

Fatal factors on the road

Seatbelts

Although wearing a seat belt will not prevent a crash, it can influence the severity of the injury sustained, and may even help save your, or your passenger's, life. Research suggests wearing a correctly fitted seat belt reduces the risk of fatal or serious injury by around 50%.

A survey by the Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics in 2017 showed that 98% of people reported always wearing a seat belt when in the front seat, and 95% reported always wearing them in back seat. Despite this, in 2019 alone, 23 people who were killed on WA roads were not wearing a seat belt or restraint at the time of the crash; and 20 of these fatalities occurred in regional WA.

What do seat belts do in a crash?

In a crash, occupants absorb kinetic energy (produced by the speed and mass of colliding objects) and can only absorb a finite amount before serious injury occurs. A seat belt helps absorb the energy and distributes it through some of the strongest parts of the human anatomy - the chest and pelvis.

Seat belts also keep you in your seat if the car hits something, spins out, or rolls over. The seat belt slows your movement and prevents you from being thrown about inside the car, striking against hard surfaces such as the steering wheel or dashboard, hitting other occupants, or being thrown out of the car. The forces involved in a crash are much too high for you to resist by yourself.

Is my seat belt worn correctly?

- » It is tight and comfortable, with the buckle securely fastened at the side.
- » The sash is placed over your mid-shoulder and diagonally across the chest.
- » The lap belt sits firmly over your hips.
- » The webbing has no twists or knots.
- » There should only be one person per car restraint - no doubling up or sharing.



Did you know?

If you were in a vehicle travelling at 100 km/hr and you weren't wearing a seat belt or a restraint, your body would continue to travel at that speed upon impact! If you were in a vehicle travelling at 40km/h and you weren't wearing a seat belt or restraint, in a crash, it would be like falling from a two storey building.



For the better

Facts and figures



In 2019, 20% of vehicle occupants killed on WA roads were not wearing their seatbelt.



In 1970, seat belt use was only about 25%; in 2017 almost all vehicle occupants reported wearing one.



In 1971, it was compulsory for everyone to wear a seat belt in Western Australia.



The more passengers without a seat belt, the greater the fine. If the driver is caught without a seat belt and has unrestrained passengers, they may be fined up to \$900 (depending on the number of passengers) and receive 4 demerit points.

Who should wear seatbelts?

Seat belts and car restraints are designed to save lives and reduce injuries - wearing your seat belt is one of the easiest ways to help protect yourself in a vehicle. Everyone should wear a seat belt when travelling. There are very few circumstances where you are not legally required to wear one. Western Australia also has child car restraint laws, which means all children under the age of seven need to be restrained in an approved child car restraint, however it is recommended that children should remain in the restraint until they exceed the maximum size limits.

Riding in the back of a utility vehicle, panel van or station wagon is illegal. Even if the vehicle is fitted with a roll-over protection device, carrying passengers in the tray of a utility, truck or other vehicle is not allowed.



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Did you know?

You must replace the seatbelts in your car if:

- 1 the sash is worn, frayed, faded or damaged;
- 2 the buckle has cracked, deformed, corroded, no longer securely fastens; or
- 3 the retracting mechanism no longer works.

Taking action to fight incorrect or non-use of seatbelts

- » Ensure everyone is wearing their seat belt correctly before embarking on a journey, and do not take them if they refuse to wear one.
- » Check the vehicle's seat belts regularly to ensure they are in a good condition.
- » Do not let people double up or share a seat belt; seek a safer alternative. You may need to arrange another vehicle or take multiple trips with the same vehicle.
- » Refuse to allow anyone to ride in the back of utility vehicle, van or car where there are no correctly fitted seats or restraints.
- » If you have children in the vehicle, ensure they are in a correctly fitted child car restraint which complies with Australian Standards.
- » Remember, an incorrectly worn seat belt will not be as effective in a crash.

Useful links

Road Safety Commission WA -
rsc.wa.gov.au

Roadwise: Child Car Restraints -
childcarrestraints.com.au

Department of Transport -
transport.wa.gov.au