

Southern Pines Police Department
Safety Tips
Seat Belts & Child Safety Seats

Seat belt use in a motor vehicle is governed by the North Carolina General Statutes. Children less than sixteen (16) years old, whether in the front or rear seat, are covered under the North Carolina child passenger safety law. Drivers and passengers sixteen (16) years old and older are covered by the North Carolina seat belt law. The driver of the vehicle is responsible for all children less than sixteen (16) years of age.

Children younger than age eight (8) and who weigh less than eighty (80) pounds must be properly secured in a child restraint. There is *no* exception. Children may be secured in a properly fitted seat belt at age eight (8) (regardless of weight) *or* at eighty (80) pounds (regardless of age) whichever happens to come first.

Infants less than one (1) year of age or less than twenty (20) pounds should ride in a restraint that faces the rear of the vehicle, and should be in the center, rear seat. Make sure the seat is installed according to manufacturer's recommendations and if the seat is more than ten (10) years old, it should not be used. Any child restraint seat, regardless of age, that has been involved in a severe crash should be discarded and replaced.

Children riding in the front seat can be seriously injured or killed when an air bag comes out in a crash. Crashes are violent and fast. So to protect you, an air bag comes out of the dashboard in the blink of an eye with great force. It can hurt those who are too close to it, particularly those who are unbelted.

Are you aware that child seats should not be just placed into a vehicle and seat belted? The seat itself must meet criteria set by the National Highway Safety Administration, but it is just as important to have the seat installed in the vehicle properly. The Southern Pines Police Department and the Southern Pines Fire-Rescue Department have specially trained personnel to help you ensure your child safety seat is properly installed. Take the time to ensure your child safety seat is installed properly so it can give your young passenger the protection they deserve.

Air bags and seat belts save lives. But they are designed to work together. Remember, the most important safety step in any vehicle is to buckle your seat belt – on every ride, and ensure your passengers are properly restrained also. Everyone should buckle both lap AND shoulder belts where available. Remember to check your vehicle owner's manual and the instructions provided with your child safety seat for correct use information. Drivers should sit at least 10 inches from the center of the steering wheel to their breastbone for the clearest margin of safety.

Research shows driver seat belt use determines child seat belt use. Be a good example for safety! Set a good example for your passengers while you make your trip a little safer. It's a Win-Win situation!

To learn more, contact the National Safety Council Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign, Washington, D.C. or log onto any of the following websites:

<http://www.nsc.org/Index.aspx>
www.buckleupnc.org
www.ncsafekids.org
www.carseat.org

**For more information or a presentation on this topic, contact the
Community Services Coordinator at (910) 692-2732.**