

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.
- Seatbelt laws work best when primary, comprehensive, and well-publicized with strong enforcement and targeted outreach, but are less effective when penalties are weak, enforcement is secondary or inconsistent, awareness is low.

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 DOTs, MPOs, state legislators, law enforcement agencies, public health organizations, driver licensing and training organizations, educational institutions, 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.

Selected Related Countermeasures

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

Cost: \$ (Low)
Service Life: NA

Targeted Solution



CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

- Ejection from vehicle



TARGET CRASH TYPE

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



ROAD FACILITY TYPE

- N/A



AREA TYPE

- All

Safety Linkage



NCHRP 500 Series

Seatbelt Use



AASHTO'S TOWARD ZERO DEATHS

Improved Safety Management



SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH

Safe Road Users

SAFE SYSTEM ROADWAY DESIGN

TIER 1

TIER 2

TIER 3

TIER 4

N/A

Safety Benefits

45%

Reduces the risk of fatal injuries for front-seat and light-truck occupants ([NHTSA, 2025](#))

60%

Seatbelts have saved many lives and remain one of the most effective vehicle safety measures ([NHTSA, 2025](#))

Resources

- [Countermeasures That Work, Seat Belts and Child Restraints, NHTSA](#)
- [Seatbelt Laws Database, GHSA](#)
- [What Works: Strategies to Increase Restraint Use, CDC](#)



Seatbelt Law. Source:

**FRONT SEAT.
BACK SEAT.
EVERY SEAT,
BUCKLE
UP.**



CLICK IT.
DON'T RISK IT.



NHTSA