

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration

**Headquarters**

Washington, DC 20546-0001



March 24, 2005

Reply to Attn of:

Logistics Management Division

NM 6000-17

NPD 6000.1B

TO: Directors, NASA Centers  
Acting Director for Headquarters Operations

FROM: Assistant Administrator for Infrastructure and Administration  
Chief Safety and Mission Assurance Officer

SUBJECT: NASA Policy for 15-Passenger Van Use

This letter establishes policy for continued safe operation and eventual discontinuance of 15-passenger vans, including on-Center shuttles. Each Center's Transportation Officer has previously received the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) research regarding 15-passenger vans, and has already taken interim corrective actions to implement the recommendations provided below. This letter formalizes our previous guidance.

There is growing concern regarding crash involvement and safety of 15-passenger vans resulting in injuries and fatalities. According to research by the NHTSA, between 1990 and 2002, there were 1,576 15-passenger vans involved in fatal crashes, resulting in 1,111 fatalities. Of these, 657 vans were involved in fatal, single vehicle crashes, and 349 rolled over. Heavily loaded 15-passenger vans are particularly susceptible to rollover. Adding to the problem was the low rate of safety belt use among the occupants of vans involved in fatal crashes.

There are approximately 45, 15-passenger vans in NASA's fleet. In response to the NHTSA notice and recommendations, all NASA Centers and NASA contractors operating NASA-owned, General Service Administration, Interagency Fleet Management System leased, or commercially leased 15-passenger vans shall:

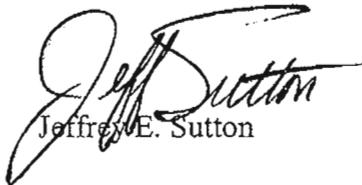
- Plan to replace all 15-passenger vans with either 7-passenger vans, or buses designed to transport multiple passengers. Replacement shall be accomplished when vehicles are due for rotation or replacement, if not sooner.
- Limit operation of 15-passenger vans to experienced drivers who have commercial drivers licenses, and who understand the risks associated with the operation of vehicles during normal and emergency operations.
- Insist that all occupants wear safety belts at all times.
- Limit capacity of all 15-passenger vans to 9 passengers including the driver.

- Ensure passengers and cargo are loaded forward of the rear axle and avoid placing any loads on the roof.
- Ensure that drivers are well rested and attentive, and that they slow down if roads are wet or icy. Additionally, the driver must be particularly cautious on curved roads and maintain a safe speed to avoid running off of the road. If the van's wheels veer off the road, the driver should gradually reduce speed and steer back onto the road when it is safe to do so.
- Ensure that drivers not use 15-passenger vans for transporting high school age and younger children.
- Ensure that at least once a month, tires are properly inflated and the tread is not worn down.

Additionally, van operators shall not pursue installation of electronic stability control (ESC) devices on existing 15-passenger vans until testing and data is available. The new ESC devices reduce, but may not eliminate, the risk associated with the operation of 15-passenger vans.

We also strongly encourage you to provide a copy of this letter to all commercial/private van pools that utilize 15-passenger vans for conveyance of employees on and off of your Center.

For additional information, contact William Gookin at 202-358-2306.

  
Jeffrey E. Sutton

  
Bryan D. O'Connor

Directors, NASA Centers:

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DFRC/Mr. Petersen  
GRC/Dr. Earls  
GSFC/Dr. Weiler  
JPL/Dr. Elachi  
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Acting Director for Headquarters Operations/Mr. Jedrey

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Safety & Mission Assurance Office/Mr. Frazier  
ARC/255-3/Mr. Kristich  
DFRC/FM/Ms. Edmondson  
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