



St. Lawrence County Traffic Safety Program Newsletter



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Occupant Restraints in New York

One of the questions that our office frequently receives is, "What is the seat belt/car seat law in New York State?"

Seat belts save lives and help prevent serious injuries in a traffic crash. That is why New York State requires seat belt use by adults, and seat belts, booster seats, or child safety seats for children in motor vehicles. (There is



a summary of the law below.)

Safety belts are designed to distribute crash forces so they are absorbed by the strongest areas of your body. Seat belts keep you in place so you are less likely to strike the vehicle's interior. They prevent you and other occupants from being thrown into each other or ejected from the vehicle.

Some argue that seat belt use should be an individual choice, but medical costs for unbuckled crash victims are 50% higher than for those who were buckled up in a collision. Society—not the individual—

pays for 85% of these costs in the form of medical and disability expenses, insurance premiums, and lost productivity.

New York State adopted its first seat belt law in the mid-1980's, and since then it has continually improved the law for child passengers. New York is a "primary enforcement" state. A law enforcement officer can issue a traffic ticket just for failure to wear a seat belt, or to a driver who fails to make sure every child passenger is properly secured in a safety seat or with a seat belt. This law also applies to visitors from outside New York State.

Summary of New York State Safety Restraint Laws

Who must wear safety restraints?

All front seat occupants regardless of age

All rear seat passengers under age 16:

- ♦ All children under 4 years old must be restrained in a federally-approved child safety seat
- ♦ Children ages 4, 5, 6, and 7 must be properly restrained in an appropriate child restraint system that meets the child's height and weight recommendations of the child restraint manufacturer

The driver is responsible for all passengers under age 16, and can receive 3 license points and be fined \$25-100 for each violation

When the driver holds a junior driver's (DJ) permit or license, or any other limited license, all vehicle occupants must be properly restrained

(Some children over the age of 8 may also benefit from use of a booster seat even though the law doesn't require it. Consult <http://www.safeny.com/op-ndx.htm> to find advice from a Certified Child Passenger Safety Technician)



International Walk and Bike to School Day

Wednesday, October 6, 2010 is International Walk and Bike to School Day. The event was created to



encourage physical activity, to reduce fuel consumption and air pollution, and to promote safer routes to school.

Participation can mean anything from a few children meeting up to walk or bike together en route to school, to a community-wide celebration. Canton and Potsdam are planning school-based events on that day. In Canton there are designated locations in

the village where parents can park, so they can walk with their children the rest of the way to school.

Any parent who has ever dropped off a child at the start of the school day can appreciate how clogged the driveways and streets can get. Even a handful fewer vehicles can help reduce some of the congestion and increase the flow of traffic during those critical minutes.

The Surgeon General recommends about 30 minutes a day of activity to promote health and reduce the risk of obesity. Walking to and from school is a great way to incorporate physical activity into your child's day.

For more information, check out the National Walk to School site at www.walktoschool.org and the "Safe NY" site at www.safeny.com/peds-ndx.htm.

Power Window Risks for Children

A little-known source of injuries and deaths in motor vehicles is the crushing force of power windows. While safety experts agree that power windows do have risks, their estimates vary considerably. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates thousands of injuries related to power windows. However, *Kids and Cars*, a non-profit watchdog agency, reports that *millions* of injuries have occurred as a result of window power activation. The discrepancy

may be because many of those injuries are not serious enough to be reported to authorities.

This does not mean that power windows can't kill. According to *Kids and Cars*, power windows can exert an upward force of 30-80 pounds, which is usually more force than necessary to raise the window. They further state that it takes just 2 lbs to activate the switch, and it takes just 22 pounds of force to suffocate or injure an infant.

All new vehicles will have "pull to close" switches, which, as their name indicates, require you to pull up on them to close the window. Older vehicles may have window switches that a child can accidentally step or put weight on, easily causing a window to close. Some vehicles have power windows that automatically reverse when an object (such as your child's arm or neck) is in the path of a closing window. Check both the individual vehicle rating pages

on www.safercar.gov and your owner's manual to see if a vehicle is equipped with this safety technology.



Problem: Children (or pets) can hurt themselves with power windows. Many kids are injured when a window closes on their finger, wrist, or hand. Some have even been strangled by power windows. (NHTSA)

Prevention Tips:

Never leave your children alone in a vehicle for any reason

Teach your children not to play with window switches, and not to stand on door arm rests

Properly restrain your children in car seats or seat belts to prevent them from accidentally activating power windows

Look and make sure your kids hands, feet, and head, are clear before raising the windows

Never leave the key in the ignition or in the "on" or "accessory" position when you walk away from your car

Remember that pets are also at risk for power window injuries