

Seat Belt Policy

I. Purpose:

To establish a policy to assure maximum operator and passenger safety, thus minimizing the possibility of death or injury as a result of motor vehicle crashes. This policy will apply to all personnel operating or riding in department vehicles.

II. Discussion:

Research clearly indicates that the use of safety belts has a significant effect in reducing the number of death and severity of injuries resulting from traffic crashes. A law enforcement officer's chance of being involved in a motor vehicle accident is approximately two to ten times greater than that of the general public. The use of safety restraints reduces this risk to death and serious injury and assists officers in maintaining proper control of their vehicles in pursuit and/or emergency high speed operations.

III. Policy:

To assure the safety of all personnel, safety belts shall be worn by drivers and passengers in all vehicles owned, leased or rented by the department at all times. This also applies to the operation of privately owned or other vehicles if used on duty.

IV. Recommendation:

It is strongly recommended that safety belts be utilized by department personnel and their families at all times in vehicles while in an off duty capacity to further reduce the risk of death or injury.

V. Procedure:

A) Department personnel shall use the safety belts installed by the vehicle manufacturer properly adjusted and securely fastened when operating or riding in any vehicle so equipped if used while on duty.

B) Lap belts shall be properly secured in those vehicles equipped with automatic safety belt systems that require the lap portion of the belt be manually secured.

C) The driver of the vehicle is responsible for insuring compliance by all occupants of the vehicle they are operating. Approved child safety restraints shall be used for all children of age, size or weight for which such restraints are prescribed by law.

D) No person shall operate a department vehicle in which any safety belt in the driver's seating position is inoperable. No person shall be transported in a seating position in which the safety restraint is inoperable.

E) No person shall modify, remove, deactivate or otherwise tamper with the vehicle safety belts except for vehicle maintenance and repair and not without the express authorization of the Chief of Police.

F) Personnel 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.

G) Whenever possible, all prisoners are required to be secured in the vehicle by a safety belt in all seating positions for which safety belts are provided by the vehicle manufacturer. Caution: Prisoners that are handcuffed in front have the ability to release the handcuffs using the safety restraint latch plate.

H) Officers operating in an undercover capacity may be exempt only if the officer believes that the use of the safety belt will compromise their identity.

I) When arriving at an emergency call or making a vehicle traffic stop, the operator may remove the safety restraint just prior to stopping for quick exit. Caution should be exercised to insure that during the traffic stop the violator is in fact going to stop. This prevents becoming involved in a pursuit without the use of a safety belt.

DRIVER AND/OR PASSENGER NEGLIGENCE

If negligence or noncompliance with the requirements of this order is displayed, appropriate corrective or disciplinary action shall be initiated as prescribed by department policies.

This order went into effect on XXXX