

December 2020

Seatbelts – a guide for workers

Wearing a seatbelt reduces the chances of you being injured in a vehicle or mobile plant accident. WorkSafe recommends workers wear seatbelts when using vehicles or mobile plant for work.

Not wearing a seatbelt has led to many workplace injuries and deaths involving vehicles and mobile plant, on and off the road, even at slow speeds. WorkSafe recommends businesses make sure their workers wear seatbelts at all times when using vehicles or mobile plant (including when you are a passenger).

As a worker, you have a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 to follow all reasonable health and safety instructions of the business (your employer). This includes having to wear a seatbelt every time you use vehicles or mobile plant for work.

When should seatbelts be worn

You should wear a seatbelt whenever you use vehicles or mobile plant for work, and there is a seatbelt available. For example:

- on public roads,¹ private roads, and off-road terrain
- outdoors and indoors at work sites/yards/construction sites/depots/warehouses/farms
- when travelling to or from a job
- every journey no matter how short
- when you are a passenger.

What vehicles and mobile plant should have seatbelts

Most modern vehicles and mobile plant should have seatbelts installed.² For example:

- cars, vans, utility vehicles
- trucks (all sizes, types)
- forklifts
- heavy machinery (graders, bulldozers, excavators)
- tractors and other agricultural vehicles
- side-by-sides
- all vehicles and mobile plant with roll over or tip over protective structures (ROPS and TOPS) fitted.³

The business may monitor your seatbelt use

The business should make sure you wear your seatbelt. To encourage seatbelt use they might:

- install brightly coloured seatbelts, so it is easier to see if you have your seatbelt on (see Figure 1)
- install seatbelts that are linked to the ignition system so the vehicle or mobile plant will not operate unless the seatbelt has been buckled. You should not attempt to work around this by buckling it up behind you

¹ See Rule 7.11 of the Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004 for limited exceptions to seatbelt use on public roads.

² Quad bikes and motorcycles do not require seatbelts.

³ Wearing a seatbelt keeps you inside the protective structure during a roll over, tip over or collision, preventing you from being ejected, crushed or impacting the protective structure.

- install semi-rigid buckles that sit up from the driver's seat – getting in the way until you buckle them up (see Figure 2)
- monitor use with in-cab cameras or check vehicle/mobile plant use data.

The business should talk with you about seatbelt safety

The business should give you training and information about using seatbelts safely (this includes how to safely adjust them for comfort). They should give you the opportunity to provide feedback on their seatbelt use policies. When buying or leasing new vehicles or mobile plant, the business should talk to you about what seatbelt options would best suit workers.

If you find your seatbelt uncomfortable or hard to use, tell your manager or health and safety representative

Making sure seatbelts are as comfortable as possible and fit correctly is important. There are options available that can help improve seatbelt comfort and fit. For example:

- seatbelts that are integrated with the driver's seat so the seatbelt does not pull against you as the vehicle or mobile plant moves (see Figure 3)
- seatbelts that give support and flexibility from multiple angles (such as a 4-point harness) – especially if the vehicle or mobile plant moves in many directions (see Figure 4)
- seatbelt extenders if you cannot comfortably do up the existing seatbelt. The business may need to check the weight rating of the seat as well.

You should not add your own features or modify the seatbelt system of your vehicle or mobile plant without talking to the business first. They will need to check that the modifications will meet safety standards and compliance requirements.

Your seatbelt needs to be in good working order to keep you safe

The business should make sure seatbelts and any approved seatbelt modifications are in good working order. Checking the seatbelt should be part of your daily vehicle or mobile plant safety check. If you notice any part of your seatbelt system is showing signs of wear or not working properly, tell your manager or health and safety representative.

Things to watch out for include:

- seatbelts that don't buckle up
- signs of wear on the seatbelt – such as torn or fraying seatbelt edges (see Figures 5 and 6)
- a retractable seatbelt that isn't fully retracting or is locked
- damaged, rusty, or worn anchor points
- missing seatbelts (these should be replaced).

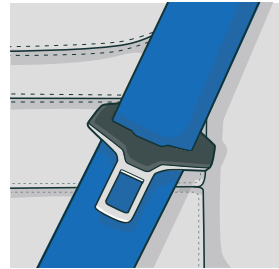


FIGURE 1:
Coloured seatbelt



FIGURE 2:
Semi-rigid buckle

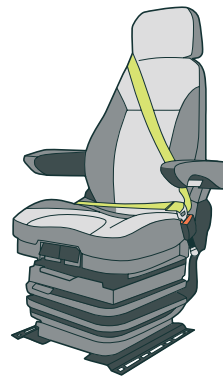


FIGURE 3:
Integrated seatbelt



FIGURE 4:
4-point harness



FIGURE 5:
Example of a fraying seatbelt

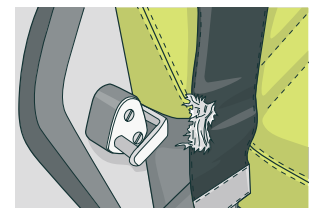


FIGURE 6:
Example of a damaged seatbelt

More information

For more detailed information on working safely in and around vehicles and mobile plant see WorkSafe's website: worksafe.govt.nz