When Will this Safety Message Click in?

The deaths of eight Utah State agriculture students and their instructor in a van rollover in that state in late September was extremely sad and completely senseless.

We say senseless because not one of the students in the bus was wearing a seat belt when the 15-passenger van they were riding in blew a tire at high speed and rolled to the bottom of a ravine.

Two students who survived were in critical condition.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration repeatedly has issued warnings about the safety of the vans, which are tall, top heavy and prone to rolling over when a tire fails or during emergencies that require a van's driver to swerve. Not wearing a seat belt while riding in such a vehicle, or any vehicle for that matter, is a very irresponsible decision.
This isn't the first time such a van has flipped, causing multiple fatalities. Consider these examples:

- A 15-passenger van carrying people to church rolled in Texas, killing four.
- A US Marshal van carrying federal prisoners rolled in Texas, killing two.
- A van flipped in Florida, killing three college students.

Between 1990 and 2002 there were 1,111 people killed in 15-passenger van crashes across the United States.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) says 15-passenger vans, when fully loaded, are three times more likely to roll over than other vehicles.

But here's another telling statistic from NHTSA: 91 percent of drivers and passengers wearing seatbelts survive 15-passenger van rollover wrecks.

If your workers travel in these vans as part of their regular

work, or during business trips, you must impress upon them the importance of buckling up.

NHTSA says research it has conducted shows that 74 percent of 15-passenger vans tested had seriously misinflated tires, which could negatively affect their handling characteristics. Tire pressure and tire condition should be checked regularly.