federal guidelines recommend that the use of vans that are able to hold 11 (including the driver) or more passengers be avoided. The Wisconsin DOT specifies that a non-school bus vehicle can legally accommodate only nine students, in addition to the driver. [LEARN MORE.](#)

NATIONAL TRAFFIC AND MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT

Requires any person selling or leasing a new school bus to sell or lease a bus that meets all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards applicable to school buses. Here are some frequently asked questions that will help you understand how NHTSA's regulations define school buses, multifunction school activity buses, school-related events and much more. [LEARN MORE.](#)

CAN DEALERSHIPS SELL 15-PASSENGER VANS TO SCHOOLS?

Federal law prohibits dealers from selling or leasing a motor vehicle with a capacity of 10 passengers or more (11 or more persons, including the driver) for the purpose of transporting students to and from school or a school-related activity unless the vehicle complies with the applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses or multifunction school activity buses.

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act established penalties for dealerships selling or leasing 15-passenger vehicle to a school district without required safety features.

Section 10309 states in part: a school or school system may not purchase or lease a new 15-passenger van if it will be used significantly by, or on behalf of, the school or school system to transport preprimary, primary or secondary school students to or from school or an event related to school, unless the 15-passenger van complies with the

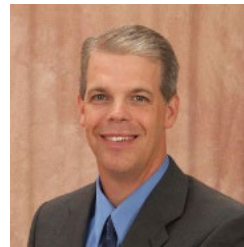
motor vehicle standards prescribed for school buses and multifunction school activity buses under this title. \$10,000 penalty, up to \$15,000,000 for multiple violations. A 15-passenger van is defined by – a vehicle that seats 10-14 passengers, not including the driver. [LEARN MORE.](#)

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CONSIDERING LARGE VANS FOR STUDENT TRANSPORT?

These regulations have been developed to ensure student safety. According to WIDOT crash data these larger vans are highly prone to roll over, especially when they are fully loaded. This higher center of gravity and the lower roof supports of a van, increase the potential for serious injury to the occupants of the vehicle in the event of a crash. This also becomes a problem if the school district removes a row or two of seats to reduce the passenger count to ten. This creates a tendency to overload the rear of the vehicle with equipment and increases the potential for problems.

ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS WHEN USING 10-PASSENGER (OR LESS) VANS

- Make sure the vehicle is adequately maintained.
- Properly inflated tires are critical. Check the tire pressure and tire wear before each trip.
- Use drivers who are familiar with the different handling issues created by larger vehicles. A large van handles much differently than a regular automobile
- Do not overload the vehicle. Overloading can occur when transporting an athletic team and all of the necessary equipment, leading to a greater tendency to roll over.



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