Fifteen-Passenger Vans

What should be done before a driver gets behind the wheel?
The most important task that should be performed before allowing an employee to drive any vehicle is to perform a driving background check. These background checks can be obtained from the DOT and will allow you to find out if your employee has a good or bad driving record. There is a strong correlation between people who drive carelessly on personal time and who get into accidents on company time.

Training
All drivers should be trained how to drive a 15-passenger van. Training is needed because 15-passenger vans act differently when loads are applied. Drivers need to understand how to load and handle the van before driving.

What should training consist of?

- Classroom training
  - Defensive driving skills
  - Speed management
  - Center of gravity-weight distribution
  - Turning radius, lane changes, parking, backing
  - Loading and unloading – seating of passengers – seatbelt use
  - Emergency maneuvers
  - Over steering & Breaking
  - Pre-trip checks – gas, oil, etc.
  - Roadside Maintenance
  - Blind spots
  - Lights on for safety
  - Etc.

- On-road training
  - Allows the driver to show you how well they learned classroom material
  - Lets the driver get use to the van before passengers enter

Training Frequency
All employees that will be driving a 15-passenger van should take a van driving class. The training should involve classroom and behind-the-wheel training. This training should be completed by:

1. New drivers
2. Suspended Drivers
3. Infrequent Drivers

Refresher classes should include behind the wheel to allow the driver to demonstrate his/her van-driving knowledge. This refresher course should be offered periodically to all drivers. Experienced drivers should be encouraged to attend these refresher classes. Any driver who gets into an accident or has a near miss should be required to go through a refresher course. If at any time you feel that your employee would benefit from a refresher course you can always ask them to attend.
All van drivers should be provided with updates and reminders on van driving issues.

**Driver Agreement**

Before you allow your drivers to take off with a van you should also have some type of Driver Agreement that is signed before given the privilege of using you van. This agreement should include your expectation of your drivers. The Driver Agreement form signed by the 15-passenger van driver should be revised to include the following language:

I will not operate a 15-passenger van while my ability or alertness is so impaired, or so likely to become impaired, through fatigue, illness or any other cause, as to make it unsafe for me to begin or continue to operate the vehicle.

Within 8 hours prior to drive and during drive, I shall not possess, be under the influence of or use alcohol or any of the following drugs or other substances:
1. Any 21 CFR 1308.11 Schedule I substance
2. An amphetamine or any formulation thereof
3. A narcotic drug or any derivative thereof
4. Any other substance, to a degree, which renders the drivers incapable of safely operating a motor vehicle.

**What else needs to be in place once your employee is trained and passed the driving record check?**

Each driver should have to fill out a maintenance list each day before using his/her van. The maintenance list should include the driver checking fluid levels, tire pressure, cleaning garbage out of the van and making sure seatbelts are in good conditions. These maintenance sheets allow you to keep track of the condition of your vans and ensures a safe trip knowing that the van is in good running order.