QuickSmarts

Seatbelts and Restraints

Wearing a seatbelt significantly improves your chances of surviving a crash.

While wearing a seatbelt or restraint does not prevent a crash, it can certainly improve the outcome for drivers and passengers.

Wearing a properly adjusted restraint reduces the risk of fatal or serious injury by half[1]. On average 31 people are killed and 166 seriously injured on Queensland roads each year as a result of not wearing a seatbelt or an appropriate restraint[3].

The facts

- Drivers and passengers are around 8 times more likely to be killed in a road crash if they are not wearing a seatbelt[2].
- People aged between 25-39 years, particularly men, are the most frequently unrestrained vehicle occupants killed in road accidents in Queensland[3].
- Alcohol is linked to the lack of seatbelt use[4].
- The driver of a vehicle is responsible for the proper restraint of all passengers[5].
- Children aged up to 7 years must use a child restraint suitable for their age[6].

Risky behaviour

- However, the latest research shows eight percent of Queenslanders still drive on our public roads without wearing a seatbelt[7].

A simple action that could save your life

It takes no time to put your seatbelt on and it could save your life. It could also prevent long-term injuries and suffering. The main functions of a seatbelt are to:

- cause the occupant to decelerate at the same rate as the vehicle in a crash, maximising the distance over which the occupant comes to a stop
- spread the force of the impact over the stronger parts of the occupant's body (pelvis and chest area)
- prevent the occupant colliding with the interior parts of the vehicle
- reduce the risk of being thrown from the vehicle
- reduce the risk of being thrown through the windscreen[8].

Even at low speed, not wearing a seatbelt can result in serious injury and death. A crash at 40km/h has the same force as falling from a two storey building onto concrete[9].

The penalty in Queensland for not wearing a seatbelt is $391 and three demerit points for drivers and passengers aged 16 years or older. The driver is responsible for ensuring that all passengers are wearing a seatbelt or are in an approved child restraint. Non-compliance can result in the driver being fined for each unrestrained passenger.

MythBusters

"If it's a short trip, I don't need to wear a seatbelt"

It doesn't matter if you're only travelling around the corner, all drivers and passengers must wear a seatbelt or an approved child restraint. Most road crashes happen close to home. Even at low speeds, not wearing a seatbelt can result in serious injury or death[10].

"I don't need to wear a seatbelt if my car is fitted with airbags"

Airbags do not replace seatbelts. Seatbelts hold the occupant in the correct position to maximise the effectiveness of airbags, which are intended to supplement the seatbelt.

"Seatbelts make getting out of a vehicle difficult in a crash"

If you're not wearing a seatbelt you have a greater chance of being knocked unconscious, making it impossible to get yourself out of the vehicle. Besides, you'll suffer more severe injuries and possibly die if you're flung from the vehicle.

"Truckies don't need to wear seatbelts so they'll be 'thrown clear' from the truck in the event of a crash"

Seatbelts are mandatory in all heavy vehicles and design regulations have been improved to make seatbelts more comfortable in trucks. Heavy vehicle drivers involved in a crash are six times more likely to die if not wearing a seatbelt[11].

Tips for safe, smart seatbelt use

Wear your seatbelt every time you drive, even if you're only travelling a few kilometres. Most road crashes happen close to home because this is where we drive most frequently.

- Make sure everyone in your car is safely restrained before moving your vehicle.
- Make sure your seatbelts and child restraints are correctly fitted.
- Regularly check your seatbelts to make sure they're safe and working well. Check the belts for any wear and tear, and that they click into place properly.
- Pregnant women should wear seatbelts at all times. If the mother does not wear a seatbelt, any blows sustained in a car crash will be transmitted to the unborn child and result in severe injury or death. The seatbelt is best positioned under the abdomen, below the front bony part of the hips and across the upper thighs. The sash should sit between the breasts.

Child restraints

Ensuring children are properly restrained in the car is one of the most important things you can do for their safety and well-being. Buckling-up is one part of the equation, but knowing which type of child restraint is appropriate and how to use it properly, is equally important.

Some things to consider

- You should select a child restraint before the birth of your baby. You will need to check that the restraint fits your vehicle and that your other passengers can still sit comfortably once the restraint is installed.
- When choosing a child restraint, the child's age is the primary factor in determining the correct restraint.
- In 2010, a new standard for child restraints (AS/NZS 1754) introduced new consumer information about the suitability of child restraints based on approximate age and seated height, rather than weight.

• Shoulder height markers on the new child restraints will ensure that the seats are properly used. This will prompt graduating the child to the next appropriate restraint once their shoulders reach the upper height marker.

• However, the rules do recognise that some children may be too small for a specific type of restraint. If your child is too small to move into the next level of restraint, you should keep them in the lower level child restraint for as long as necessary.

For example:

– a child who has turned 4 but is too small for a booster seat should remain in a forward facing child restraint with built-in harness

– a child who has turned 7, but is too small for an adult seatbelt should remain in a booster seat.

• Similarly, the rules also recognise that some children may be too large for a specific type of restraint. If your child is too large to fit into a restraint specified, you may move them into the next level of restraint.

A child is too big for a booster seat when:

– the level of the child's eyes is above the level of the back of the booster seat – their shoulders reach the upper shoulder height marker.

• Kidsafe Queensland has qualified staff who can install and check child car restraints. They also offer baby capsules, travel systems and other child car restraints for short-term hire. If you have any questions or concerns about child restraints, contact Kidsafe on: (07) 3854 1829 or www.kidsafeqld.com.au

Further information about child restraints can be found on the website at:

https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/safety/rules/children

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1 NHTSA. (2001). Fifth/Sixth Report to Congress: Effectiveness of Occupant Protection Systems and Their Use. (Report No. DOT HS 809 442). Washington, DC: Author. https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov search: DOT HS 809442 Accessed 08/07/15.

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3 Department of Transport and Main Roads Qld, Unpublished data extracted 27 June 2018 using road casualty statistics 2013-2017.

4 Ball, C.G., Kirkpatrick, A.W., & Brennaman, F. D. (2005). Noncompliance with seat-belt use in patients involved in motor vehicle collisions. Canadian Journal of Surgery 48(5) Pp. 367-372.

5 Transport Operations (Road Use Management—Road Rules) Regulation 2009 Sections 264(1), 265(3) & 266(1). www.legislation.qld.gov.au/ LEGISLTN/CURRENT/T/TrantOpRURR09.pdf. Accessed 06/02/15.

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7 Department of Transport and Main Roads, Driver Behavior & Attitudes Study. Footprints Market Research March 2018.

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9 Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q) (2012). State of the Road: Seat Belts Fact Sheet. www.carrsq.qut.edu.au/publications/corporate/seat_belts_fs.pdf. Accessed 06/02/15.

10 Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety – Queensland (CARRS-Q) (2012). State of the Road: Seat Belts Fact Sheet. www.carrsq.qut.edu.au/publications/corporate/seat_belts_fs.pdf. Accessed 06/02/15.

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