

A van driver's checklist for backing safety.

According to the National Safety Council, one out of four vehicle collisions can be blamed on poor backing techniques, and backing collisions cause more than 500 deaths and 15,000 injuries per year.¹ Backing accidents are especially worrisome for owners of 15-passenger vans routinely used by human services providers. We suggest giving a copy of this checklist to anyone who drives a van for your organization.

Check *all* the boxes to reduce the likelihood of a backing accident.

- Think ahead. Avoid backing whenever possible by parking to allow for a front exit. Do this especially in unfamiliar or congested areas.
- Know vehicle blind spots. Vans have much larger blind spots than cars. Adjust mirrors to see blind spot areas on both sides and directly behind the vehicle.
- Perform a vehicle walk-around to scan for cars and pedestrians.
- Judge clearances accurately and avoid obstructions, trees and wires.
- Take it slow and easy. After scanning the area, back up slowly, but as soon as possible before conditions change.
- Use a back-up spotter whenever one's available.
- Once in the vehicle, change your body position and turn your head to see as much of a blind spot area as possible.
- Get others' attention. Tap your horn several times and use four-way flashers to increase visibility.
- Use driver's side backing vs. blind-side backing. (See sidebar.)
- Avoid backing into traffic.
- Use extra caution around children.
- If you have doubts about backing, don't do it.



The technique of driver's side backing.

Turn the steering wheel counter-clockwise, carefully check both mirrors, and look left out the driver's side window for better visibility. Proceed slowly and carefully, continually checking for clearances. Blind-side backing makes the vehicle move to the right, blocking your line of sight, so it's to be avoided whenever possible.

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¹ *May 2014 Safety Coach*, National Safety Council, http://www.nsc.org/NSCDocuments_Advocacy/Texas%20Documents/May-2014-Safety-Coach.pdf, (downloaded 10/29/15).