

TOOLBOX TALK #23

LIMIT RISKS WHEN OPERATING A PASSENGER VAN

We know that some construction companies will transport workers to a difficultly accessed jobsite through the use of passenger vans. This works well, especially when parking at the site is extremely limited.

Although convenient for transporting groups, passenger vans can pose a safety risk to inexperienced drivers, their passengers and other road users.



Of the 235 people killed in rollover crashes involving a 15-passenger van between 2010 and 2019, 57% were ejected from the vehicle, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The NHTSA says operators of passenger vans should:

Be experienced. They should be licensed drivers who operate this type of vehicle on a regular basis.

Pay attention. Stay focused on driving safely by being well rested, never using a cell phone and limiting conversation with passengers.

Obey posted speed limits. Reduce your speed as needed based on road or weather conditions, as well. Remember: these types of vans require additional braking time and can't handle abrupt maneuvers.

Buckle up. All occupants need to wear a seat belt. An unrestrained occupant involved in a single-vehicle crash is about four times more likely to be killed than a restrained occupant.

Inspect tires, check tire pressure. This should be done before each use. A van's tires, including the spare tire, need to be properly inflated and the tread shouldn't be worn down. Excessively worn or improperly inflated tires can lead to a loss of vehicle control and possibly a rollover.

Check the spares. Used vans may come with dangerous spare tires that are many years old. Check a tire's age by finding its Tire Identification Number on the tire's sidewall. The last four digits of the TIN indicate the week and year the tire was made (for example, "1010" means March 2010).

Don't exceed max occupancy. Never allow more than the manufacturer's stipulated number of passengers.