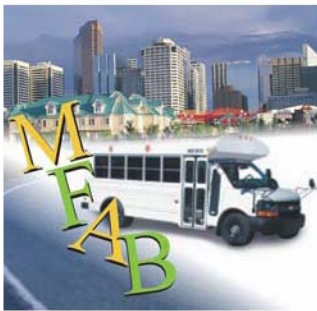


15 Passenger Van Use Information for Albertans



Fifteen-passenger vans are more likely to be involved in a single-vehicle rollover crash than any other type of vehicle. Collisions involving these vehicles across Canada and the United States have indicated the design of 15 passenger vans may contribute to roll-overs. Many traffic safety agencies across North America are concerned with the use of 15 passenger vans. In Alberta, the Alberta School Board Insurance Exchange has stopped insuring 15 passenger vans for the transportation of students to and from school.

The United States of America, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) research found that 15 passenger vans were nearly three times more likely to rollover when carrying 10 or more passengers than when carrying five passengers or less. The increased risk occurs because the extra weight increases the vehicle's center of gravity and causes it to shift rearward; both of these situations give the van less resistance to rollover and cause it to handle differently than other, more common, passenger vehicles. Any load carried in a 15 passenger van will increase the roll-over risk, not just passengers.



A Multi-Functional Activity Buses (MFAB) is a new type of vehicle which conforms to the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) D270 Multi-Functional Activity Bus standard. This standard has only existed since 2008; it was created to provide a class of vehicle which would be a safe alternative to school buses. The D270 has the same roof and side structural requirements as the CSA D250 School Buses standard. Both the D270 and D250 standards were created with involvement of manufacturers, regulators, users and carriers.

Alberta Transportation supports the use of a MFAB instead of a 15 passenger van. A MFAB is built to a higher standard than 15 passenger vans, having both a reinforced roof and side structure; in Canada an MFAB must conform to the requirements of the CSA D270 standard as well as Transport Canada's *Motor Vehicle Safety Act* requirements for commercial buses.

The major difference between a MFAB and a school bus is the MFAB does not have traffic and pedestrian control devices or flashing lights and allows alternative seating arrangements. A MFAB is not allowed to be yellow, unlike a school bus which is required to be yellow.

Manufacturers of 15 passenger vans have been developing new technology to increase the safety of these vehicles. New technologies include electronic stability control (ESC) and tire pressure monitoring systems (TPMS). ESC has been a standard equipment piece on 15 passenger vans since 2005; while TPMS systems have been standard equipment since 2008. When purchasing a replacement 15 passenger van, look for these important safety features on your next vehicle.

Since 2008, 15 passenger vans have been built with lap/shoulder belts for rear passengers. The addition of these belts increases the safety of passengers in these vehicles and these belts must be worn. The manufacturers continue to look for new ways to increase the safety of 15 passenger vans. Potential improvements exist in variable ride height systems and the application of side impact air bags.

When operating a 15 passenger van Alberta Transportation recommends the following safety precautions:

- 15 passenger vans should be maintained in good mechanical and operating condition.
- Do not exceed the Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR) or Gross Axle Weight Rating (GAWR) of the vehicle.
- Place cargo in front of the rear axle if possible and do not place any loads on the roof.
- When not transporting at full capacity, seat passengers in front of the rear axle and never transport more than 15 passengers.
- The driver and all passengers should use seatbelts or an appropriate child restraint at all times.
- Use tires that are in good condition, and tires that are designed for the traveling conditions, before each use check the tire pressure of all tires.
- Only use drivers who are trained and experienced with 15 passenger vans; the drivers should also be operating 15 passenger vans on a regular basis to maintain their familiarity with the vehicle.
- Swerving done at high speed when reacting to obstacles or hazards increases the risk of rollover. For example, swerving to avoid an animal such as a deer; it is safer to have it strike the vehicle than to swerve and avoid the risk of a rollover.
- Drivers should be well rested, keep distractions to a minimum (do not use cell phones while driving, limit conversations with other passengers, volume of radio, etc.) and please limit drive time to eight hours per 24-hour period.
- The driver should be particularly cautious on curved rural roads and pay close attention to road conditions.

You can view the Transport Canada web page regarding 15 passenger vans, which has many links providing information on safety issues.

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/roadsafety/tp-tp2436-rs200808-menu-202.htm>

There are many other informative sites on 15 passenger van safety that interested parties can visit. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in the United States has a number of research documents and an information page on 15 passenger vans; please visit the following link to find a NHTSA advisory on 15 passenger vans and a link to their general site on 15 passenger van safety:

<http://www.nhtsa.gov/About+NHTSA/Press+Releases/Consumer+Advisory:+NHTSA+R>

The NHTSA has issued a release showing their findings from their research, this release can be viewed here:

<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811143.pdf>

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety also has a web page providing information on 15 passenger van safety, which is available at the following site:

http://www.iihs.org/research/qanda/fifteen_passenger.html

Keep Alberta highways safe for everyone!