

# Making the most of your small business vans

## Tips for choosing and running a cost-effective van fleet.

2013 saw over 327,000 new vans and trucks registered in the UK – an increase of 14.7% and an indicator of economic recovery. If your business is considering investing in vans – or already runs one or more light commercial vehicles – then read on. We'll look at how to manage your van costs.

When choosing LCVs, the '90% rule' is useful. Consider the capacity and engine size, then decide what will be carried and the likely journeys for the vast majority of the time. There's no need to select a large vehicle that can carry 4m lengths if you only transport them twice a year – it's easier and cheaper to simply hire a vehicle for those odd occasions. Secondly, a larger engine size is more economical for motorway mileage rather than shorter, 'stop and start' multiple trips: what will your drivers be doing 90% of the time?

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Another practical consideration is the interior. A bulkhead behind the driver and passenger can save lives in an



emergency stop situation as items from the rear are dislodged. Being hit by a full can of coke or a tool at 30mph can easily kill...

Payload (how much weight the van is capable of carrying) is an important issue. Most manufacturers advertise the payload including a fuel tank 90% full and fluids in the engine – but without taking into account the driver or a passenger. And every item added to the van will reduce the payload further. To stay legal you must include the weight impact of fitting racking, roof systems and storage, as well as the stock, tools or goods being carried.

In fact payload should stay front of mind on an ongoing basis as the vehicle inspectorate are pulling over vans more than ever. An overloaded van is easy to spot, not least because it sits lower at the back in 'powerboat' mode. If one of your vans is overloaded, they can be stopped and prevented from moving until the load is reduced to a safe level. Fines can be up to £5k, plus the cost of downtime.

If your driver isn't sure of their exact payload, encourage them to use a public weighbridge. It's a cost-effective

way to stay safe and compliant and only takes a few minutes. Ensure that roof loads are secured properly and not excessive – many vans have less than 100kg roof loading capacity including the weight of the roof rack. Importantly, your drivers must understand that what they carry in the company vehicle is their responsibility, not the company's – a common misconception. If they believe they are overloaded or not able to secure their load properly, they must refuse to drive the vehicle.

Simple, daily checks to identify damage or defects, tyre pressure and levels are effective to ensure roadworthiness and improve fuel economy. Fitting reversing sensors and speed limiters are also useful.

Finally, don't forget that an overloaded, badly maintained van bearing your company name is advertising your business – but perhaps not as well as a professionally presented, proudly-driven one would do.

If you would like to find out more about what Lombard Vehicle Solutions could do for you, or would like to see our vehicle special offers, please click [here](#).

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