

## Older vans are generally a poor safety risk

**W**anna die young? Buy an old van. There's often just a few millimetres of steel between you and the car in front, and in a head-on collision, chances are you're dog tucker.

The smallest vans are the worst. According to Australian accident researchers, the driver of a '82-90 Suzuki Carry van has a dreadfully high chance of serious injury – in fact, you are several times more likely to die driving the Suzuki van than you would driving the average car. The same applies to early Mitsubishi passenger vans.

The Suzuki is an extreme example, but the fact remains that old vans generally are a poor safety risk. This is borne out in both simulated crashtests and actual crash results.

Obviously some vans are better than others, but overall, we recommend that you steer clear of them unless you have a definite need for one.

We especially advise families to avoid using older vans as a regular way of getting around. If a passenger van is the only option,



then we advise getting either a purpose-built passenger van like the Honda Odyssey or one of the large diesel vans.

The US Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), has warned that 15-passenger vans have a rollover risk that increases dramatically as the number of occupants increases from fewer than five to more than 10. In fact, 15-passenger vans (with 10 or more occupants) had a rollover rate in single vehicle crashes that is nearly three times the rate of those that were lightly loaded.

NHTSA recommends that 15-passenger vans should be operated only by trained, experienced drivers and occupants

should wear seatbelts at all times (80 percent of those who died in 15-passenger van rollovers nationwide in the year 2000 were not wearing seatbelts).

When it comes to moving small families around a larger station wagon such as a Toyota Camry, late-model Ford Falcon or Holden Commodore is a much better bet.

Newer vans and people-movers tend to be safer, but you should avoid using an older van for transporting people.

If you must use one, then buy a vehicle designed for moving people, not just a goods van with seats. If you really have to have an old van to move people, bigger is better, okay? •

