

University of Oregon – OPP - Driving State Vehicles

There is no aspect of the operation of the Outdoor Pursuits Program that involves more risk than the transportation of students to and from outing sites. Virtually all motor vehicle accidents can be prevented. A recent study showed that fewer than 2% of all accidents are not preventable! Almost invariably, accidents can be traced to poor judgment on the part of the driver.

Furthermore:

- As of December, 2001, only vans have been involved in fatal incidents.
- 64% of total accidents involve vans, of which 44% involve backing.
- Drivers must be cleared (have their driving record checked) before being permitted to drive state vehicles. A clean driving record is required. Driver's are responsible for their own citations.
- Because of their high center of gravity, vans are more prone to rollovers. As a result, all van drivers must participate in a van driver training course before being cleared to drive 12-passenger and cargo vans. The OPP (almost exclusively) uses vans to transport students and gear to and from outings.
- The 2 most common errors drivers tend to make are not coming to a complete stop at a stop sign or red light, and not turning into the closest lane after turning onto a street.
- Drivers have a legal responsibility for their passengers and are expected to follow state laws related to driving vehicles.

Drivers Are Responsible For:

- Filing an Outing Itinerary with the Department of Public Safety.
- Ensuring that a safety kit is loaded into each vehicle.
- Making sure that all lights and signals are working properly. Complete a quick visual check prior to departure, and adjust the mirrors prior to moving. Drivers MUST drive with headlights on at all times.
- Having a responsible relief driver. A qualified relief driver is required for one-way travel on trips greater than 300 miles.
- Loading vans properly! Passengers must be loaded from the front to the rear. Every front seat must be occupied before a rear seat. Cargo over 5 lbs. must be strapped and secured. Small items should be placed under the seats. Items carried by passengers must not pose an exit risk after an accident.
- Ensuring that passengers are wearing their seat belts properly. Passengers should be informed that slouching, leaning to the side, or moving the shoulder strap to the back causes the lap belt to rise up and dramatically increases the risk of a spinal injury during a collision.
- Driving defensively and safely, observing all laws. Vans must NEVER be operated at a speed higher than 55 mph, even on roads with higher posted speed limits.
- Being in possession of a DPS card verifying clearance. Motor Pool representatives require that you display a current card when checking out vehicles.
- Reporting all accidents and completing accident forms and paperwork (see below).

Potential Drivers Are Expected To:

- Report all citations or marks against your driving record to a Director. Driving records are checked ONLY when a renewal request is made to DPS (annually for students). If you have been issued a citation that would otherwise prevent you from being cleared to drive state vehicles, we expect to know about it.

- Get behind the wheel only if you are rested, ready to assume the responsibility of driving others, and comfortable driving in the anticipated conditions.
- Occupy the front passenger (co-pilot) seat ONLY if you are willing to serve as an alert navigator and assistant (see responsibilities below).
- Inform the instructor if any passengers are unruly or will not follow your directions related to seating and seat belt use.

Co-Pilots Are Responsible For:

- Not being a distraction to the driver.
- Serving as a relief driver, if necessary.
- Answering passenger questions and keeping rowdiness in check.
- Assisting the driver with safety tasks and responsibilities, specifically:
 - Ensuring that vans are loaded from front to rear.
 - Making sure people have seat belts fastened properly.
 - Assisting with navigation including being a second set of eyes, helping to adjust mirrors and check lights and signals, helping with backing up, adjusting temperature controls, making telephone calls, reading a road map, etc.

Defensive Driving Tips:

- Adjust all mirrors before the trip.
- Know the instrument panel well enough to operate controls without being distracted, especially the lights, wipers, and temperature controls.
- Drive with the headlights on at all times. This is policy!
- Use signal lights for ALL turns and lane changes.
- STOP at all stop indicators.
- Avoid eating anything other than easy to manage snacks when driving. Eating is a major distraction that has been the main cause of many accidents.
- Avoid backing up, if possible. If not, get assistance from the co-pilot for backing maneuvers.
- Utilize the three second rule when driving vans in optimal conditions – 4 seconds or longer if conditions are less than optimal – even longer if conditions are dangerous (e.g. icy roads). Vans take longer to stop than cars, and are nowhere near as maneuverable! When driving in a convoy, leave LOTS of distance between your van and the van ahead of you – a quarter mile is about right – in other words enough distance to allow impatient drivers to pass comfortably. As a rule, if you can read the license plate in front of you, you are following too close.

Important Considerations for OPP Outings:

- Call 511 (or 800-977-6368) to check on the current road conditions prior to leaving campus.
- Know the route, the intermediate meeting points, and the travel destination. Have on your person the mobile phone numbers of at least one person in each van, and the DPS telephone number. DPS must be called in the event of an accident or delay of more than 45 minutes.

- Each van must be equipped with an OPP emergency road (black) container (which has chain tighteners and a tightener tool, a scraper, a first aid kit, fire extinguisher, jumper cables, reflective triangles, and plastic sheeting). Additionally, all vans MUST have chains. All deficits MUST be resolved prior to leaving campus.
- Flammable liquids must be carried in tightly sealed metal or plastic containers in sedan trunks or in the cargo compartment of the cargo van - NEVER in the passenger compartment of any vehicle.
- Check to make sure that you have all passengers after rest stops and breaks. Count the number of people you are transporting prior to leaving campus and all stops along the way.
- Disengage child safety locks (most vans have them). Quick exit from a vehicle is essential after an accident.
- A common cause of vehicle break-ins is an attractive item that is left in plain view within a vehicle. We require that all items left in vans be placed out of sight underneath seats or behind the last passenger seat in a 12-passenger van. Items left in the rear of a 12-passenger van should be covered with dark plastic to hide them.
- Public vehicles are closely watched by the public. Obey traffic laws explicitly, drive defensively and courteously, and be courteous and respectful in public areas such as parking lots, grocery stores, restrooms, etc. You and your passengers are representatives of the U of O and the OPP. Please go out of your way to accommodate others and represent our institution in the best manner possible.
- NEVER stand on the front bumper and place your knee on the hood of a van to scrape the front windshield. You'll likely damage the van hood. Open the van door and stand on the vehicle floor. The black boxes are equipped with long-handled scrapers.
- Drivers on OPP outings often travel on backcountry roads, and/or travel in adverse weather conditions. Drive very conservatively on gravel roads, slow down on corners and keep a constant lookout for approaching vehicles.
- Select the least favorable parking spot(s) and park vans as close together as possible, with mirrors folded in.

Vehicle Emergency Response

A. Traffic Accident in University Vehicle

1. Stop at once in a safe place close to the accident site without obstructing traffic. Turn on the emergency flashers to warn others. Determine if anybody is injured and needs medical assistance. If there are no injuries that preclude moving vehicle occupants but you are unable to park the vehicle well off of the road in a safe location, get people out of the vehicles and in a safe location well off of the shoulder.
2. Assess the situation and call the Police. Depending on the severity of the injuries, call 911. DO NOT move a seriously injured person, unless it's absolutely necessary for his/her safety.
3. Place emergency warning devices (e.g. safety triangles – found in black boxes or in the OSU vehicle) far enough away from the van to allow drivers to slow or stop if the vehicle is a road hazard. On highways with speed limits of 55 mph safety triangles must be placed a minimum of 100 to 150 yards from the accident.
4. Request that the attending officer file a written report, *regardless of the extent of the damages*.
5. Move the vehicle only when directed to do so, or if necessary to avoid obstructing traffic.
6. Complete the "AT SCENE OF ACCIDENT" form found in the **orange envelope** in the vehicle's glove box.
7. Have witnesses complete the orange "WITNESS CARDS".
8. Show the blue "CERTIFICATE OF COVERAGE" (proof of insurance) form to the Police and any other parties that

request this information.

9. Report the accident to the OSU Motor Pool (call 866-253-5671) and submit the "**STATE SELF INSURANCE CLAIM**" form.
10. Within 72 hours, fill out the "DMV ACCIDENT REPORT" if there were any of the following:
 - a) injury resulting from accident;
 - b) damages exceeding \$1500; or
 - c) if the vehicle needs to be towed.

IMPORTANT

1. DO NOT debate or admit responsibility.
2. DO NOT make statements to anyone except a Police/Law Enforcement Officer, your supervisor, the University Motor Pool, the Office of Risk Management, and Legal Counsel

B. UNATTENDED VEHICLE

Fill out the **YELLOW CARD** in the orange envelope in the glove box. The State of Oregon requires that you leave your name, address, driver's license number, vehicle plate number, insurance information, and a description of the incident.

C. ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE - 24 HR Service

Phone: (866) 253-5671. The University Motor Pool supports drivers 24 hours a day.

If you need assistance please call the Motor Pool toll-free at (866) 253-5671. After hours and on weekends a Public Safety Dispatcher will connect you with a Motor Pool employee 24 Hrs per day to get you the help needed.

The 24 HR number is also listed on the dispatch ticket, on a business card located on the driver side visor pouch, and on an orange sticker on the driver side windshield.

D. VEHICULAR ACCIDENT INVOLVING INJURED PASSENGERS

1. Implement the steps described above, and consider the following.
 - a) Do not move passengers who are injured unless remaining in the vehicle poses a threat (e.g. gas leak, etc.). Administer first aid to the best of your abilities. The well being of the uninjured passengers is also a priority. Do what is necessary to maintain their safety. (e.g. move them to a safer location and maintain supervision by a leader).
 - b) Relinquish authority to emergency response personnel (police officers, fire and ambulance crews) upon their arrival. You are still responsible for your group. Maintain control and oversight to assure their safety, and assist emergency workers and police where appropriate.

NOTE: OPP outing groups usually travel in several vans. It's imperative that vans remain close enough together to render assistance in an accident, yet far enough apart so as not to impose a travel hazard for other drivers. Under most conditions, the course instructor should travel in the trailing vehicle to ensure the best chance of being able to respond to an emergency involving a lead van. An exception is recommended when traveling over icy mountain passes when chains might be required. In this situation, it's best that the course instructor travels in the lead van, and make an executive decision about whether, and where, to chain up.

SELECT DRIVING EMERGENCIES

The variety and complications of emergency situations make it difficult to prepare for every possible set of circumstances. The following emergencies have been selected to stimulate thought and prepare you for decisions.

1. *Recovering from a skid*

- a. Avoid braking on icy pavement.
- b. Immediately back off on the gas (not necessarily completely - just enough to slow the vehicle and allow it to regain traction) while steering in the direction in which the rear end of the vehicle is skidding.
- c. Rear-wheel drive, front-wheel drive, all-wheel drive and four-wheel drive vehicles each behave differently when skidding. Practice in a safe, snowy, or icy place, so the proper responses are automatic.

2. *Running off the pavement*

- a. Release the accelerator pedal,
- b. Keep firm grip on the steering wheel,
- c. Resist the urge to return to the pavement immediately, then
- d. Straddle the pavement edge until the vehicle is moving slowly.
- e. When the pavement level is nearly even with shoulder, turn sharply back onto the pavement.

3. *Deep ruts and/or holes in the road*

- a. Reduce speed.
- b. Try to avoid ruts and holes if this can be done safely.
- c. Just before a wheel drops into a rut or hole, let up on the brakes so the wheel can rotate freely.
- d. Maintain a firm grip on the steering wheel.

4. *Animals on the road*

- a. Avoid hitting an animal only if you can do so safely and without losing control.
- b. If it is not possible to avoid the animal, slow as much as possible before impact and maintain a firm grip on the steering wheel. Be prepared for possible damage to the vehicle, including the alignment and steering control systems.

5. *Bee or other stinging insect in the vehicle*

- a. Ignore the insect while driving.
- b. Stop safely in a safe place before removing the insect.

6. *Dropped articles*

- a. Do not try to retrieve anything from the floor of the vehicle while the vehicle is moving!
- b. Stop, then recover or dispose of the dropped item.

7. *Blinding lights*

- a. Dim headlights even if the other driver does not.
- b. Look at the right edge of the road, and
- c. Slow down.

8. *Tire blowouts*

- a. Keep a firm grip on the steering wheel.
- b. Keep the wheels as straight as possible
- c. Pump the brakes lightly.
- d. Reduce speed to 15 mph or less before pulling off onto the shoulder.
- f. Be sure the vehicle is well off the road before changing the tire.

9. *Brake failure*

- a. Pump brake the pedal repeatedly.
- b. Shift to the next lower gear.
- c. Engage the parking brake.
- d. Rub a tire against the curbing if on a steep city hill.
- e. If on a mountain road and the above measures fail, drive against a soft roadside dirt slope, into dense bushes or into a shallow ditch before picking up speed.
- f. Turning off the ignition may help reduce speed, but use caution, as this will also eliminate power steering.

10. *Steering failure*

- a. If hard steering develops, pull off the road and check for low tire or a broken power-steering belt.
- b. Complete failure: apply the brakes moderately to prevent skidding.

11. *Lights fail*

- a. If at night, stop well off the highway.
- b. Try other lights, such as high or low beam, turning signal, parking lights, fog lights, or brake lights to warn other drivers.
- c. Check the bulbs, switches, and fuses.

12. *Accelerator sticks*

- a. Pump the accelerator pedal with several sharp jabs to release it.

13. *Hood flies up*

- a. Look ahead out of the left window.
- b. Slow down as much as possible, watching for cars approaching from the rear
- c. Do not cross the centerline.
- d. Pull off the road as soon as possible.

14. *Dead battery*

- a. Attempt a "jump start" only between two vehicles that use the same voltage system (e.g. 12 volt). To jump start a vehicle (i.e. to partially recharge the vehicle's battery and provide enough extra current to start the engine):
- b. Connect one jumper cable (usually the red cable) from the positive side of the donor's battery to the positive (+) side of the dead or insufficiently charged battery.
- c. Connect the other (black) cable to the negative (-) side of the donor's battery.
- d. Connect the other end of the negative (black) cable to a grounded part of the metal frame or engine on the car with the dead battery. Do not make the final connection at the battery! Hydrogen gas is present and may explode if ignited by the spark, which could blow the battery apart and send acid in all directions. People have been disfigured and blinded by battery explosions; use caution.
- e. Start the donor's engine and wait for a minute or two before trying to start the other engine. If it still won't start, try letting the battery charge for several minutes before trying again. This is often necessary if the battery has a very low charge, or in very low temperatures.
- f. Once the engine has been started, remove the cables in the reverse order. The connector removed first must be the one distant from the battery, so the spark is less likely to ignite any hydrogen gas.

15. *Stalling on railroad tracks*

- a. If a train is coming, leave the vehicle immediately. Leave the area of impact and move as far as possible away from the train.
- b. Maintain a constant lookout for trains, and call 911 to alert trains of your presence.
- c. If in a vehicle with a manual transmission, and a train is not coming, place the gear shift lever in low or reverse, engage the clutch, and engage the starter. This may provide enough power to move the vehicle off the tracks.
- d. If the above techniques fail, or if in a vehicle with an automatic transmission, place the vehicle in neutral and try to push it off the tracks. If possible, push or pull it with another vehicle.

16. *Submerged vehicle*

- a. Escape through open window, before water reaches the window level, if possible.
- b. Most vehicles will float for several minutes!
- c. If the vehicle sinks too rapidly, move to the rear of the passenger compartment to breath trapped air while planning to escape.
- d. Open the side window or knock out the back window by kicking with both legs.
- e. Open the door when the pressure is equalized.

17. *Vehicle catches on fire, or a gasoline leak*

- a. Evacuate the passengers immediately, to a safe distance.
- b. Turn off the ignition key.
- c. Throw mud, dirt, or snow on the blaze if and only if it is very small, or passengers are entrapped. Stay far from the vehicle if there is any danger of fuel tank or tire explosion. Vehicle fires are unpredictable and can progress very quickly from a small blaze to an inferno. Explosions are common.

18. *Rear-end collision imminent*

- a. If possible, warn the passengers before impact.
- b. Use your arm to support the back of your head and neck, or slump down so your head hits the back of the seat.

19. *Head-on or front-corner impact imminent*

- a. Warn the passengers.
- b. Steer until accident is unavoidable.
- c. Immediately before impact, the driver should cross the arms over the face.

20. *After an accident*

- a. If there is a danger of spilled gasoline, or if the vehicle is severely damaged, turn off the ignition. Do not allow anyone to smoke anywhere in the vicinity of the vehicle! Vapors travel a long way.
- b. Place flares to warn other drivers. Place at least two flares, one about 150 ft. (about 50 meters) and the other 300 ft. (about 100 meters) in each direction from which traffic is coming. These are bare minimums! If possible place more flares at least 500 ft. (about 160 meters) in each direction from which traffic is coming. Remember that it takes at least 125 ft. (about 40 meters) for a car to stop on good, dry pavement when going 40 mph. Snow and/or ice can easily triple stopping distances! Protect yourself and others: drivers commonly do not slow down soon enough even when flares are visible, and may enter the accident site at high rates of speed.
- c. Render first aid and send for professional help.
- d. Protect yourself and others from the environment; keep everyone warm and dry.

21. *If you are not involved but choose to stop at an accident scene*

- a. Drive past the accident and stop/park in a safe place.
- b. If it appears that emergency services will be needed call 911 unless it is clear that emergency services have already been called.
- c. Warn other drivers—place flares, add additional ones, or replace dying ones.
- d. Do not attempt to tow another vehicle. Towing is best left to professionals.
- e. The leader's primary responsibility is the safety of the group. Leaders must maintain control of the group. Have participants remain in the vehicle or at a safe site. No leader or participant should go to the accident site unless there is a need for his or her skills.