



BROWN

Office of Insurance & Risk  
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**To: Faculty and Staff**

**From: Jeanne B. Hebert, Director**

**Re: Guidelines for the use of 12-15-Passenger Vans**

**Date: July 29, 2004**

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A newly released National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) research report reinforces earlier research by that body that 15-passenger vans have a rollover risk that increases dramatically as the number of occupants increases to full capacity. The increased loading of these vans causes the center of gravity to shift higher and toward the rear, thereby increasing the likelihood of rollover. The center of gravity shift also results in less driver control of the vehicle in panic situations.

According to the NHTSA Action Plan for 15- passenger van safety, "...while this plan focuses on 15-passenger vans, the actions identified also relate to 12-passenger vans which are similar to vans configured for 15 passengers in terms of design, handling characteristics, and safety problems."

**In accordance with our receipt of this information regarding the safety concerns of 12-15-passenger vans, effective *September 2004*, Brown University will begin to phase out the use of these vehicles with a goal of removing them completely from the University fleet as vehicles are replaced. This includes short term rentals. In the interim, the following guidelines need to be implemented by departments and offices that own, lease or rent 12-15- passenger vans:**

1. All 12-15 passenger vans, whether Brown owned, leased or rented, should always be operated by drivers who have taken the Insurance Office web based driver training course and Drivers need to understand the handling characteristics of vans, especially when fully loaded. (Contact the Insurance Office 3-9481 to sign up for training).
2. Vehicle operators should assure that all their passengers are wearing their seat belts. (The NHTSA indicates that the chance of an individual being killed in a rollover is decreased by about 75% just by wearing a seat belt.)
3. Evenly load the vehicles and load front first. The driver should be trained to implement this guideline.
4. Limit the occupant number to 10 or less. According to the NHTSA, heavily loaded 12-15 passenger vans – those with 10 or more passengers – have an increased chance of rollover.
5. Luggage should be placed in the rear behind the back seat. Roof racks should be removed. (Roof loads raise the center of gravity, and hence, the risk of rollover.)

6. Check tire pressure regularly. Excessively worn or improperly inflated tires can lead to a loss-of-control situation and a rollover.
7. Use charter buses or other contracted transport or mini-vans for long trips. Use 12-15-passenger vans only for shorter trips - 300 miles or less one way.
8. Adhere to all speed limits. Avoid extreme panic-like over-steering.

The web site for the June 2004 NHTSA warning is:

[http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=midadd\\_06-01.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=midadd_06-01.html)

Departments that own 15 passenger vans should print the informational "hang tag" available on the NHTSA web site listed above, and place it in their department's 15 passenger van.

Additional information on reducing the rollover risk can be found at:

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/problems/studies/15PassVans>

Exceptions to this policy may be requested by sending a memo to the Director of Insurance who will consult with the appropriate Senior Officer.