

Motor-vehicle crashes kill more than 40,000 Americans and injure 2.7 million each year.

Approximately 70 percent of motor vehicle occupants fatally injured in Missouri traffic crashes were not wearing safety belts. Safety belts are considered the most important safety equipment in a motor vehicle, and using them correctly and on every trip is the most effective way to reduce injuries and fatalities in a crash.

Research from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicates automobile occupants are 45 percent more likely to survive a crash if they are wearing their lap and shoulder belts correctly; pickup truck and light truck passengers are 60 percent more likely to survive a crash when buckled up correctly.

Properly worn seat belts and functioning air bags can reduce the risk of death in a vehicle crash 63 percent, according to a recent study led by Justin Cummins, an orthopedic surgeon at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, NH.

Missouri Coalition  
for **Roadway Safety**



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[www.saveMOlives.com](http://www.saveMOlives.com)

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# Sit Tight

Tips for Avoiding Injury in a Crash



**ARRIVE  
ALIVE**



## Safety Belts

Safety belts are an adult's most effective occupant protection device in motor vehicles. **Chapter 307 of the Missouri Revised Statutes** requires all adults riding in the front seat of a car, pickup truck, sport utility vehicle or van to wear safety belts.

Children ages eight through 15 must always wear safety belts. A law enforcement officer can stop you and issue you a citation for no other reason than non-compliance with this law.

## You Need to Know

- To be effective, safety belts must be worn correctly. The lap belt should be worn low and snug across the hips. The shoulder belt should lay over the shoulder and across the chest, adjusted according to the vehicle's owner's manual. Never place the shoulder belt under your arm or behind your back – this could result in a serious or fatal injury.
- Pregnant women should always wear safety belts with the lap belt as low as possible across the hips.
- Safety belts should be worn in combination with air bag systems. They keep your body in the safest position so an air bag can do its job.
- Drivers with air bags should keep at least a 10-inch distance between the air bag and their breast bone.
- A tilt steering wheel should be tilted down so the air bag will deploy toward the chest and not the head.

## Child Safety Seats

- **Chapter 307 of the Missouri Revised Statutes** requires all children under age eight to be properly secured in an appropriate child safety seat or booster seat. This includes all cars, pickup trucks, SUVs and vans. A law enforcement officer can stop you and issue you a citation for no other reason than non-compliance with this law.

### Missouri Law Requires:

- Children **less than 4 years old or less than 40 pounds** to be in an appropriate child safety seat.
- Children ages 4 through 7 years old who weigh at least 40 pounds **must** be in an appropriate child safety seat or booster seat unless they are 80 pounds or 4'9" tall.
- Children 8 and over or weighing at least **80 pounds** or at least **4'9"** tall are required to be secured by a **safety belt or booster seat** appropriate for that child.

### Types of Safety Seats:

There are many types of safety seats. Choose one that is right for your child's size and age, and fits correctly in your vehicle. Your options include:

**Infant Seats** are used from birth until a child is at least one year old **and** weighs at least 20 pounds. These should be placed in the back seat facing the rear of the vehicle, at the angle recommended by the manufacturer. **Never place a rear-facing infant seat in front of an air-bag.**

**Convertible Seats** are for children between birth and 40 pounds. These seats face backward or forward, depending on the child's age and size. They can be adjusted as your child grows. All children under one year old and weighing less than 20 pounds must face the rear of the vehicle.

**Booster Seats** are for children who've outgrown convertible seats. They face forward and must be used for children 4-7 years old unless they are 4'9" tall or weigh 80 pounds. Booster seats should never be used with a lap belt only, they require the use of lap and shoulder belts. If your vehicle does not have shoulder belts in the rear seats, have them installed.

Not sure if your child's safety seat is installed correctly? Contact the Missouri Department of Transportation's Highway Safety Division at **800-800-BELT (2358)** to find an approved fitting station near you, or visit [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).



## Keeping Kids Safe

- Properly installed child safety seats should have no more than one inch of side-to-side movement.
- Check the owner's manual for proper use of your child safety seat or booster seat.
- Many seats use a plastic chest clip to keep the shoulder straps positioned correctly on your child. The chest clip should be at armpit level.
- Never use an old safety seat; it may have invisible damage or may be missing parts. Check the child safety seat for an expiration date. Typically they should be discarded after six years.
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recommends that children 12 and under ride properly restrained in the back seat.