

Seat Belts

1207.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of seat belts and child restraints. This policy will apply to all members operating or riding in office vehicles.

1207.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Child restraint system - An infant or child passenger restraint system that meets Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) and Regulations.

Seat belt system - A system utilizing a lap belt, a shoulder belt or any other belt or combination of belts installed in a motor vehicle to restrain drivers and passengers, and that conforms to federal regulations.

1207.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office that members use safety and child restraint systems to reduce the possibility of death or injury in a motor vehicle crash.

1207.3 WEARING OF SEAT BELTS

All members shall wear properly adjusted seat belts when operating or riding in a seat equipped with restraints, in any vehicle owned, leased or rented by this office while on- or off-duty, or in any privately owned vehicle while on-duty. The member driving such a vehicle shall ensure that all other occupants, other than prisoners in a rear seating position, are wearing a seat belt.

1207.4 TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

Child passengers shall be transported using an approved child restraint system.

Rear seat passengers in a cage-equipped vehicle may have reduced clearance, which requires careful seating and positioning of seat belts. Due to this reduced clearance, and if permitted by law, children and any child restraint system may be secured in the front seat of such vehicles provided this positioning meets federal safety standards and the vehicle and child restraint system manufacturer's design and use recommendations. In the event that a child is transported in the front seat of a vehicle, the seat should be pushed back as far as possible and the passenger-side air bag should be deactivated. If this is not possible, members should arrange alternate transportation when feasible.

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1207.5 TRANSPORTING SUSPECTS, PRISONERS OR ARRESTEES

Suspects, prisoners and arrestees should be in a seated position and secured in a vehicle with a prisoner restraint system or, when a prisoner restraint system is not available, by seat belts provided by the vehicle manufacturer. The prisoner restraint system is not intended to be a substitute for handcuffs or other appendage restraints.

Prisoners in leg restraints shall be transported in accordance with the Handcuffing and Restraints Policy.

1207.6 INOPERABLE SEAT BELTS

Office vehicles should not be operated when the seat belt in the driver's position is inoperable. Persons should not be transported when the seat belt is inoperable.

Office vehicle seat belts shall not be modified, removed, deactivated or otherwise tampered with, except by the vehicle maintenance and repair staff, who shall do so only with the express authorization of the Sheriff.

Members who discover an inoperable restraint system shall report the defect to the appropriate supervisor. Prompt action will be taken to replace or repair the system.

1207.7 VEHICLES MANUFACTURED WITHOUT SEAT BELTS

Vehicles manufactured and certified for use without seat belts or other restraint systems are subject to the manufacturer's operator requirements for safe use.