

Seat Belts

1022.1 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 collision. This policy will apply to all employees operating or riding in Department vehicles or aircraft.

1022.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Child restraint system - An infant or child restraint system that meets Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards set forth in 49 CFR Part 571.

1022.2 WEARING OF SAFETY RESTRAINTS

All members 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 member driving such a vehicle shall ensure that all other occupants, including non-members, 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 member or the public. Members must be prepared to justify any deviation from this requirement.

1022.2.1 TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

An approved child restraint system shall be used for all children who are 5 years old or younger or who are under 8 years old and are not more than 4 feet 9 inches tall (ARS § 28-907).

Rear seat passengers in a cage-equipped vehicle may have reduced clearance which requires careful seating and positioning of seat belts. Due to this reduced clearance, children and the child restraint system or booster seat should be secured properly in the front seat of these vehicles, provided this positioning meets the vehicle and the child restraint system manufacturer's design and use recommendations. In the event that a child is transported in the front seat of a vehicle, the passenger side air bag should be deactivated. If this is not possible, officers should consider arranging alternative transportation.

1022.3 TRANSPORTING PRISONERS

Prisoners should be secured in the prisoner restraint system in the rear seat of the patrol vehicle or by seat belts when a prisoner restraint system is not available. The prisoner should be in a 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.

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1022.4 INOPERABLE SEAT BELTS

No Department vehicle shall be operated if the seat belt in the driver's position is inoperable. No person shall be transported in a seating position in which the seat belt is inoperable.

No person shall modify, remove, deactivate or otherwise tamper with the vehicle safety belts, except for vehicle maintenance and repair staff, who shall do so only with the express authorization of the Chief of Police.

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

1022.5 VEHICLES MANUFACTURED WITHOUT SEAT BELTS

Vehicles manufactured and certified for use without seat belts or other restraint systems are subject to the manufacturer's operator requirements for safe use.