

# Seatbelts save lives



You're twice as likely to survive a car crash if you're wearing a seatbelt.

In NSW, on average each year around 30 drivers and passengers are killed and a further 82 are seriously injured in crashes when not wearing an available seatbelt. Many of these deaths and injuries could have been prevented if a seatbelt had been used. Even if you're only going a short distance, or driving on your own property, a seatbelt can save your life.

If someone is injured or killed in a crash it doesn't only affect them, it can impact many people including their family and friends, the emergency services and hospital staff who have to respond to these crashes. This trauma can often be prevented by wearing a seatbelt.

## The facts

- ▶ In rollover crashes, people not wearing a seatbelt are more than 15 times more likely to suffer fatal injuries. In these crashes seat belts prevent people being partially or completely thrown from the vehicle.<sup>1</sup>
- ▶ Not wearing a seatbelt was a factor in around 9% of fatalities between 2015 and 2019, but accounted for 10% of fatalities in 2020.

<sup>1</sup> Funk, J. R., Cormier, J. M., & Manoogian, S. J. (2012). Comparison of risk factors for cervical spine, head, serious, and fatal injury in rollover crashes. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 45, 67-74.

## How do seatbelts protect us?

In a car crash the five main functions of seatbelts are to:

1. Help people's bodies to slow down at the same speed as the vehicle, allowing them to benefit from the vehicle's crumple zone.
2. Spread the force of the impact over the stronger parts of a person's body - the pelvis and chest area.
3. Prevent the driver and passengers from colliding with each other or the inside of the vehicle.
4. Reduce the risk of the driver or passengers being thrown from the vehicle. In some crashes, a person may burst through one of the windows and be partially or fully thrown from the vehicle, exposing them to other dangers.
5. Work together with airbags. In a crash, the seatbelt slows the speed of the driver and passengers so they impact safely with airbags.

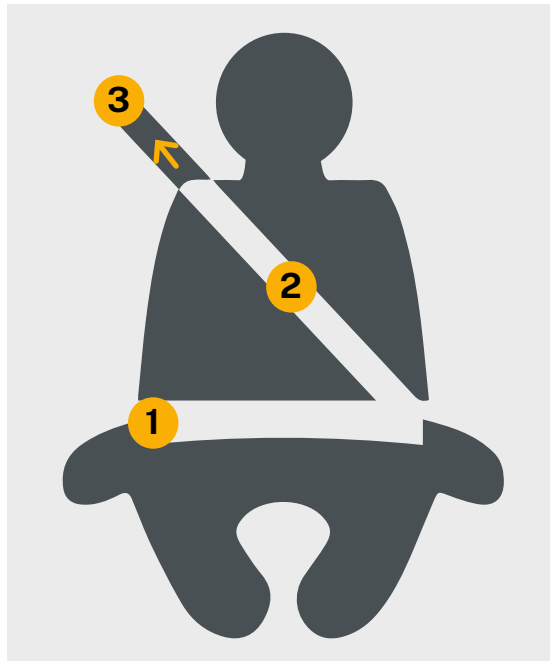


## Adjust seatbelts firmly for maximum protection

Injuries from seatbelts can generally be traced back to incorrectly adjusted seatbelts. Seatbelts should be adjusted so that the lap portion lies across the hips and the sash falls across the chest and mid shoulder.

For a seatbelt to work, you should adjust it 'low, flat and firm':

- 1 low – placed on your hips to fully secure your body weight
- 2 flat – no twists, turns or folds
- 3 firm – regularly pull the belt firm to remove any slack.



## Legal requirements

Since 1971, it has been a legal requirement for people in a vehicle to wear a seatbelt in NSW.

Drivers must wear a seatbelt while driving. There are penalties and demerit points for drivers who are not wearing a seatbelt. Drivers are also responsible for making sure:

- ▶ each passenger is sitting in their own seat that's fitted with a seatbelt
- ▶ each passenger is wearing a properly secured and adjusted seatbelt or is in an approved child car seat suitable for their age and size
- ▶ there are not more passengers in the vehicle than it's designed to carry
- ▶ no-one travels in an area of the vehicle not designed for passengers, for example, in the boot, on the floor, in the tray of a ute, or in a trailer or caravan.

It's also the responsibility of passengers aged 16 and over to:

- ▶ sit in their own seat and wear a properly secured and adjusted seatbelt
- ▶ not travel in an area of the vehicle not designed for passengers.

There are limited exemptions to wearing a seatbelt. For information about seatbelt exemption rules visit [www.nsw.gov.au/topics/roads-safety-and-rules/safe-driving/seatbelts](http://www.nsw.gov.au/topics/roads-safety-and-rules/safe-driving/seatbelts)

## More information

For more information on: Seatbelts visit [roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au](http://roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au) or finding the safest child car seats visit [www.childcarseats.com.au](http://www.childcarseats.com.au)