

Questions and Answers Regarding Ohio's New Seat Belt Law



**WRIGHT
STATE**

Wright State University
Dayton, Ohio

School of Medicine
Department of Emergency Medicine



What does the Ohio Seat Belt Law require?

- Every passenger car registered in Ohio must have two sets of seat belts in its front seat.
- The driver and the front seat passenger in each automobile must wear their seat belts whenever the vehicle is in operation. This requirement is for commercial vehicles as well as private ones.
- If it is medically impossible or impractical for you to wear a seat belt, your doctor must sign an affidavit stating such in order to exempt you from the law.

What about children?

- Any child riding in an automobile which is registered in Ohio must ride in a "child restraint system" or "car seat" if the child is under 4 years old or weighs less than 40 pounds.
- All children over 4 years of age or over 40 pounds are subject to the new Seat Belt Law.
- This includes children riding in automobiles belonging to their parents, friends, or anyone other than a taxicab. It also includes vehicles operated by nursery school, kindergartens, and day-care centers.

When does the Seat Belt Law go into effect?

- The law regarding small children has been in effect since 1984.
- The law regarding older children and adults goes into effect on May 6, 1986 with fines levied after July 3, 1986.

What are the penalties for violating these laws?

You may be fined between \$10 and \$30.

Am I responsible if a passenger in my car doesn't wear his or her seat belt?

Yes, the operator of the vehicle is responsible for all occupants of the vehicle. Should anyone in the vehicle refuse to wear a seat belt, the driver can be fined for operating a vehicle in violation of the law.

Isn't it a violation of my rights to force me to wear a seat belt?

No! The state supreme court of Wisconsin and several Federal District Courts have ruled that the law provides no sanctions for self destruction. They also ruled that the public welfare regarding financial resources was best served by limiting injuries and, therefore, public liability. Finally, the use of public thoroughfares and driving vehicles is a privilege and the rules allow for orderly use of these facilities. This deprives no one of their individual rights.

Are there any exceptions to the law?

- Mail carriers in the performance of their duty are exempt from the law. Otherwise, only those persons who have a signed affidavit from a licensed physician stating that wearing restraint devices is impossible are exempt.
- Cars assembled prior to 1966 are not required to be equipped with seat belts.

Do seat belts really save lives?

Yes! Statistics repeatedly show that approximately half of all deaths and half of all serious injuries from car accidents could be prevented by wearing belts. That means about 23,000 lives a year could be saved. That's 63 lives every day! In addition, thousands of injuries could be prevented every day.



Do seat belts prevent injuries at "low" speeds?

Deaths from head and neck injuries have been reported in accidents occurring at speeds less than 10 mph. This is especially true in infants and young children who are thrown through the vehicles windshields even at low speeds.

Do other states have seat belt laws?

Yes; 14 other states already have seat belt laws and many others will soon. In fact 32 other countries around the world have seat belt laws. The United States is the last of all industrialized countries to have such laws.

Have seat belt laws been effective in other states?

New York was the first state to enact a seat belt law in January, 1985. During the first four months of 1985 there was a 38 percent reduction in state-wide fatalities. If this trend continued for all of 1985, between 450-550 lives would be saved yearly by seat belts. New Jersey showed a 27 percent reduction in vehicle fatalities the first two months after its law went into effect.

Could I be trapped in my car by my seat belt?

Only if you are conscious can you help yourself escape from a wrecked vehicle. Seat belts keep occupants from striking windshields, steering wheels and dash boards, the primary cause of severe head, neck, and chest injuries even in "low" speed accidents. Therefore, seat belts prevent or decrease the severity of injuries, allowing the victim a greater chance for survival.



(Continued on Back)

Do I stand a better chance of survival if I'm thrown clear of the vehicle?

Statistics prove that those people thrown out of cars have a 300 times greater possibility of death or permanent disability than those who remain in the car. The sudden impact of hitting a stationary object outside the car is usually the cause of death.

Should I wear my seat belt if I'm pregnant?

Yes! Seat belts should be worn by all pregnant women. The lap belt should be worn as low as possible. It should not be loose, and the shoulder harness should always be worn. The belt prevents the mother and child from being thrown against the dashboard. This type of injury could cause a miscarriage in the unrestrained patient.

Why are seat belts especially important to young adults?

Statistics prove that over 60 percent of the 23,000 yearly vehicle deaths occur in the age group 16-29. The majority of two million permanently disabled occupants are from the young adult group.

A publication prepared by the Wright State University School of Medicine Department of Emergency Medicine.

Emergency Phone Numbers