



# Occupant Restraint

## I. Key Messages

The following key messages can be used to support the Occupant Restraint Communication Campaign:

- What's holding you back? Protect yourself against the unpredictable.
- Seatbelts do save lives.
- This is about a simple action that could make the difference between life and death.
- Buckle up in all seats of the vehicle.
- If you do not buckle up – you become a deadly weapon to others in the vehicle.
- It takes seconds to buckle up and a lifetime to make up for a loss.
- You can drive without wearing one, but you might not be here to drive again.
- Seatbelts are the single most cost effective life saving device we have to protect us in a motor vehicle collision.

## II. Fact Sheet

The use of occupant restraints reduces the likelihood of sustaining an injury and the severity of injury decreases as well. Research and collision investigations show that seat belts increase the chances of survival in a collision by 50 per cent. According to Transport Canada, almost 40 per cent of drivers and passengers killed in collisions were not wearing their seatbelt at the time of the crash.

## Facts to Know

- In Alberta, wearing a seatbelt is required by law.
- In Alberta, the fine for not wearing a seatbelt is \$115. Drivers are also responsible for the proper restraint of children under 16.

- Passengers are not exempt from the consequences of fines, injuries or deaths resulting from not wearing a seatbelt.
- Occupants using a restraint reduce the likelihood of sustaining an injury and the severity of injury decreases.
- Seatbelts save about a 1000 lives per year in Canada.
- Seat belts distribute the force of a collision evenly to the stronger parts of a person's body. In a crash, a vehicle traveling 50 kilometers per hour comes to an abrupt stop in 1/100th of a second. At 50 kilometers per hour, an unrestrained person, weighing 80 kilograms (176 pounds), will strike whatever they hit first with a force of 2,785 kilograms (6,215 pounds).
- Airbags only function properly if the occupant is restrained in a proper position by a seat belt. Airbags deploy at an explosive speed and can cause injury if the occupant is not properly positioned. Airbags are a supplemental device.
- Vehicles are designed with an engineered life space which can withstand the force of most impacts. Seatbelts keep occupants in this space where they are safest.
- In a collision, one unrestrained occupant increases the risk for all occupants in the vehicle. An unrestrained occupant may hit something or someone inside the vehicle; or they may be thrown from their vehicle into another object.
- Child safety restraints are required by law for children under the age of 6 who weigh less than 18 kilograms (40 pounds).
- A child under 10 kilograms (22 pounds) and one year of age is safest in a rear facing child restraint seat. Be sure to consult the owner's manual for guidelines.
- Forward facing child restraint seats should have shoulder straps that originate above the shoulders and should not have a back lower than the middle of the child's ears.
- Booster seats are recommended for children under the age of 9, 18 to 36 kilograms (80 pounds) or 145 centimeters (58 inches).

- Without a booster seat, a child is four times more likely to suffer a significant injury or to suffer a head injury in the event of a collision.
- Children under the age of 12 are safest in the back seat of a vehicle in proper restraints based on their age, height and weight.

### **III. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

#### **I am a good driver. Do I still need to wear a seatbelt, even for a short distance?**

You cannot control every one else's behaviour on the road. Seatbelts dramatically increase your chances of survival in a collision, regardless of who is driving the other vehicle.

#### **What is the proper position of a seatbelt? What if the seatbelt is uncomfortable?**

The seat belt should be positioned securely across the hip bones and across the shoulder.

A properly positioned seatbelt should not be uncomfortable. Never put the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the back. In a collision this could cause fatal injuries.

#### **What if there are more people in a vehicle than seatbelts?**

A driver cannot transport more people in a vehicle than there are seatbelts. Sharing seatbelts is dangerous as occupants will hit each other during a collision increasing the likelihood of injury.

#### **When is it time to place children in a forward facing child restraint?**

Always follow the weight and height guidelines in the manufacturer's instructions. Even if a child's feet are touching the back of the vehicle seat in a rear facing restraint it does not mean they should be moved to a forward facing seat. Infants should remain rear facing until one year of age and they can pull themselves into a standing position.

#### **Can a child restraint that has been used in a collision continue to be used?**

No, this is not recommended. While the child restraint may appear to be fine, there could be microscopic cracks in the shell, weakened areas in the harness or seat frame and the restraint would not hold together in a subsequent collision.

### **Can a second hand child restraint seat be used?**

Although it is not recommended, a second hand car seat can be used. First, make sure it is not more than 10 years old, check the expiry date for the seat, ensure that it has not been used in a collision and that all parts are in good condition.

### **Why should parents ensure their children are properly secured in booster seats?**

Booster seats position the seatbelt over the strongest bones in the child's body. It helps position the lap belt across the bones of the hips, not across the soft abdomen. It also places the shoulder belt across the chest, preventing the upper body and head from slamming forward during a collision.

### **What about using an after market seatbelt adjuster?**

The use of after market seatbelt adjusters for adults or for children, are not recommended as they are not government regulated.

### **Should pregnant women wear a seatbelt?**

Yes, seatbelts are the best protection for both mother and unborn child. Pregnant women should sit as upright as possible with the shoulder belt across their chest above the belly, and the lap belt low so that it pulls downward on their pelvic bones and not on their abdomen.

### **Where can I find more information about occupant restraint in Alberta?**

Additional information and resources can be found on the Saferoads web site at:

<http://www.saferoads.com/vehicles/restraints.html> and

<http://www.saferoads.com/vehicles/childseats.html>.

Another valuable source of information is the Alberta Occupant Restraint Program web site:

<http://albertaseatbelts.ca> and <http://www.boosterseats.ca>.

**[Send copy of this notice to a friend.](#)**

**Click here to view the complete printable version of this notice: [Occupant Restraints](#)**