

Radford University

Protocol and Guidelines

For Training and Safe Operation of Passenger Vans

Background/history

Radford University's Facilities Maintenance and Operations-Central Motor Fleet and/or Enterprise Vehicle Rentals has accommodated transportation needs for the University's various Departments/sponsored clubs by providing passenger vans through a rental program for many years.

The University's Office of Risk Management wants to assure that Departments and Club Sponsors who request/authorize the use of passenger vans and also the driver(s) who will be responsible for driving a van are aware of the risks and dangers associated with operating passenger van vehicles. **Please Note: Individuals who will be driving/operating either Central Motor Fleet owned vans or Enterprise Vehicle Rental vans must successfully complete the passenger safety awareness on line course and only these individuals are allowed to drive. Only ten (10) people, the driver and nine (9) passengers are allowed per van, regardless if the van is rented from Central Motor Fleet or Enterprise.**

Successful completion of the Passenger Van Safety Awareness D2L Course presented by Environmental Health and Safety that includes passenger van safety information and defensive driving techniques, is required for students, faculty and/or employees who will be operating Central Motor Fleet and/or Driving Enterprise passenger vans.

In an effort to communicate the inherent risks and dangers associated with driving a passenger van, Department Administrators and Club Sponsors who are responsible for requesting/authorizing van use through Facilities Management are asked to read and also communicate the following information to those who will be operating a passenger van:

Studies conducted by the National highway Safety Transportation Administration (NHTSA) of the US Department of Transportation reveal that loaded 15 passenger vans have significantly higher risk of rollover than passenger cars and light trucks. Loading the vans raised 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 light passenger vehicles which can cause serious consequences in an emergency situation when an untrained driver expects the vehicle to respond like a car. Driving large vans requires skill and experience from the operator, with little or no margin of error.

While 15-passenger vans are convenient, drivers and passengers must use caution to minimize the risks associated with these vehicles. Passenger vans are unlike minivans and have a higher rate of rollover under certain conditions. NHTSA research has shown that 15-passenger vans have a rollover risk that increases dramatically as the number of occupants increases from fewer than five to more than ten. In fact, passenger vans with 10 or more occupants had a rollover rate in single vehicle crashes which is nearly three times the rate of those that had fewer than five occupants. Because of these increased risks, drivers and passengers need to pay greater attention to tire maintenance and road conditions. In addition, driver experience is essential to safely operating these vehicles. It is critical that both drivers and passengers follow some simple safety rules to minimize risks to themselves and their loved ones.

Qualifications and restrictions required for driving/operating a passenger van

All drivers (student/faculty/employee) of university owned and/or leased (Enterprise)passenger vans must meet the following requirements to operate these vehicles **except** where drivers already possess the following certifications:

- Class B Certified Driver License (CDL) and/or an Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC) endorsement and who maintain such endorsement is not required to participate in the passenger van safety awareness training. However, these individuals are reminded to follow all recommendations/restrictions addressed in the DGS Fleet Driver Safety and Policy Lesson.

1. Drivers attest their drivers license is valid.
2. Have a minimum of two (2) years driving experience.
3. For University owned and/or leased (Enterprise vans) **only nine (9) passengers and a driver for a total of ten (10) people is permitted for all vans.**
4. Ensure that all passengers wear a seat belt when the vehicle is in motion.
5. Do not use a cell phone while driving.
6. Obey all traffic regulations, including posted speed limits.
7. Alcohol or drug use by driver(s) and/or passenger (s) is prohibited.
8. Take frequent breaks
9. Never place loads on top of the roof.
10. Never tow trailers with van. Exception being the RU Outdoors program where some drivers in this program have approval and experience.
11. No other passengers in the van are allowed to drive unless they have successfully completed van safety awareness and are registered with Facilities Management to rent/drive a van.

Passenger van maintenance program

- The University's Central Motor Fleet has an inventory of four (4) passenger vans and Facilities Management (831-7800) can help coordinate reservation for University owned and/or vans leased through the local **enterprise** office.
- The vans included in the Central Motor Fleet inventory are serviced and maintained by mechanics.
- **enterprise** passenger vans are serviced and maintained by a contracted garage.
- The rear seat has been removed from the Central Motor Fleet van inventory, as a recommended procedure which provides a reminder that only 10 people are allowed in a van and also to minimize weight beyond the rear wheel axel.
- Even if a van is equipped with roof racks, **placing luggage or other items on the roof is prohibited.**