

**Gustavus Adolphus College
Motor Pool Policy and Guideline
For
15-Passenger Van Drivers and Occupants
December 01, 2002**

I. PREPARATIONS BEFORE DRIVING

- A. Walk around the van to do a quick visual inspection. Look for new dents and fluids leaking from beneath the vehicle; check light covers, tire condition, etc. With the help of someone in the driver's seat, check the running lights, turn signals and brake lights.
- B. Make sure that your van is equipped with a fire extinguisher.
- C. Clean all trash from the inside of the vehicle at the beginning and end of your trip. If the previous user has not done this, please note on your trip report.
- D. Adjust the seat, mirrors and tilt steering wheel before starting the vehicle. Do not attempt to adjust the seat or steering wheel while driving.
- E. **When vehicle is in operation, the driver and all passengers must wear seat belts.**
- F. Make sure the gas tank is full. College vehicles take regular unleaded gas of at least 87 octane.
- G. Record the starting mileage and remember to record the mileage again at the end of the trip.
- H. Have your driver's license with you when driving.
- I. Cell Phone use by the driver is prohibited while the vehicle is in operation.
- J. Remember; when driving a college vehicle you are representing Gustavus Adolphus College.
- K. **Do NOT carry more than the recommended number of passengers (including the driver) and cargo in any van. With fifteen-passenger vans, in particular, never travel with more than 12 occupants (including the driver) and average cargo; if no cargo is involved, up to 15 passengers (including the driver) can be accommodated. Motor Pool personnel can make modifications for hauling cargo in the van by removing certain seats. Individuals 18 years of age or younger and who are not enrolled as a Gustavus Adolphus College student are prohibited from riding in any 15-passenger van.**

II. SAFE DRIVING GUIDELINES

A. Basic Safety

1. Drive defensively – assume that others do not.
2. Do not exceed posted speed limits! Always drive more carefully and slowly than you would in your own vehicle.
3. Obey traffic laws.
4. If you have consumed any alcohol in the previous 12 hours, do not drive. This does not simply mean you must be below the legal blood alcohol limit of .10%. This means **any amount** of alcohol. The same is also true for any drugs that can affect one's driving ability, especially illicit drugs but also including legal drugs that may cause drowsiness, etc.
5. The van is longer than your car! It is necessary to take turns wider than you would in a car, due to the van's length. Because the van is so long, the rear wheels tend to track further inside the turn than the front wheels. This means that on a tight turn either to the right or left, your front wheels might still be inside your lane while your inside rear wheel is on or over the yellow line. Be careful not to sideswipe things on the inside of the turn! Use your mirrors to find out where you are relative to the boundaries of your lane, and how close you are to objects alongside the van.
6. **The van is heavier than your car! It will take more time and distance to stop the van than a car.** This is especially true when the van is carrying many passengers and/or you are towing a trailer. To compensate for this extended stopping distance:
 - (a) Use a light foot on the gas. Accelerate slowly and evenly to your desired speed. Accelerating too quickly will require braking to keep your speed under control.
 - (b) Maintain at least a 3 second following distance at all speeds. **DOUBLE YOUR FOLLOWING DISTANCE IN POOR CONDITIONS.** In rain and fog, drive at a speed that will allow you to stop within the distance you can see ahead.
 - (c) Use the road to help control your speed. Anticipate that an uphill stretch ahead will slow the van, so use the incline to help you slow down. Freeway off-ramps are a great example: just coast to the top! Because down hills will add to your speed, let up on the gas before you come over the top and start to descend.
 - (d) Learn to COVER THE BRAKE. Watch the road ahead for problems that will require you to brake. When you see brake lights come on in traffic ahead of you, or cars with turn signals on, or even curves in the road, move your foot from the accelerator and hold it above the brake pedal. The van will begin to slow even before you decide that you really do need to apply the brakes, and your braking distance and time will be shortened because you are anticipating the need to stop.
 - (e) Generally plan ahead, look ahead, to the sides and in your mirrors, and start braking earlier than you think you need to.
8. Remember that your brakes are a finite resource. Constant braking can lead to brake failure. Instead, use the transmission to help hold your speed down on long or steep down hills. Slow down and downshift to a lower gear before you begin to descend.
9. Use extreme caution when passing other vehicles. On the interstate or other four-lane roads remember the following rules:
 - (a) Before pulling out to pass, check your mirrors and turn your head and look into the van's blind spot on the left side. Signal your intention well in advance.

- (b) Maintain a steady speed while passing, and stay in the center of your lane. You should not need to go to the extreme left side of your lane while passing -- this only puts you at risk of driving off the road into the median.
 - (c) After you have passed the other vehicle, signal early before returning to the right lane. You will know you have given the other vehicle enough room when you can see him clearly in your rear view mirror (not the right side mirror). You may also ask for a visual check by a passenger (in addition to you checking your mirrors) before pulling back to the right lane. More room will be needed if you are pulling a trailer!
 - (d) Avoid driving in the left lane for extended periods. Faster vehicles will begin to pass you on the right, creating difficulties for you since you cannot see well on that side. Traveling alongside another vehicle reduces your ability to maneuver -- you will have nowhere to go if you need to change lanes. Try to avoid passing at all on two lane roads, or any time passing will take you into a lane used by oncoming traffic. If you find yourself behind a very slow moving vehicle (farm machinery), do not try to pass until you are certain you have enough room and sight distance to do so safely. There is no rush.
10. Drive with both hands on the wheel (in the 8:00/4:00 position), especially in heavy traffic, bad weather or winding roads. Accidents are more likely when the driver is rushing to meet a schedule or the driver's attention is focused on things other than the road; for example, changing the radio station, trying to eat, reading a map, or looking back at the passengers behind him/her. It is a good idea to have the person "riding shotgun" assist in navigating, adjusting the radio, etc. As far as schedules go, be late instead of not arriving at all. Driving safely takes priority over schedule problems at all times.
11. Stopping and changing lanes in a van can take a lot of distance. You will need to be constantly aware of traffic and road conditions ahead of and around your vehicle. Check your mirrors frequently to:
- (a) See where other vehicles are. Has an overtaking car moved into your blind spot? Do you know where you can go if you have to change lanes quickly?
 - (b) Shift your forward vision from near and far frequently. Know what is going on around you and look far enough ahead (**12 to 15 seconds, or 1/4 mile at 60 mph**) to be able to deal with upcoming road or traffic problems.
12. The vans are equipped with cruise control. If you are not familiar with cruise controls, read the owner's manual (prior to driving) before attempting to use it. It is imperative that you pay full attention to the road when the cruise control is on. This is not autopilot! **DO NOT USE CRUISE CONTROL ON SLIPPERY ROADS, ON WINDING OR UNPAVED ROADS, IN HEAVY TRAFFIC, OR IF YOU ARE SLEEPY.**
13. When backing, or maneuvering in any tight spot:
- (a) Do not move until you have walked around the van to examine obstacles and are certain you will not hit something. If there is someone else in the van with you, have them get out to act as a spotter to direct you around posts, cars, or other objects in your path.
 - (b) Be sure to roll down your window so that you can hear the spotter. Make sure the spotter stays safely away from the vehicle and is clearly visible to you at all times.
- (C) USE YOUR HORN TO GIVE A SHORT WARNING HONK BEFORE YOU BEGIN TO BACK UP.**
14. Monitor the dashboard gauges while driving. If a warning light comes on, or if a gauge indicates a problem, pull over safely, stop the engine and check to see what the problem is.

15. When locking the van be sure to lock the back doors and all side windows, as well as the front and side doors.

B. Driving with Passengers

1. The driver is responsible for the safety of all passengers in the vehicle.
2. **All passengers must wear their seat belts at all times!**
3. The driver should not allow any horseplay that might lead to an injury or distract the driver.
4. Smoking and/or consumption of alcohol are prohibited in the van.
5. You should not drive with the rear door windows open, since exhaust fumes will be drawn into the van.

C. Driving on long trips, and especially long nights

1. Safe driving requires concentration and can be tiring. Change drivers every three hours to avoid driver fatigue. If the current driver is having trouble keeping his/her eyes open, or is feeling particularly tired, s/he should pull over at the first safe spot to do so and change drivers. If all approved drivers in the van are too tired to continue driving, **STOP AND REST**. Remember that if the driver falls asleep at the wheel, everyone in the van could be injured (or killed)! **DON'T DRIVE WHEN YOU SUSPECT YOU MAY BE TOO TIRED TO DO SO SAFELY.**
2. On long trips, the "shotgun" passenger should stay awake to assist the driver with navigation, help in passing, and to help keep the driver awake with lively conversation.

D. Driving on unpaved roads

1. **Do not exceed 20 mph** on narrow unpaved mountain roads.
2. Braking is tricky on gravel and dirt, since the van can skid easily. Consider using a lower gear to keep your speed down and save the brakes.
3. Lookout for washboards (tightly spaced ripples) in the road surface. These can cause the van to "float" off the road.
4. It is best to drive in the center of the road, except when entering a sharp turn, being approached by another vehicle or approaching the top of a hill; shoulders can be very unstable and may give way under your van.
5. When being approached by another vehicle on a narrow dirt road, move slightly to the right and stop. Give the other driver a chance to decide what to do. Do not hurry. You may need to get out and negotiate with the other driver in order to pass safely. Be careful not to pull off onto an unstable shoulder. You may need to back up to a wider part of the road -- use spotters and unload passengers if you feel this will be safer.
6. Consider using the horn on blind curves. At night, you may see the headlights of oncoming vehicles before you meet them. Flash your own lights from high to low and back as you enter a sharp curve to let oncoming cars know you are in the curve.
7. Make U turns only at safe turnarounds, not in the middle of a narrow road.
8. If you can hear the transmission constantly switching in and out of overdrive while driving on mountainous roads, turn the overdrive function OFF.
9. Turn Overdrive OFF if you downshift to control your speed.

E. Towing a Trailer

1. **Towing any type of trailer behind a 15-passenger van is strictly prohibited.**

F. IN EMERGENCIES

1. In case of an accident, **stay on the scene until police arrive.** Do not attempt to assess blame. Complete the Accident Information Form contained in the motor pool vehicle pouch.
2. In an accident or mishap that involves personal injury: Contact the Gustavus Adolphus College Department of Safety and Security at (507) 933-8888. **Do not make statements to the Press,** but refer any questions to the Office of Marketing and Public Relations.
3. In any accident or mishap that involves injury or that will require repairs to the van: have a police report done as soon as possible and obtain a copy of the report or arrange for one to be sent to the Finance Office for insurance purposes. Take photographs of the scene and vehicles involved. A disposable camera is included in the motor pool vehicle pouch.