

Seatbelt Law

Seatbelt Laws are traffic safety regulations that require vehicle occupants to wear safety belts while driving or riding in a motor vehicle.

Implementation Strategy

How and Where to Apply

- Implement or upgrade to primary enforcement seatbelt laws at the state level to allow officers to cite unbelted drivers without needing another offense.
- These laws vary by state and are categorized as either primary or secondary enforcement
- The **NHTSA** states that this marking can be used "Seat belts are the single most effective safety technology in the history of the automobile. They have saved more than 374,000 lives since 1975."

Use in a Safe System Approach

Seatbelt laws enforcement aligns with the SSA by promoting the principle of safer road users and supporting the human tolerance for crash forces. While it does not prevent crashes, seatbelt use significantly reduces the severity of injury in those that do occur and helps to mitigate consequences when system failures happen.

Key Stakeholders

State legislators, law enforcement agencies, public health and safety officials, vehicle manufacturers.

Proactive Implementation

Proactive implementation involves upgrading laws to primary enforcement through legislative action, allowing direct citations for non-use. Agencies can enhance effectiveness with high-visibility enforcement, targeted outreach to high-risk groups (e.g., rural drivers, teens, pickup occupants), and promotion of vehicle-integrated reminders and interlock systems to encourage consistent seatbelt use.

Countermeasure Overview

Objective: Maximize use of occupant restraints by all vehicle occupants

Strategy: Conduct highly publicized enforcement campaigns to maximize restraint use.

Targeted Solution



CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Ejection from vehicle



TARGET CRASH TYPE

- Single Vehicle
- Head-on
- Run-off-road



ROAD FACILITY TYPE

- All



AREA TYPE

- All

Safety Linkage



NCHRP 500 Series

Increasing Seatbelt Use



AASHTO'S TOWARD ZERO DEATHS

Safer Drivers and Passengers



SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH

Safe Road Users

SAFE SYSTEM ROADWAY DESIGN

TIER 1

TIER 2

TIER 3

TIER 4

N/A

Selected Related Countermeasures

- CM1** High-Visibility Enforcement (HVE)
- CM2** Public Education and Outreach Programs
- CM3** Vehicle-Integrated Seatbelt Technologies

Cost: \$ (Moderate to High)

Service Life: NA

Benefit-Cost Ratio: 6:1

Seatbelt Law. Source: [CARMASTERS](#)

Safety Benefits

45%

Reduces the risk of fatal injuries for front-seat and light-truck occupants¹.

60%

Seatbelts have saved many lives and remain one of the most effective vehicle safety measures¹.

¹NHTSA, 2025

Resources

- [NHTSA Reports on Seatbelt Use and Effectiveness](#)
- [Governors Highway Safety Association \(GHSA\) Seatbelt Laws Database](#)
- [CDC Injury Prevention Guidelines](#)

