



# Texas Department of Public Safety

**Information for the News Media**  
Media Relations Office  
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Sept. 8, 2009

## **New laws strengthen seat belt and child safety seat requirements**

### **Buckle up in the back seat too.**

Starting Sept. 1, as required by House Bill 537, **all** occupants of a passenger vehicle, no matter their age or where they are sitting in the vehicle, must be secured by a safety belt. Maximum fines can reach as high as \$200, plus court costs. (The previous law exempted anyone 17 and older from wearing a seat belt in the back seat.)

The law also adds seat belt requirements for larger passenger vans.\* In addition, children younger than 8 must be in the appropriate child safety seat.

(This new law makes no changes to pick-up bed and school bus requirements.)

### **Buckle children into the appropriate child safety seat.**

A new law (Senate Bill 61) amends the existing statute regarding child passenger safety seats by requiring that any child younger than 8 be restrained in an approved child safety seat system unless the child is taller than 4 feet, 9 inches in height.

The law becomes effective on Sept. 1, 2009, but tickets for this offense cannot be issued until June 1, 2010. Police officers are allowed to issue a warning before that date. However, the previous law remains in effect for now and requires children younger than 5 and less than 36 inches in height be in a child safety seat, and tickets can still be issued for this violation.

### **No children younger than 5 are allowed on motorcycles.**

HB 537 also prohibits a motorcycle operator from carrying a passenger under the age of 5 unless the child is seated in a sidecar attached to the motorcycle.

For more information on properly installing child safety seat systems, please go to this link  
[http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/director\\_staff/public\\_information/carseat.htm](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/director_staff/public_information/carseat.htm).

\* A 15-passenger van is defined as a passenger van designed to transport 15 or fewer passengers, including the driver. This law applies to third-party transport service providers when transporting clients pursuant to a contract to provide nonemergency Medicaid transportation. (Previously, these providers were exempt from the specific safety belt requirements.)

### (PIO 2009-53)



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