

December 2020

## Seatbelts – a guide for businesses

Wearing a seatbelt reduces the chances of workers being injured in vehicle and mobile plant accidents. WorkSafe recommends businesses make sure workers wear seatbelts when using vehicles or mobile plant for work.

As a PCBU (a person conducting a business or undertaking) you have a duty to make sure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that your workers' health and safety is not put at risk while carrying out work. This includes when they are using vehicles and mobile plant for work purposes. All vehicle and mobile plant safety features should be used, this includes seatbelts. Seatbelts should not be removed from vehicles or mobile plant.

You must also make sure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that other people at your workplace are not put at risk from your work, such as visitors riding in vehicles.

### When should seatbelts be worn

Workers should wear seatbelts whenever they are using a vehicle or mobile plant for work, and there is a seatbelt available.

For example:

- on public roads,<sup>1</sup> 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 travelling as a passenger

### What vehicles and mobile plant should have seatbelts

Most modern vehicles and mobile plant should have seatbelts installed.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

If you have vehicles or mobile plant that have never had a seatbelt installed, you should investigate if it is reasonably practicable to safely retrofit a seatbelt. A qualified engineer should be able to advise you if it is possible (see [Retrofitting seatbelts or replacing factory seatbelts](#) for more details).

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

<sup>2</sup> Quad bikes and motorcycles do not require seatbelts.

<sup>3</sup> Wearing a seatbelt keeps the worker inside the protective structure during a roll over, tip over or collision, preventing them from being ejected, crushed or impacting the protective structure.

## Promote and monitor seatbelt use

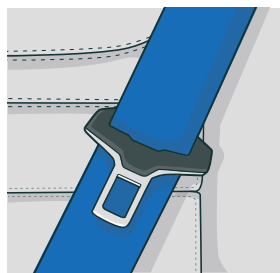
You should promote and monitor the use of seatbelts by your workers. There are many ways you can promote and monitor seatbelt use. For example:

- create a workplace culture that promotes wearing seatbelts, encourage workers to look out for each other by reminding each other if they have forgotten to put one on
- use brightly coloured seatbelts, so it is easier to see when a seatbelt is being worn (see Figure 1)
- use seatbelt systems that are interlocked with the vehicle or mobile plant's ignition so workers cannot operate the vehicle or mobile plant without the seatbelt being buckled
- install semi-rigid buckles that sit up from the driver's seat - getting in the way of the worker until they buckle them up. This also makes it harder for workers to buckle the belt behind themselves (see Figure 2)
- monitor use with in-cab cameras or check vehicle or mobile plant use data.

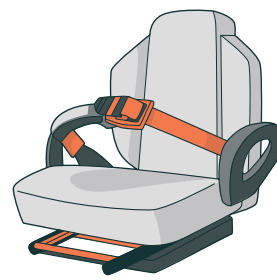
## Engage with your workers about seatbelt use

Talk to your workers about the importance of wearing seatbelts at all times. For example:

- provide training on how to wear seatbelts correctly. This includes:
  - how to alter the adjustable parts of their seat and seatbelt to improve comfort
  - how to make sure the seatbelt is fitting correctly to provide maximum protection
  - refer to the vehicle or mobile plant's user manual for more information on getting the correct fit
- discuss the importance of seatbelt use at your regular health and safety meetings, and toolbox and tailgate talks
- consult with your workers and work with them to overcome any issues they may have with wearing seatbelts
- provide workers with feedback from seatbelt use monitoring data
- share examples of incidents where wearing a seatbelt has provided protection, or non-wearing has caused harm
- include a seatbelt wearing policy in your business health and safety documents and worker training resources.



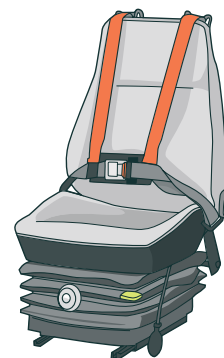
**FIGURE 1:**  
Coloured seatbelt



**FIGURE 2:**  
Semi-rigid buckle



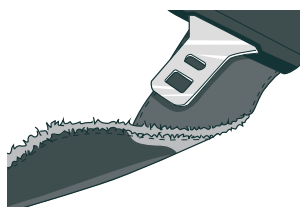
**FIGURE 3:**  
Integrated seatbelt



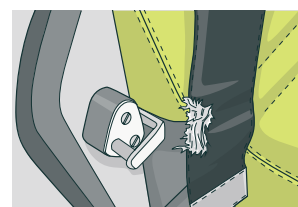
**FIGURE 4:**  
4-point harness



**FIGURE 5:**  
seatbelt extender



**FIGURE 6:**  
Example of a fraying seatbelt



**FIGURE 7:**  
Example of a damaged seatbelt

## Focusing on fit and comfort can help overcome any objections to wearing seatbelts

Seatbelts should fit well and be as comfortable as possible. There are options available for improving seatbelt comfort. For example:

- Choose vehicles and mobile plant that have the seatbelts integrated with the driver's seat so the seatbelt does not pull against the worker as the vehicle or mobile plant moves (see Figure 3).
- If the vehicle or mobile plant moves in many directions, or works on a slope, use seatbelts that provide support and flexibility from multiple angles, such as a 4-point harness (see Figure 4).
- Provide seatbelt extenders for workers who cannot comfortably do up the existing seatbelt (see Figure 5). Before using a seatbelt extender you need to:
  - check the weight limit of the extender and the seat. It may be necessary to install a seat with a higher weight rating, which usually includes a larger fitting seatbelt as well
  - check that the extender is the right one for the make and model of vehicle or mobile plant, or seatbelt system. Make sure that it is labelled with the manufacturer's name and a certification label. Local retailers who sell verified products should be able to provide you with advice.

## Consider seatbelt options when purchasing or upgrading vehicles or mobile plant

When purchasing or leasing new vehicles or mobile plant, ask your supplier what seatbelt options are available. Choose vehicles and mobile plant that include the most modern and appropriate seatbelt features for worker comfort and safety. You should also consult with your workers and their representatives about the options available.

### Retrofitting seatbelts or replacing factory seatbelts

Aftermarket seatbelt kits and upgrades are available to fit to vehicles and mobile-plant without seatbelts, or to improve seatbelt comfort and functionality. When making modifications to your vehicle or mobile plant, make sure you follow the manufacturer's instructions and do not compromise the overall safety or structure of the vehicle or mobile plant.

Modifications should be done by a suitably qualified person. The vehicle or mobile plant may need to be re-certified by a qualified engineer before it can be used again (for example when making changes to an operator protective structure or when adding a seatbelt where there was not one previously).

## Maintaining seatbelts

Make sure seatbelts and any approved seatbelt modifications are in good working order. Checking the seatbelt should be part of the daily vehicle or mobile plant safety check. If a seatbelt is showing signs of wear or not functioning properly, it may need replacing. 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 6 and 7)
- a retractable seatbelt that isn't fully retracting or is locked
- damaged, rusty, or worn anchor points
- missing seatbelts (these should be replaced).

## More information

For more detailed information on working safely in and around vehicles and mobile plant see WorkSafe's website: [worksafe.govt.nz](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)