

# IT'S THE LAW

## NORTH CAROLINA'S SAFETY BELT LAW

In 1985, North Carolina's safety belt law went into effect to save lives and reduce injuries. Key points of the law include:

- All drivers and passengers must wear a safety belt or be in a child safety seat properly.\*
- The driver is held responsible for themselves and all passengers under age 16. All passengers age 16 or older receive their own tickets if not buckled.
- Violators can be stopped by law enforcement if not buckled up.
- Fine is \$25 plus \$75 in court costs.

\*Revised December 2006



## NORTH CAROLINA'S CHILD RESTRAINT LAW

- Children under age 16 must ride in a safety belt or a child safety seat no matter where they sit.
- Children younger than age 8 and who weigh less than 80 pounds must be properly secured in child restraints or booster seats.
- When a child reaches age 8 or weighs 80 pounds, whichever comes first, a properly fitted lap and shoulder belt may be used to restrain the child.  
**WARNING:** Belt-positioning booster seats can be used only with lap and shoulder combination safety belts. Belt-positioning booster seats must *never* be used with just a lap belt.
- If there is no lap- and shoulder-belt-equipped seating position available for using a belt-positioning booster, a child who weighs at least 40 pounds may be restrained by a properly fitted lap belt only.
- The law applies to all passenger vehicles with both in-state and out-of-state registration.
- The driver is held responsible for proper restraint of children, regardless of their relationship to the child.
- The penalty for not complying with this law is two points on driver license, a \$25 fine plus \$110 in court costs.



For copies of this brochure and other highway safety publications available in English and Spanish, contact:

**Governor's Highway Safety Program**  
215 East Lane Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601  
[www.ncdot.org/secretary/GHSP](http://www.ncdot.org/secretary/GHSP)  
919-733-3083  
1-800-999-9676 (toll-free)

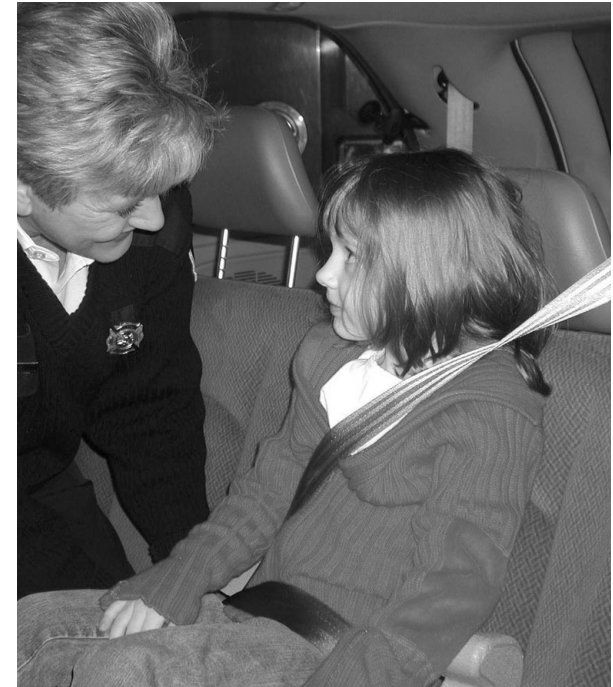
For more information about child safety seats and safety belts or a referral to a local certified child passenger safety technician, contact:

**N.C. Child Passenger Safety  
Resource Center**  
1-800-672-4527

[www.buckleupnc.org](http://www.buckleupnc.org)

**N.C. Department of Insurance  
N.C. Safe Kids**  
1-800-634-7854

## NORTH CAROLINA SAFETY BELT AND CHILD RESTRAINT GUIDE



North Carolina  
Department of Transportation

## HOW TO WEAR A SAFETY BELT

North Carolina law requires that safety belts and child restraint devices must be used properly. Follow the child restraint and vehicle manufacturer's instructions. Safety experts recommend the following guidelines for proper restraint usage.

### ADULTS

- Wear lap belt low (touching the upper thighs) and snug
- Wear shoulder belt snug across collar bone and chest — not behind the back or under the arm
- Keep vehicle seat back in upright position
- Position adjustable head restraint high enough to protect the head

### CHILDREN

- Use child restraint/booster seats until the safety belt fits — usually until a child weighs about 80 pounds or more, or is at least 4 feet 9 inches tall.
- Use shoulder and lap belts whenever present
- If a lap-shoulder belt is not available, a lap-only belt should be worn as low and snug as possible
- Do not allow a child to place the shoulder belt behind his/her back

### PREGNANT WOMEN

- Wear lap belt below abdomen
- Wear shoulder belt across chest
- If the seat belt is too short, consult an auto dealer for a seat belt extender

**CAUTION!** Safety belts should never be:

- Under arm
- Loose
- Across throat
- Over face

# CHILD SAFETY SEAT GUIDE

### Use Safety Seats Correctly and Safely

- Use according to the safety seat and vehicle manufacturer's instructions.
- Child must be within the weight and height listed for the seat.
- Children less than 1 year old or weighing less than 20 pounds should ride facing the rear of the vehicle — either in a rear-facing-only infant seat or rear-facing convertible model.
- Seats must have the harness properly fitted over the shoulders with the straps snug, not loose.
- Seats must be installed properly and snugly in the vehicle with a seat belt or LATCH (Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children) system.
- Refer to the vehicle's owner's manual to see if a locking clip is needed to install a child seat. If needed, locking clips are available from automobile and safety seat manufacturers.



### REAR-FACING ONLY INFANT SEATS

- For children 20 – 22 pounds
- Always face the rear of the vehicle
- **Must not** be placed in a seat with a front passenger-side airbag



REAR-FACING-  
ONLY INFANT  
SEAT

### CONVERTIBLE SAFETY SEATS

- Most models are for children weighing up to about 40 pounds.
- Most models are installed reclined and rear facing for children younger and smaller. **Note:** Older models may require the safety seat to be turned when the child reaches 20 pounds; however, some newer models allow children to remain rear facing until 35 pounds.
- Rear-facing child safety seats **must not** be placed in a front seat with a passenger-side air bag.
- Installed upright and facing the front for children more than 1 year old and heavier than 20 pounds.
- Some may convert to a booster seat for children over 40 pounds; check manufacturer's instructions.



CONVERTIBLE  
SAFETY SEATS



### COMBINATION SEATS

- Front facing only
- Used with a harness for children up to 40 pounds or more (depending on the model), then used with the harness removed as a belt-positioning booster until the child is big enough for the safety belt to fit.



COMBINATION  
SEAT

### BOOSTER SEATS

- For children who have outgrown a convertible seat or harness of a combination seat but are too small for safety belts to fit properly: Most children do not fit in seat belts until they are 4 feet 9 inches or taller.



BOOSTER SEAT