

# Seat Belt Myths

*Myths are great for the ancient Greeks but the facts could save your life*

*The following article is reprinted, with minor changes, from Commercial Motor Vehicle Driver safety Belt Usage, published by the Office of Motor Carriers of the Federal Highway Administration.*

The responsibilities of a commercial driver are many, but your use of seat belts is one of the most effective means you have to protect yourself and your company or agency from death and injury and revenue loss.

When you wear your seat belt, you increase your chance of avoiding death and injury by up to 50 percent. The first step in increasing your safety is overcoming commonly held and dangerous myths about seat belt use.

**Myth:** "I face traffic every day. crashing is the least of my worries."

**Fact:** The risks inherent in commercial driving cannot be ignored. You drive more miles than the average person and are on duty for long periods of time and in all kinds of weather. You are on the road at night when you are most likely to encounter drunk drivers. Driving for extended periods of time or in heavy traffic can be stressful and your awareness can be reduced.

**Myth:** "I'm a good driver. I don't need to wear a seat belt."

**Fact:** Good drivers usually do not cause collisions, but they often are involved in crashes caused by bad drivers, bad weather, mechanical failure or tire blowout. Good driving skills help avoid crashes, but the statistics speak for themselves: you are highly vulnerable to crashing. If you do crash, seat belt use can save your life and prevent long-term disability.

**Myth:** "I get in and out of my vehicle 20 times a day. I don't have time to fasten my seat belt that many times."

**Fact:** It takes about three seconds to buckle up. Even if you get in and out of a vehicle 20 times a day, buckling up requires only one minute a day.

**Myth:** "People should have freedom to choose whether or not they want to wear seat belts."

**Fact:** Wearing a seat belt keeps a driver in the seat and in control of the vehicle, protecting passengers as well as others on the road. Besides, if someone is hurt or killed in a crash, a lot of other people bear emotional suffering as well as the cost. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that the annual cost of U.S. motor vehicle and pedestrian accidents is more than \$74 billion. This is not just an individual problem, but one that greatly affects our society.

**Myth:** "The seat belt is a pain in the neck. It's uncomfortable and my clothing catches in it."

**Fact:** A few seconds adjusting the belt at the beginning of your trip will prevent discomfort and inconvenience. You cannot argue the trade-off in safety.

**Myth:** "My vehicle is equipped with the latest safety features that make it safer than the average vehicle on the road."

**Fact:** Despite safety standards for commercial motor vehicles, you may still be injured in a crash. In addition, the extra equipment in commercial vehicles such as radios, tachographs and on-board computers can actually contribute to your chances of being injured.

**Myth:** "In encountering a dangerous driving situation, my first duty is to react, not to take the time to buckle my seat belt."

**Fact:** If you take the time to buckle up each time you enter your vehicle, you can be sure of staying at the wheel and in control of the vehicle. This increases your ability to properly react to the situation and pose less of a threat to motorists.

**Myth:** "I wear my belt when I'm on the highway, but I don't need it when I'm traveling in the city at low speeds."

**Fact:** More than 80 percent of crashes occur at speeds between 30 and 40 miles per hour. A vehicle will stop or slow down if it collides with another object, but an unrestrained occupant will continue to move at the same speed. Imagine hitting the ground after jumping from a five-story building. That is the same force with which you would hit the windshield at 40 miles per hour.

**Myth:** "If I crash, I would rather be thrown clear of the wreckage."

**Fact:** If you are ejected from a vehicle in a crash, you are four times more likely to be killed or injured. Seat belts prevent you from going through the windshield, being hurled through the air and onto the pavement, and crushed by your own vehicle or someone else's.

**Myth:** "Wearing a seat belt might prevent me from escaping if my vehicle is burning or submerged."

**Fact:** Less than one-half of one percent of serious collisions involve fire or submersion. Seat belts can keep you from being knocked unconscious, enhancing your chance of escape.

**Myth:** "I always wear my seat belt when my vehicle is moving, but I don't need to buckle up when stopped on the roadside."

**Fact:** Even when stopped, you are still vulnerable to being hit. The risk of death and injury is equally as great stopped or moving.



As a professional driver, your actions and attitude toward using seat belts influence those with whom you come in contact. Help us change the motoring public's attitude toward seat belts. Your positive attitude can help reduce the death and injuries on our nation's roadways.

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