

Buckle Up & Obey the Law

Minnesota Seat Belt Law

Minnesota's seat belt law is a primary offense, meaning drivers and passengers in all seating positions must be buckled up or in the correct child restraint. Law enforcement will stop and ticket unbelted motorists or passengers. A seat belt ticket can cost between \$25 to more than \$100.

Minnesota Child Passenger Safety and Booster Seat Law

A child who is both under age 8 and shorter than 4 feet 9 inches is required to be fastened in a child safety seat or booster seat that meets federal safety standards. Under this law, a child cannot use a seat belt alone until they are age 8 or 4 feet 9 inches tall — whichever comes first. It is recommended to keep a child in a booster based on their height, rather than their age.

DON'T SKIP A STEP



A Guide for Child Passenger Safety Seats and Seat Belts

Don't Skip a Step

Child Passenger Safety

- Safety seats must meet federal safety standards and be installed properly to prevent injuries.
- Read the manufacturer's instructions and the motor vehicle owner's manual to ensure the safety seat is being used correctly. Follow instructions carefully.
- Check the instruction manual for the weight and height restrictions for each child safety seat.
- Children under age 13 should ride in the rear seat.

Common Child Passenger Safety Mistakes

- Turning a child from a rear-facing safety seat to a forward-facing safety seat too soon.
- Safety seat is not secured tight enough — should not shift more than one inch side-to-side or out from the seat.
- Harness on the child is not tight enough — if you can pinch harness material, it's too loose.
- Retainer clip is up too high or too low — should be at the child's armpit level.
- The child is in the wrong safety seat — don't rush your child into a seat belt.

Seat Belt Safety

Take Responsibility

- In a crash, unbelted passengers can slam into and injure other occupants — make sure everyone buckles up, every seat, every ride.
- Wear lap belts low and snug across the hips; shoulder straps should never be tucked under an arm or behind the back — not only is this unsafe, it is illegal.
- Children under age 13 should always ride in the back seat.

Airbags and Seat Belts

- Airbags are designed to work with seat belts to keep vehicle occupants in a safe position during a crash — airbags are not effective when the vehicle occupant is not belted.
- Drivers should be a minimum of 10 inches from the steering wheel.

Pregnancy and Seat Belts

- Pregnant woman should wear the lap belt under the stomach, as low on the hips as possible and against the upper thighs. The shoulder belt should rest between the breasts.
- Make sure the straps fit snugly.

Don't Skip a Step: Four out of five car seats are used incorrectly.



Find car seat installation videos, inspection locations and more: buckleupkids.mn.gov



Rear-Facing Seat

- Types of rear-facing seats — infant only or convertible.
- For newborns to at least 1 year old and 20 pounds. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends keeping children rear-facing until age 2.
- Children may stay rear-facing longer in convertible seat up to 30 or 35 pounds, or based on the seat's weight limits.

Always place rear-facing safety seats in the reclined position at a 30- to 45-degree angle. Keep the harness snug, and at or below the shoulders.

Rear-facing seats should be placed in the back seat of a vehicle. If a car seat must be used in the front seat, airbags must be turned off. Never place a rear-facing child seat in front of an airbag.

Most babies will outgrow an infant seat (designed for babies 20–22 pounds) before age 1. Change to a convertible seat with a higher rear-facing weight limit.



Forward-Facing Seat (with a harness)

- Types of forward facing seats with a harness — convertible or combination seat.
- For children who have outgrown a rear-facing seat (recommended to keep children rear-facing until age 2). Children should use a forward-facing harnessed seat until they outgrow the weight limit (typically 40–60 pounds, depending on seat).

Place forward-facing in the upright position.

Move the harness straps to the proper reinforced slots.

Keep the harness snug and at or above the shoulders. Check the manufacturer's instructions for exact positioning.

Some types of child seats can be used as a booster when the harness is removed.



Booster Seat

- Booster seats are required by law in Minnesota.
- Children must use a booster after they outgrow a forward-facing harnessed seat, and remain in a booster until age 8 or 4 feet 9 inches tall — whichever comes first. It is recommended to keep a child in a booster based on their height rather than age.

Booster seats keep the lap belt positioned properly around a child's hips and the shoulder belt in the correct position. Boosters must be used with a lap and shoulder belt. If a vehicle is equipped with a lap belt only, have shoulder belts installed.

Some boosters come with a high back, others come without a back, but both must be used with a lap and shoulder belt.

Boosters without a back may only be used in vehicles with a head rest.



Adult Seat Belt

- Over 8 years old or 4 feet 9 inches tall
- Minnesota's seat belt law is a primary offense, meaning drivers and passengers in all seating positions must be buckled up or in the correct child safety seat. Law enforcement will stop and ticket unbelted motorists or passengers.

Your child is ready for an adult seat belt when they can sit with their back against the vehicle seat, knees bent comfortably and completely over the vehicle seat edge without slouching, and feet touching the floor.

Children 4 feet 9 inches or more can correctly fit in a lap/shoulder belt.



Minnesota Department of Public Safety
Office of Traffic Safety
buckleupkids.mn.gov