



## OFFICE OF RISK MANAGEMENT – RISK ADVISORY

March 1, 2010

**To: Old Dominion University Faculty, Staff, Students and Volunteers/Agents**

**From: Kenneth R. Blow, Director**

**Subject: 15-Passenger Vans**

The following advisory is being issued to address the continued use 15-passenger vans to transport students, due to the inherent and widely documented risks associated with these vehicles. Research by the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration reveals that 15-passenger vans have a greater propensity to rollover when the weight of the vehicle increases with passengers and cargo. They have stated that “these vans are more likely to be involved in a single-vehicle rollover crash than any other type of vehicle.” Additional information from NHSTA can be found at the following website: <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/cars/problems/studies/15PassVans/SpreadTheWord.html>

The Virginia Division of Risk Management and the Department of Human Resource Management have both issued safety and risk advisories calling for additional safety measures to be taken by state agencies to reduce the potential for rollover accidents. The Commonwealth of Virginia previously outlawed these vehicles for the transportation of high school age students and younger, as they do not meet the definition, nor provide the level of safety, afforded by a school bus. Reference documents can be found at the following locations: <http://www.trsvirginia.gov/documents/drm/riskadvisory.pdf> and <http://www.covwc.com/lcarticles/archives/000052.php> .

While current Virginia law does not prohibit Colleges and Universities from using 15-passenger vans, there are known risks associated with these vehicles that are felt to increase possible risk of injury and the University’s liability in continuing to support their use for transporting our students. It is therefore recommended that renting or leasing 15- passenger vehicles for transporting students be discontinued, effective immediately, and the use of existing fleet vehicles for transporting students be discontinued by the end of FY-12, or sooner if possible.

The Office of Risk Management advocates that departments, who may be using the existing fleet of 15 passenger vans during phase-out, develop safety policies and procedures to control how, when and by whom these vehicles should be operated safely. Drivers need to take special precautions to ensure that passengers are protected at all times. As an aid to accomplishing this, there are many publications available from the NHTSA and other regulatory organizations that analyze these risks and how best to counter them through incorporating best operating practices.

In an attempt to identify some of the more prevalent risks associated with the use of 15 passenger vans, and how best to minimize these risks, we advocate the following minimum best practices during phase-out:

- Limit capacity to no more than 10 passengers (driver and 9), and seat as many passengers in front of the rear axle as possible.
- Drivers must require that passengers wear seat belts at all times!
- Limit speed to 60 MPH (slower during adverse weather conditions).
- Require all drivers to be at least 21 years of age, have a valid driver's license, and have one to two years of driving experience.
- If any of the rear seats have been removed, do not use this space for heavy storage.
- Nothing shall be transported on top of the van or towed by the van, ever!
- Drivers should rotate every two hours on long trips.
- Night driving should be kept to a minimum, and driving past midnight is prohibited.
- Drivers shall not eat, drink or use electronic devices while operating the vehicle.
- The person occupying the front passenger seat should remain awake and monitor the driver and driving conditions.
- Drivers are responsible for making a visual inspection of the vehicle prior to use including proper tire pressure, vehicle glass, vehicle lights, mirrors, and checking brakes. Deficiencies must be corrected before beginning the trip.