



The Oklahoma Safety Belt Law:

Commonly asked questions

(Last amended September 1, 2005)

What are the basic requirements of the safety belt law?

- ◆ All drivers and front seat passengers ages 13 and older must have a safety belt properly fastened about his/her body at all times while the vehicle is being operated.
- ◆ Children ages 12 and under are covered under the Oklahoma Mandatory Child Restraint Law.

What vehicles are covered by the law?

- ◆ All vehicles required by Federal law to be equipped with safety belts are covered.
- ◆ All passenger cars manufactured after 1967 are required by Federal law to be equipped with safety belts and are covered.
- ◆ Vans, pickups and sport utility vehicles manufactured after 1971 are required by Federal law to be equipped with safety belts and are covered.
- ◆ Oklahoma law does not require safety belt use in trucks, truck-tractors, recreational vehicles, motorcycles, postal service route carrier vehicles or farm tagged vehicles used primarily for farm use.
- ◆ Implements of Husbandry, such as combine harvesters and various other motorized agricultural

implements are also exempt from the safety belt law.

Why are school buses and commercial buses exempt from the Safety Belt law?

- ◆ School buses and commercial buses are not required by Federal law to have safety belts because they are manufactured under a greater structural standard than passenger cars, making them stronger and much less prone to rollovers. In addition, "compartmentalized" seating provides enhanced protection inside the vehicle.

What are the penalties for a violation of the Safety Belt Law?

- ◆ Drivers and front seat passengers who violate this law are subject to a fine of no more than \$20, including court costs.

Is the Oklahoma Safety Belt Law a primary law or a secondary law?

- ◆ Oklahoma has had a primary safety belt law since November 1, 1997. This means that a law enforcement officer can stop and cite a driver solely for a violation of the safety belt law.

Are there medical exemptions and how do I get one?

- ◆ Exemptions may be requested by persons who, for medical reasons, are unable to wear a safety belt. To apply for this exemption, the

person must submit a written application to the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety requesting an exemption, including written verification from their physician attesting to the need for the exemption. If the request is approved, a special notation will be placed on the person's driver license to indicate the exemption from the safety belt law.

If a passenger isn't buckled up, who gets the ticket?

- ◆ Generally, drivers are responsible for themselves and any front seat passengers under age 16. Front seat passengers age 16 and older are generally responsible for themselves.

How does the Mandatory Child Restraint Law differ from the Safety Belt Law?

- ◆ It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that children ages 12 and under are properly restrained, regardless of whether they are in the front seat or a rear seating position.
- ◆ Children ages 12 and under are required to ride in a safety belt, booster seat or child car seat.
- ◆ Children ages 5 and under are required to ride in a booster seat or child car seat.

My car doesn't have safety belts. Do I have to install them?

- ◆ Cars manufactured after 1967 and vans, pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles after 1971 are required by Federal standards to have safety belts. Belts must be installed in

these vehicles if the original belts have been removed or are otherwise not operational. Belts do not have to be added on older models.

I'm too large for my safety belt to fit around me. What should I do?

- ◆ Safety belt extenders are available for most domestic vehicles for a small fee. These extenders are 10 inch lengths of webbing with buckles on both ends to fit onto the belts already in the vehicle. Take the information on the safety belt label along with your vehicle to the parts department of your local auto dealer. Extenders are generally not interchangeable, so go to a dealer for your particular vehicle. If you have trouble getting service from the dealer, check your vehicle owner's manual for a customer assistance number.

Does the Safety Belt Law apply to employer owned vehicles?

- ◆ The Oklahoma Safety Belt Law does not recognize any difference between privately owned vehicles and employer owned vehicles. The safety belt law still applies.

Now that I'm pregnant, should I still wear my safety belt?

- ◆ Yes, especially now! The greatest threat to the unborn child is death or serious injury to the mother, and a seat belt will help insure your survival in the event of a crash. When possible, choose a seating position with a combination lap/shoulder belt, with the lap portion low and snug on the hips beneath the baby and the shoulder belt snug and across the chest above the baby.

Can't safety belts actually cause injuries?

- ◆ Yes, they can cause some injuries, especially in severe crashes. These injuries are usually limited to bruises and cracked collar bones and ribs - minor injuries in comparison to what often happens without the safety belt. It is important that safety belts be worn correctly to reduce the chance that they might injure you.
- ◆ Lap belts should be worn as low and snug as possible on the hips, since belts that are worn high crossing the stomach can cause injuries.
- ◆ Shoulder belts must also be worn snugly across the chest and middle of the shoulder. Never wear a shoulder belt with more than an inch of space between your chest and the belt. Too much slack will allow your head to go too far forward in a front end crash. If the shoulder belt rubs against your neck, try adjusting your seating position, the position of the seat or the seat belt height adjustment, if equipped, to get a proper fit. Cloth comfort sleeves may also be placed on the shoulder belt to make it more comfortable.
- ◆ Do not place the shoulder belt behind your back or under your arm. With the shoulder belt behind the back, your head and upper torso will be thrown forward in the event of a frontal crash. As with the belts behind the back, shoulder belts under the arm do not hold your head and upper torso back away from danger. In addition, the belt

under the arm can fracture ribs and cause serious internal injuries.

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