
Best Practices for Vanpool Safety

Vanpool safety is an on-going activity that begins with each driver, and with each van. It serves to protect all participants as well as the community at large. It compliments needs of the community and the environment which both benefit by those who choose to vanpool.

Vanpool safety is accomplished by establishing and implementing:

- A driver approval policy that will identify the good character, skill and experience of a driver;
- A safety education policy that will describe safe vanpool vehicle operation and enlist the cooperation of the vanpool participants (drivers and riders);
- An accident, incident or complaint review process that will implement actions to increase safety; and
- A procurement of high quality vanpool vehicles that are properly equipped maintained and, when necessary, repaired.

Recommendations of the ACT Vanpool Council

1. **Establish and implement a driver approval policy that will identify and compliment the good character, skill and experience of a driver.**
 - **Driver license**
Ensure all drivers are currently and properly licensed and satisfy required drug or medical testing
 - **Minimum Age and Experience**
Industry practices suggest that drivers be between 21 and 25 years or older with five years of U.S. driving experience.
 - **Acceptable Driving History**
Obtain authorization to check motor vehicle records at the time when approving new drivers and at any time thereafter. Require notification of any moving violations of any vehicles. Review current motor vehicle records at regular and random intervals. Review motor vehicle records post accident, incident or complaint.
 - **Back-up Drivers**
Vanpool drivers and participants working together must anticipate the need for experienced back-up drivers who must also be approved. By discussing holiday and vacation schedules, preparations can be made to qualify and approve new drivers. All approved drivers need to drive frequently to maintain skills and experience.
2. **Establish and implement a safety education policy that describes safe vanpool vehicle operation and enlists the cooperation of the vanpool participants (drivers and riders).**
 - **Vanpool Vehicle Orientation**
Demonstrate to all vanpool participants the differences between driving a personal vehicle versus a vanpool vehicle, defensive driving, and vehicle safety features. Orientation and demonstration can include both intellectual and “hands-on” instruction by an experienced vanpool driver. Perform a walk-around observation prior to any operation of the vehicle to inspect for wear, breakage, tire inflations and clearance. Document compliance with Basic Vanpool Safety Policies to include (but not limited to) the following:
 - Only approved drivers may operate the vehicle
 - All occupants must wear seat belts or approved child restraints
 - Loading/Seating must comply with manufacturer’s stated passenger and/or weight capacity and must not create weight distributions that may contribute to instability (do not put loads on roof, distribute seat to riders from front to back)
 - Obtain scheduled service, maintenance and required inspections

Recommendations of the ACT Vanpool Council (continued)

- Perform daily walk-around observation prior to operation
- Prohibit the use of any cell phone or audio/video device by a driver when operating the vehicle
- Inform and obtain written agreement from all drivers of consequences of any unauthorized or prohibited use

- **Continuing Safety Education**

Provide frequent and regular communications to continue focus on safety. Provide opportunities for additional safety training and encourage feedback from all participants to identify issues and concerns.

- **Vanpools Participants Involvement**

All participants share the responsibility of creating a safe environment in which to operate the vehicle. Noise and commotion can be a distraction and must be controlled by all participants. It is important that drivers and riders have a simple and safe channel to communicate concerns to the vanpool provider. When warranted take corrective action and provide direction to vanpool participants.

- **Route Planning**

Utilize High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, whenever possible. Encourage care in route planning to avoid construction, congestion, left turns at controlled intersections, and dangerous conditions. Facilitate means for drivers to discuss route planning with other riders and back-up drivers. Utilize safe drop-off and pick-up locations. Develop and communicate contingency plans that consider Adverse Weather, Homeland Security and what to do in the event of an emergency.

3. **Establish and implement an accident, incident or complaint review process that will implement actions to identify unsafe vehicle operation.**

- **Accident Reporting**

Require notification of all accident and incidents. Ensure accident reports and instructions are in the vanpool vehicle with vehicle registration and insurance documentation.

- **Accident Review**

Review all accidents and incidents to identify recurring types and contributing factors. Provide the identity information and the phone number of the vanpool provider on vehicles. Take corrective and/or responsive action for complaints regarding vehicle operation.

4. **Procure vanpool vehicles that when equipped, maintained and repaired meet OEM standards and satisfy FMVSS requirements.**

- **Safe Vanpool Vehicle**

Fundamental to a safe vanpool operation is a safe vehicle. Vanpool vehicles, when equipped with aftermarket modifications, are certified and tested to meet Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) requirements. Document in-vehicle testing of aftermarket modifications (passenger restraints, seats, attachments and/or anchors) which are performed utilizing OEM standards established for modifiers or final stage manufacturers of vans. Vanpool vehicles when loaded with passengers may not exceed the gross vehicle weight rating for the vehicle. Equip vehicles with safety kits; triangle, flashlights, etc. which may be a requirement.

- **Service and Maintenance**

Provide service and maintenance schedules and instructions describing approved service centers where vehicles can be taken. Comprehensive safety inspections are to be conducted at least once a year with a six month interval being the goal. Implement a follow-up process to ensure that service, maintenance and any required inspections are performed.

- **Vehicle Repairs**

Repairs are to be performed at approved repair facilities and must be performed on a timely basis. Determine that a repair will not compromise the integrity of the vehicle. Determine that a vehicle requiring a repair may not be operated, when it poses an unsafe condition due to damage that has been incurred.