

# Occupant Protection



Improving occupant protection is the single most cost-effective emphasis area in terms of the potential number of lives that could be saved. Taking the time to buckle your seatbelt or install a child seat could keep you or your family from a lifetime of injuries, rehabilitation, large medical bills, court costs, fines—and might even save a life!

## Kentucky Safety Facts

- **What Is Kentucky's Seatbelt Law?**

Kentucky has a primary seatbelt law, meaning drivers can be stopped and cited if *anyone* in the vehicle is not wearing a seatbelt. Those in violation will be subject to a fine.

With the passage of a primary seatbelt law, it's estimated Kentucky will see an 11% increase in seatbelt usage, saving 62 lives, preventing 740 serious injuries, and resulting in a cost saving of \$148 million per year.

For seatbelt myths and facts, visit <http://highwaysafety.ky.gov/brochures.asp>

- **What Are the Economic Costs of Low Seatbelt Usage?**

It is estimated that the costs of medical care, emergency services, rehabilitation, lost productivity, legal services, workplace losses, and insurance administration when taken together amounted to \$1.9 billion for Kentucky in 2004. This included both fatal and nonfatal injuries, as well as property damage crashes.

- **Do Seatbelts Really Help in a Crash?**

Yes! During a crash, properly fastened seatbelts distribute the forces of rapid deceleration over larger and stronger parts of the person's body, such as the chest, hips and shoulders. The seatbelt stretches slightly to slow your body down and to increase its stopping distance.

The difference between the belted person's stopping distance and the unbelted person's stopping distance is significant. It's often the difference between life and death.

- **What Is the Function of the Airbag?**

Air bags are supplemental restraints, designed to be used with the seatbelt. Seatbelts help to properly position occupants to maximize the airbag's benefits help restrain occupants during the initial and any following collisions.

- **What is Kentucky's Child Safety Seat Law?**

Children 40 inches or less need to be properly restrained in a federally approved safety seat. However, that is not best practice. (Please see information on the back page.)

- **Why Do We Need Child Safety Seats?**

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death in the United State for people from age 3 to 33. An average of 7 children age 15 and younger were killed and approximately 800 were injured EVERY DAY in motor vehicle crashes in 2004.

Research shows child safety seats are 71% effective in reducing fatal injury for infants (younger than 1 year old) and 54% effective for toddlers (1 to 4 years old).

# Occupant Protection *(continued)*

## Child Passenger Safety—Types of Seats

### Infant Seat

- Used rear-facing only, from birth until upper weight limit on seat (check seat label)
- A child must remain rear-facing to at least **1 year of age AND 20 pounds**

### Convertible Seat

- Used for both rear-facing and forward-facing
- Can be used until the upper rear-facing weight limit on the seat (check seat label)
- Can be used forward-facing for children over 1 year of age and over 20 pounds, until the upper forward-facing weight limit on the seat (check seat label)

### Forward-facing Seat with Harness

- For children over 1 year of age, up to 40 pounds or more (check seat label)

### Combination Forward-facing Seat with Harness/Booster

- Used with the harness for children over 1 year of age, up to 40 pounds or more (check seat label)
- Remove harness at weight limit and use as a booster seat

### Booster Seat

- For children over 40 pounds, up to 80 pounds or more (check seat label)
- Must be used with a lap-shoulder belt

## When Can My Child Use A Seatbelt?

1. Can your child sit straight against the back of the vehicle seat?
2. Can your child's legs bend at the knee on the edge of the vehicle seat?
3. Can your child sit comfortably in the vehicle seat without slouching?
4. Does the lap portion of the seatbelt sit down on your child's hips, touching the thighs?
5. Does the shoulder belt stay at the center of your child's shoulder, crossing the collarbone?

**If you answered YES to ALL FIVE questions, your child is ready to use a seatbelt.**

### For more information:

- **AAA Exchange:** [www.aaapublicaffairs.com](http://www.aaapublicaffairs.com)
- **Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety:** [www.actsinc.com](http://www.actsinc.com)
- **Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP):** [www.chop.edu](http://www.chop.edu)
- **CPS Safety:** [www.cpsafety.com](http://www.cpsafety.com)
- **Drivers.Com:** [www.drivers.com/topic/101/](http://www.drivers.com/topic/101/)
- **National Center for Injury Prevention and Control:** [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/childpas.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/childpas.htm)
- **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA):** [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov)
- **National Safety Council:** [www.nsc.org/traf/sbc.htm](http://www.nsc.org/traf/sbc.htm)
- **SAFE KIDS Coalition:** [www.usa.safekids.org](http://www.usa.safekids.org)
- **Safety Belt Safe USA:** [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org)