

SEATBELTS

STANDARD NO(S):

NYSLEAP 42.3
NYSSA # 95

DATE:

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REFER TO:

John E. Breese
James Altimari

I. OBJECTIVE:

To require the use of seat belts in all SCSO vehicles.

II. POLICY:

It has been shown statistically that the use of occupant safety restraining devices can have a significant effect in reducing fatalities and the severity of injuries in traffic accidents. In addition, the use of seat belts by officers engaged in pursuit or other high-speed emergency operations can provide better control of the patrol vehicle.

III. DETAILS:

A. The following paragraphs are excerpts from Section 1229-c of the New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law:

1. "No person shall operate a motor vehicle in this state unless all back seat passengers of such vehicle under the age of four are restrained in a specially designed ... seat ... or in the case of any other passenger under the age of ten, he is restrained by a safety belt ..."
2. "No person shall operate a motor vehicle unless all front seat passengers under the age of sixteen are restrained by a safety belt or, if they are under the age of four, by a specially designed ...seat ..."
3. "No person shall operate a motor vehicle unless such person is restrained by a safety belt ... No person sixteen years of age or over shall be a passenger in the front seat of a motor vehicle unless such person is restrained by a safety belt ... "

B. Although the above-mentioned statute specifically exempts police vehicles from the provisions of this law, recent surveys and studies conducted by the state indicate that the use of seat belts saves many lives annually and reduces injuries in thousands of accidents each year.

C. For their own safety and for the safety of any passengers, including persons in custody, members of the SCSO are required to use the seat belt and to insure that passengers do likewise. Should the circumstance arise where it becomes necessary to transport a child

under the age of four in an SCSO vehicle, the member shall contact the shift Sergeant who will have access to an approved child restraint seat for the member's use.

D. Seat belt use is particularly important while operating at high speeds, not only as protection in the event of a collision, but as a device for keeping the driver in a proper position for better control of the vehicle.

E. Members should use discretion in seat belt use if engaged solely in conducting building checks or other activities requiring frequent exiting and reentering the vehicle. In these circumstances, good judgment might dictate that seat belt use be deferred until actual road patrol is resumed.

F. It is a fact that uniformed police officers are closely scrutinized by the public and can have a positive effect on the conduct of others by merely setting a good example. In this regard, a member properly wearing the seat belt shows concern for good safety practices.