



Chatham Borough Police Department

Traffic Safety Unit



Safe driving is the responsibility of all individuals who operate a vehicle on New Jersey roads. The rules of the road must be obeyed at all times and laws must be strictly followed. A motorist must ensure the safety of all passengers who are riding in his/her vehicle and be mindful of the other motorists who share the road each day.

The New Jersey seat belt law requires all front-seat occupants of passenger vehicles operated in New Jersey to wear a seat belt. The motorist is responsible for all passengers under 18 years of age. Front-seat passengers 18 years of age and over are responsible for themselves. Motorists with GDL permits or probationary licenses must use seat belts. Additionally, they must require all passengers seated anywhere in the vehicle to use seat belts. (N.J.S.A. 39:3-76.2f, 39:3-13.2a, 39:3-13.4)

New Jersey's seat belt law requires the motorist, front-seat passenger and children under 18 years old to be belted (N.J.S.A. 39:3-76.2f). Non-compliance is a primary offense. A police officer can stop a motorist solely for a violation of the seat belt law. The law also expands the definition of passenger vehicle to include vans, pickup trucks and utility vehicles. Under a secondary law, all back seat occupants, 18 years of age and older, are required to buckle up. Unbuckled back seat passengers can be issued a summons when the vehicle they are riding in is stopped for another violation.

The exemptions are any passenger vehicle manufactured before July 1, 1966, a passenger vehicle that is not required to be equipped with seat belt systems under federal law and a physical or medical reason, verified in writing by a licensed physician, that makes the motorist or passenger unable to wear a seat belt. (N.J.S.A. 39:3-76.2g)

Seat belts can save a life and improve a motorist's chances of surviving a crash by 60 percent. A motorist's chances of surviving a collision are three to four times better if he/she is wearing both a seat belt and a shoulder strap.

Fastening a seat belt takes only three seconds and reduces the chances of death or serious injury.

Seat belts help in many ways, for example:



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- They keep motorists and passengers from being thrown from the vehicle in a collision. If a motorist/passenger is held in place, any injury may be less severe.
- They slow a body down with the vehicle. If a vehicle hits something, the vehicle stops, but the person keeps going at the same speed that the vehicle was moving. Hitting the dashboard or windshield at 30 mph is like falling from the top of a three-story building.
- They keep a motorist/passenger from sliding on the seat during sudden stops and turns. Belts and straps also keep a motorist in position so he/she can control the vehicle.

Tips for Seat Belt Use

- Buckle up with both lap and shoulder belts on every trip. (Air bags are supplemental protection devices.)
- Wear the lap belt under the abdomen and low across the hips. The shoulder portion should come over the collar bone, away from the neck, and cross over the breast bone. The shoulder belt in most new vehicles can be adjusted on the side pillar to improve fit.
- Know how to adjust the seat belts and how to release them if motorists/ passengers have to quickly get out of the vehicle.
- Buckle up if riding in the backseat; use center seat belts if those seats are used. Seat belts help prevent riders from falling forward.
- Never put more than one person in one belt.

Car Seats

Traffic accidents are a leading killer of children. When riding in a vehicle, children should be held in place by a restraint system that meets all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards. Refer to the paragraph on Child Restraint Law.

All child restraint systems built since January 1, 1981, must be designed to pass tough safety tests. These seats carry a label that gives the date of manufacture and reads: "This child restraint system conforms to all applicable Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards." There are many types and styles of car seats. An infant car seat will protect a baby up to 20 pounds and 26 inches and must be placed in the vehicle facing the rear. A convertible car seat is a larger seat that can be used for an infant or a toddler of up to 40 pounds and 40 inches in height. The seat can be adjusted to a reclining position and placed in the vehicle facing backwards for a baby. When the baby weighs at least 17 pounds and can sit up well without help, the seat can be adjusted to an upright position and placed in the vehicle facing forward.



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Note: It is preferred that whenever possible, child car safety seats be placed in the backseat. However, if a motorist is riding with a new infant and the vehicle does not have a backseat, move the front seat as far back as possible from the dashboard and make sure the child is buckled properly in the appropriate restraint for his/her height and weight. Never place rear-facing infant safety seats in the front seat of a vehicle with a front passenger-side air bag. While a convertible seat is designed to be used facing forward once a child has reached at least 17 pounds, an infant seat must never be faced forward. To do so would be very dangerous. Always check the label on a car seat to find out the size and weight of the child the seat is designed to protect. Using the car seat every time a child rides in the vehicle - and using it correctly each time - is very important for the safety of the child. Always read the instructions that come with the seat and follow them very carefully. Correct use of the car seat is the best protection a motorist can offer a child. For more information on child car seats, contact the Division of Highway Traffic Safety at **(800) 422-3750** or visit www.njsaferoads.com.

Child Restraint Law

The New Jersey child passenger safety law (N.J.S.A 39:3-76.2a) states:

- Children up to age eight or a weight of 80 pounds must ride in a federally approved safety or booster seat in the rear seat of the vehicle. If there is no rear seat, the child must sit in the front seat secured by a safety or booster seat.
- Children under age eight and over 80 pounds must be in a rear seat and use a seat belt. If there is no rear seat, the child must be properly belted in the front seat.
- Failure to comply with this law could mean a \$54 fine and court costs.