

On July 1, 1987, the use of seat belts became mandatory for all drivers and vehicle passengers in Prince Edward Island, with some exceptions.

The purpose of mandatory legislation is very simple. Seat belts save lives and legislation is the most effective means to increase seat belt use.

Even the most outspoken opponents of mandatory seat belt legislation agree that when properly worn, seat belts do work to save lives.

For detailed information about seat belts and air bags, please contact:

Transportation and Public Works
Highway Safety Division
PO Box 2000, Charlottetown, PE C1A 7N8
Telephone: 902 368 5230

Design: Strategic Marketing and Graphic Design
Printing: Document Publishing Centre

Seat Belts and Air Bags



What you need to know



Transportation
and Public Works
Highway Safety
Division

Table of Contents

Responsibilities of the Vehicle Owner	1
Responsibilities of the Vehicle Driver	1
Responsibility of the Vehicle Passenger	2
Rights and Privileges	2
Types of Child Restraint Systems	3
Positioning Child Restraints	4
Pre-schoolers	6
Older Children	7
Adults and Older Children	7
Safety Benefits of Air Bags	9
Exemptions for Seat Belt Use	10
Questions and Answers on Occupant Restraint Legislation	11
Human Costs	13

Responsibilities of the Vehicle

Owner Include:

- **not** removing seat belts from the vehicle (except for maintenance, or if the seating position has been removed);
- replacing broken, worn out, or previously removed seat belts;
- maintaining seat belts in good condition; and
- **not** modifying a seat belt in any way that will reduce its effectiveness.

Responsibilities of the Vehicle

Driver Include:

- using the available seat belt;
- ensuring that all passengers under 16 years of age wear available seat belts; and
- ensuring that every child is secured in an appropriate infant, or child, safety seat.

Responsibility of the Vehicle

Passenger Includes:

- using the available seat belt.

Rights and Privileges

As with many social issues which affect our daily lives, there are always differing points of view. For those who feel this legislation infringes on their human rights, we would ask them to consider the following:

- Laws exist to protect the individual and society as a whole, and they exist to be enforced. Mandatory seat belt legislation is designed to protect vehicle occupants.
- You have the right to expect that people using roads and highways will take all reasonable precautions against injuring you physically or financially. Roads belong to the public and are built with tax dollars.
- Children have the right to expect their parents to do all that they can to ensure their safety and to protect themselves from potential dangers.

- Possession of a driver's licence is not a right. It is a privilege to drive a motor vehicle in Prince Edward Island and in every other province in Canada. Those who abuse the privilege can expect that their licence to drive will be taken away for a period of time.

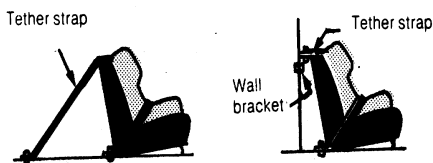
Types of Child Restraint Systems

There are four different types of child restraint systems:

- infant carriers
- combination seats
- booster seats
- integrated (built-in) child seats

Children weighing under 9 kgs (20 lbs.) must be secured in a rear-facing infant carrier. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when installing car seats.

Children weighing 9 kgs (20 lbs.) to 22 kgs. (48 lbs.) who can sit up by themselves should be placed in a forward-facing car seat. The seat must be anchored to the vehicle by the tether strap supplied with the seat.



-3-

Children who are too tall for their car seats (that is, when the mid-point of their ears comes over the top of their seats) or who weigh more than 18 kgs (40 lbs.) can be secured in a booster seat. Be sure to secure the booster seat with the vehicle's seat belt system.

Some vehicles have child restraint systems built into the vehicle seat bench. These seats are required to meet *Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards*. Since these seats are built right into the vehicle seat bench, they do not require the use of a tether strap. Refer to owner's manual and follow instructions as outlined.

When children reach 23 kgs (50 lbs.) or over, they use the full seat belt assembly as provided in the seating position.

Positioning Child Restraints

The rear seat of the vehicle is a preferable place for the child restraint; although, if you are travelling alone with the baby, you may wish to secure the rear-facing infant carrier in the front passenger seat. This allows you to check on the child without taking your attention off driving.

DO NOT USE A REAR-FACING INFANT CARRIER IN FRONT OF AN AIR BAG.

-4-

Injury may result if the air bag deploys, propelling the infant seat carrier into the back of the seat.

For larger children, a booster seat will improve their view, and help position the lap belt properly over the thighs, and the shoulder belt properly across the chest.

When no child restraint system is available, secure your child with the existing vehicle seat belt system in the back seat. Ensure that the lap portion is as low on the hips as possible, and if a shoulder belt is available, that it is snug across the chest.

The following describes how drivers should comply with the seat belt law for children in Prince Edward Island.

Air bags are popular safety devices, but can be deadly to small children riding in the front seat.

Babies in rear-facing infant carriers often travel in the front seat of vehicles where the driver can easily see them but these children are **at risk if the vehicle has a passenger-side air bag.**

The impact of an air bag on the head of an infant in a rear-facing seat can exceed 300 g's. An adult could survive only about 80 g's and children less than that.

Of particular concern is that in a minor crash, the impact of the air bag can injure or kill infants who might otherwise have suffered no injuries.

The tether strap must **always** be securely attached to a bolt installed in the rear shelf of a car, or on the floor of a van, station wagon or hatchback. Some automobile manufacturers provide pre-installed anchorage locations.

Pre-schoolers

Pre-schoolers from 18 to 23 kgs (40-50 lbs.) who have outgrown the safety seat must use the **lap belt portion** of the seat belt assembly worn securely fitted, low on the hips.

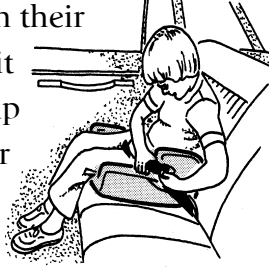


If a child of this size must ride in the front seat and there is a shoulder strap, make sure it **fits correctly**. If it passes across the child's face or neck, you should purchase a comfort clip to adjust the shoulder belt off your chest.

Children (pre-schoolers) of this size should NEVER ride in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with passenger-side air bags.

Booster Seats

A booster seat may be used with the lap belt for children who have outgrown their child safety seat. Make sure it is in the back seat and the lap belt is worn low, snugly over the child's hips (**not** over the stomach).



Older Children

Children who have outgrown a booster seat must wear a seat belt. Children under the age of 12 years should **never** ride in the front seat of a vehicle if it is equipped with a passenger-side air bag. Serious injury could result in the case of a frontal impact. Ensure that the lap belt is worn low and snug over the lap area, **not** over the stomach.

Never place the shoulder belt under the arm. This can cause serious internal injuries in a vehicle collision.

Adults and Older Children

Once you have your child properly secured in an approved restraint system, be sure to use your own seat belt as well.

There are three ways vehicle occupants can be seriously injured in a vehicle collision:

- they hit something;
- something hits them; or
- they are ejected from the vehicle.

An unbelted adult can crush a child against the dashboard, door or seat and a loose object can strike a child causing injury.

Lap belts must be worn snugly and as low on the hips as possible. In the front seat, adults should always wear the shoulder belt over the shoulder. Accident research indicates that it is **extremely dangerous** to place the shoulder belt under the arm.

Adults set a good example for children when they wear their seat belts all the time, and the trip will be safer for everyone.



Adults who are short in stature, who drive vehicles that are equipped with air bags, should ensure that their seat is adjusted as far away as possible to allow the air bag room to deploy. People who sit close to the air bag module, usually because they are short, are at the highest risk of injury.

Children are also **extremely** vulnerable because they are small. They should be properly belted, and those under the age of 12 should be seated in the back.

Safety Benefits of Air Bags

Air bags are safety devices that protect the head and upper body from injury in a collision. They prevent the driver's head from hitting the steering wheel and the front passenger's head from striking the dashboard.

While air bags save many lives each year, they do **not** protect in all kinds of crashes. They deploy in frontal impacts only, and not in rear-end collisions, side impacts or roll-overs. They may also deploy in low speed collisions – sometimes as low as 15 kilometres per hour.

Seat belts, on the other hand, protect the entire body and are effective in all types of collisions. In low and moderate-speed impacts, seat belts alone provide all the protection a person really needs.

Air bags are most effective in high-speed crashes, where they are often necessary to prevent serious injury. Together, seat belts and air bags offer good protection in most collisions, as long as the passenger compartment is not extensively crushed.

An air bag cushions the head as it moves forward after an impact; however, it expands with explosive speed – more than 300 kilometres per hour – and it opens faster than the blink of an eye. As a result, a deploying air bag can cause injuries. While most of these injuries consist of minor bruises and abrasions, some can be serious or even fatal.

Exemptions for Seat Belt Use

- a driver of a vehicle which is travelling in reverse;
- a passenger when all available seating positions with seat belts are occupied;
- a fireman while in or on a vehicle of a fire-fighting organization;
- a medical attendant in an ambulance transporting a patient; and
- a person engaged in work which requires that person to leave or enter the seating position at frequent intervals.

Questions and Answers on Occupant Restraint Legislation

- *To whom does the occupant restraint legislation apply?*
All drivers and passengers.
- *If my car has air bags, must I use a seat belt?*
Yes. You must use seat belts in a car with air bags.
- *My vehicle does not have seat belts. Must I install them?*
No, if the vehicle is a 1970 or earlier model. If it is a 1971 model or later, original seat belts must be retained or installed if they have been removed.
- *If my car is a pre-1971 model and the seat belts have been removed, must I reinstall them?*
No. (All vehicles 1971 and newer are equipped with seat belts.)
- *The seat belts in my vehicle are not working. Must I have them repaired?*
Yes.
- *The air bags in my vehicle are not functional. Must I have them repaired?*
No, but it is strongly recommended you do.

- *My child has some toddler friends visiting. When I drive them home, do they have to be secured in a safety seat?*
When a toddler travels in a vehicle, other than a parent's or legal guardian's, a lap belt may be used.
- *I am a taxi driver. Must I buckle up and am I responsible to ensure that children under the age of 16 years of age are buckled up in my taxi?*
Yes.
- *If an adult drives five or six children to school, hockey practice, etc., and there are not enough seat belts for them all, what should be done?*
All seat belts available must be used. The extra children do not have to be belted.
- *My child has outgrown the toddler seat. Is there a larger seat on the market, or can I use a booster seat under the child?*
Yes, booster seats designed for use in cars are available. They may be used for a child weighing more than 18 kgs (40 lbs.). Check to make sure the booster seat conforms to Standard 213.2 under the *Motor Vehicle Safety Act (Canada)*. Never substitute with a cushion or household booster.

- *If I am transporting children in a van, station wagon, or bus, may I buckle-up more than one child per lap belt?*

Definitely not! The lap belt is designed for one person only. If more than one child is buckled-up in a lap belt, they could be seriously injured since the lap belt will not be low and snug over the hips.

Human Costs

No one can put a price on grief and suffering when an accident results in death or permanent injury.

Permanent disabilities frequently result in changes in occupation and almost always drastic changes in lifestyle.

Too often, infants and small children are killed or injured because they are not properly restrained in child safety seats. Because children are unable to decide for themselves, parents must accept this responsibility.