

Vehicular accidents accounted for 42,642 deaths in 2006 – another 2,700,000 people were injured. Vehicular accidents are the leading cause of death from unintentional injury for every age group under 16 except 1-year-olds, accounting for nearly half of the approximately 6200 accidental deaths suffered by children under legal driving age. Those children died not because they were adventuresome, or inattentive, or foolish, but because someone else made a mistake behind the wheel of a motor vehicle. The goal of this “Alert” program is to provide teaching points derived from recent YMCA-related incidents to prevent similar events. Each will begin with the article (omitting any name or identifying references to a YMCA, if involved). As always, if you need additional guidance on this topic, please call us at 800-463-8546.

The Redwoods Group Insurance Program for YMCAs

TRANSPORTATION ALERT • 2007-1

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1 [university] student dies, 7 injured in [state] crash

RURAL MIDWEST – 12/01/07: One member of [university's] recreational ice hockey team was killed and seven others were injured in a wreck today on an icy road in northwest [state], police and school officials said.

[Deceased], 18, a freshman from [city, state], died, university officials said.

The team had been traveling to [location] for a game, officials said.

According to the university, among the injured were players [injured-1], 19, a sophomore from [location-1]; [injured-2], 21, a sophomore from [location-2]; [injured-3], 20, a junior from [location-3]. All the injured players have been treated and released from the hospital, said the team's volunteer coach, [name].

"We'll just have to do what Andrew would want us to do," said [coach], adding that the team will likely continue to play when games are scheduled to resume in mid-January. "I know that's cliché. But he was a young man who was dedicated to the team. We have to bond together even stronger than we did before."

The wreck happened about 3:45 p.m. on [state] Highway 25, about 5 miles north of [town], according to the university and [state] Department of Natural Resources Conservation Officer [name], who is investigating the accident. The DNR often works with local police, and [officer] is

investigating because he was available to respond when the wreck happened.

He said it's still unclear what caused it but said weather conditions were poor. "Weather may have been a factor," he said. "It was freezing rain. We had winds, sleet. The roads were slick."



The team was on its way to play [college] of [location] at the [site]. Twenty players, two coaches and a manager were traveling in three vans.

One of the southbound vans flipped at least once and landed on the driver's side in a field, [officer] said. He would not say who was driving the van. There have been no citations issued, he said.

The team is not part of the university's athletics department, officials said. Organized under [university's] Recreational Sports Center, it plays in the non-scholarship American Collegiate Hockey Association. Players pay to participate, [coach] said.

[Coach] said of [deceased], a defenseman: "He was a great player. But most important was the kind of person he was. He's one of those guys who would go above and beyond to help someone."

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Tire Blowout + 15-Passenger van = 5 dead + 11 injured

MIDWESTERN CITY: 10/22/2007 – Federal regulators have warned for years that overcrowded [15-passenger vans](#) or those with improperly inflated tires can pose a higher risk of rollovers.

Police say a tire blowout may have caused a van to flip over on Interstate 69 near [city] Sunday. They state that no other vehicles were involved in the 4:45 pm Sunday incident when the southbound van carrying 16 Amish passengers veered out of control, entered a grassy median and overturned, coming to rest in the northbound lanes near [city] and leaving three children and two adults dead and 11 others injured. Four of the deceased were ejected from the vehicle, one was trapped in the wreckage; the roof of the vehicle was shorn away.

Witnesses saw the rear left tire on the van blow out before the crash, and police said in a statement that a preliminary investigation of the tires confirmed those observations. The van's owner and driver was [victim], who died in the accident along with his wife and three children. Four other children in the family survived, as did seven members of another family traveling in the van.

It is not clear whether anyone was wearing seat belts, police said. "It's controlled chaos, is what it is, when you have a situation like this," with ejections and multiple victims, State Police Sgt. [name] said.

Traffic in both directions was stopped for four hours as authorities used the highway to land seven medical helicopters. All lanes opened hours later.

"A bang, like a gunshot -- that's what I thought -- it was a gunshot. I was looking the wrong way, and when I turned ... I saw the van just flip, flip, flip, and dust everywhere," said [witness]. "It was very heart-sickening to see children. It was sad."

The Amish families were traveling home from a church function. Although Amish generally shun modern conveniences, some members drive vehicles.

State police said five [town] family members were killed in the accident: [driver], 39; his wife, [name], whose age was not known; and their sons, [name], 16; [name], 11; and 1-year-old [name].

Seven members of [another]'s family were injured. "All we can believe is that the Lord had his hand on it and that his ways are not our ways," [another] told [call-letters] TV in [city]. "I would not choose this way, but His ways are as far above ours, as the heavens are from the earth."

Californian [commenter]'s 17-year-old daughter died in a van rollover in 2002. "I really feel for them," [commenter] said. "I know what they're going through."

[Commenter] now runs a group called Van Angels, which aims to save lives by educating people about what he considers the dangers of 15-passenger vans, which are popular with church groups, sports teams and others who need to transport large groups of people.

A 2005 study from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that 74 percent of all 15-passenger vans had at least one tire that was improperly inflated. In comparison, about 40 percent of passenger cars had an improperly inflated tire.

State police were still examining the van in the I-69 crash.

The highway safety agency has also found that when the vans have 10 or more passengers, they have a rollover rate that is nearly three times higher than when they have fewer than five occupants.

[Name], a spokesman with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, noted that the vans have a higher center of gravity than cars. "As you add people, the center of gravity gets even higher," he said.

Van manufacturers had added stability control to help prevent rollovers. And safety officials also stress the importance of wearing seat belts in large vans.

The safety agency says between 1990 and 2003, nearly 80 percent of those who died in rollovers in the 15-passenger vans were unbuckled. In contrast, 91 percent of those wearing seat belts in fatal, single-vehicle rollovers in the vans survived. The agency has tried to raise safety awareness in the large vans in recent years following some deadly accidents.

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[State] Van Crash Kills One, Injures 12

RURAL NORTHEAST – 08/06/07: A 15-year-old boy was killed and 12 others were injured after a van pulling a trailer loaded with canoes overturned on Interstate 95 in northern [state] on Monday morning.



The accident happened at about 7 a.m. in [community], north of [city].

It took seven ambulances to transport all of the victims, who were from a summer camp in [nearby state], according to Public Safety Department spokesman [name].

Troopers said the van from [camp name] in [location] was coming to [state] so that campers could canoe the [name1] River and hike Mount [name2]. The campers were all boys ages 14 to 18.

A school official identified the victim as [deceased], who studied at a yeshiva in [deceased's town].

Troopers said the driver of the van, [name], was seriously injured in the crash. [Driver] was one of two camp counselors traveling with the boys. The other staffer in the van was [name], 20, of [staffer's home].

According to [Public Safety spokesman], initial indications were the van had left [state] at about 8 p.m. on Sunday enroute [sic]. Most of the occupants were asleep at the time of the crash, and the van may have stopped an hour or so before the crash to change drivers, he said.

State police said the van appears to have drifted off the left-hand side of the road into the median and then ended up in a grassed sloped area along the travel lane. The van overturned at least once.

After the crash, one of the northbound lanes of I-95 at the site was closed for six hours as the van, five canoes, and debris were removed.

[Spokesman] said a team of state troopers is investigating the crash. The van has been towed to the [state] State Police garage in [city] for examination.

Van Puts YMCA Bus on Its Side

SOUTHERN CITY: 11/15/2007 – A minivan struck a bus carrying 12 children from a local YMCA in [city] on Thursday afternoon.

The [name] YMCA bus was traveling east in the 4900 block of [street] around 4:15 p.m. The driver of a [transportation company name] Chevrolet Astro, while traveling north on [intersecting street], ran a stop sign at its intersection with [street], officials said.

The Astro slammed into the passenger side of the YMCA bus, causing it to roll over.

No one was injured, officials said. [Street] was shut down immediately after the accident.



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WHAT WE KNOW...

About the fully loaded van driven in icy weather

- A 12-passenger van carrying eight occupants and their hockey gear was traveling at an undetermined highway speed in cold, icy weather – one died and the other seven were injured
- Something caused the van to flip – exactly what has not been determined – that these vehicles are prone to such incident with more than six occupants is significant

About the fully loaded van towing a trailer

- The van was fully loaded (two adults, 11 children, plus gear) *and* was pulling a trailer
- The van was driving on a limited access highway, presumably at freeway speeds
- The van had driven all night, probably after a full work day (left at 8pm, incident at 7am)
- *For further details and discussion points of this incident please see Lessons In the News 2007-9*

About the overloaded van that suffered a blow-out

- The van was over loaded (sixteen passengers, many of whom were children, in a vehicle designed for 15)
- The van was driving on a freeway – presumably at freeway speeds
- The driver was unable to control the vehicle after experiencing a significant tire failure
- Many of the occupants were ejected from the vehicle

About the mini school bus

- A 15-passenger, dual-rear-wheel mini-school bus was struck from the side (*details from sources not cited*)
- Dual-rear-wheel mini-school buses do *not* have the roll-over tendency of 15-passenger vans or single-rear-wheel mini-buses
- The Astro (a minivan) that struck the mini-bus had to be traveling at a considerable speed to transfer enough momentum to tip the significantly larger mini-bus
- Even with a side impact severe enough to overturn the vehicle, the use of seat belts and the protective cage created by following Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) for school buses prevented significant injury
- If this vehicle had been another 15-passenger van it probably would have been another tragic story about the dead and injured, the victims and the families – instead it was nearly a non-event that received only cursory media coverage. It should have been front page news – YMCA saves the lives of 15 children by using an appropriate mini school bus for transportation

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About 15-passenger vans in general

- 15-passenger vans are prone to roll-over incidents, especially with more than six passengers or at speeds exceeding 45 mph – when they roll the integrity of their passenger compartment generally fails
- That same lack of passenger compartment integrity makes their passengers highly susceptible to injury in side impact collisions
- Tragically, people continue to use them – and people continue to die as a result

WHAT WE MUST REMEMBER...

- ◆ 15-passenger vans are unsafe (as are extended body 12-passenger vans)
- ◆ 15-passenger vans should not be used to transport people – if they *must temporarily be used*...
 - don't use drivers that aren't alert, well rested, trained, and experienced in this type of vehicle
 - don't overload the van – least danger is with the rear seat removed and six passengers or less
 - don't exceed 45mph – stay off of limited access highways as 45mph is unsafe on them
 - don't tow a trailer or use a roof rack – remove or disable both trailer hitch and roof rack
 - don't drive on snowy, icy, or dirt roads – those surfaces exacerbate handling issues
- ◆ Not all bus conversions are suitable for highway transportation – only those meeting FMVSS school bus standards should be considered
- ◆ FMVSS 220, 221, and 222 (addressing roll-over protection, body joint strength, and passenger seating and crash protection) greatly reduce the potential for injury during roll-over incidents and even from significant side impact collisions
- ◆ Having appropriate seatbelts (FMVSS 225) and actually using them reduces injuries even more
- ◆ Dual-rear-wheels significantly reduce the potential of roll-over

WHAT WE SHOULD DO...

- ◆ Professionally – stop using 15-passenger vans for transportation in our own association – whether owned, leased, rented, borrowed, or provided by a partner
- ◆ Personally – refuse to ride in any 15-Passenger van – even if that action is contrary to peer or other pressures; you need not be rude, obnoxious, or argumentative, but you should be unbending
- ◆ Strongly warn your friends and family – encourage them to refuse to ride in 15-passenger vans
- ◆ Advise organizations that use 15-passenger vans about the dangers involved; lobby to change their practices; decline participation in activities using such vehicles or utilize alternate transportation

Please call us at 800-463-8546 to discuss this or any other risk management concern, or visit our web site at www.redwoodsgroup.com to learn more about YMCA risk management related issues.

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