

Seat Belts

723.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The use of seat belts and other safety restraints significantly reduces the chance of death or injury in case of a traffic collision. This policy establishes guidelines for seat belt and child safety seat use to promote maximum operator and passenger safety, thus reducing the possibility of death or injury as the result of a motor vehicle crash. This policy will apply to all employees operating or riding in Department vehicles. (Veh. Code § 27315.5.)

723.2 WEARING OF SAFETY RESTRAINTS

All employees shall wear properly adjusted safety restraints when operating or riding in a seat equipped with restraints, in any vehicle owned, leased or rented by this Department while on or off-duty, or in any privately owned vehicle while on-duty. The employee driving such a vehicle shall ensure that all other occupants, including non-employees, are also properly restrained.

Exceptions to the requirement to wear safety restraints may be made only in exceptional situations where, due to unusual circumstances, wearing a seat belt would endanger the employee or the public. Employees must be prepared to justify any deviation from this requirement.

723.2.1 TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

Children under the age of eight shall be transported in compliance with California's restraint system requirements. (Veh. Code § 27360.)

A child may be transported by sworn personnel without the use of a child passenger restraint system in an authorized emergency vehicle if a child passenger restraint system is unavailable and the child is secured by a seat belt. (Veh. Code § 27363(b).)

Employees shall deactivate, if available, the passenger side airbag when appropriate, such as when transporting a rear-facing infant or child in the front seat.

723.3 TRANSPORTING PRISONERS

Whenever possible, prisoners shall be secured in the prisoner restraint system in the rear seat of the Department vehicle or, when a prisoner restraint system is not available, by seat belts. The prisoner should be in seating position for which seat belts have been provided by the vehicle manufacturer. The prisoner restraint system is not intended to be a substitute for handcuffs or other appendage restraints.

723.4 INOPERABLE SEAT BELTS

No employee shall operate a Department vehicle in which the seat belt in the driver's position is inoperable. No person shall be transported in a seated position in which the seat belt is inoperable.

No employee shall modify, remove, deactivate or otherwise tamper with the vehicle safety belts.

Employees who discover an inoperable restraint system shall report the defect to the appropriate Supervisor. Prompt action will be taken to replace or repair the system.

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723.5 VEHICLE AIRBAGS

In all vehicles equipped with airbag restraint systems, the system will not be tampered with or deactivated, except when transporting children as indicated elsewhere in this policy. All equipment installed in vehicles equipped with airbags will be installed as per the vehicle manufacturer specifications to avoid the danger of interfering with the effective deployment of the airbag device.