

Safety Belts

811.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes guidelines for the use of safety belts and child restraints. This policy will apply to all members operating or riding in department vehicles.

811.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Child restraint system - An infant or child passenger restraint system that meets Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) and regulations set forth in 49 CFR 571.213 and Vehicle Code § 27360.

811.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Humboldt County Probation Department (HCPD) that members use safety and child restraint systems to reduce the possibility of death or injury in a motor vehicle accident.

811.3 WEARING OF SAFETY RESTRAINTS

All members shall wear properly adjusted safety restraints when operating or riding in a seat equipped with restraints, in any vehicle owned, leased, or rented by this department while on- or off-duty, or in any privately owned vehicle while on-duty. The member driving such a vehicle shall ensure that all other occupants, including those who are not members of the Department, are properly restrained.

Exceptions to the requirement to wear safety restraints may be made only in exceptional situations where, due to unusual circumstances, wearing a seatbelt would endanger the department member or the public. Members must be prepared to justify any deviation from this requirement.

811.4 TRANSPORTING CHILDREN

Child passengers younger than 8 years old shall be transported using an approved child restraint system in compliance with Vehicle Code § 27360.

Rear-seat passengers in a cage-equipped vehicle may have reduced clearance, which requires careful seating and positioning of safety belts. Due to this reduced clearance, and if permitted by law, children and any child restraint system may be secured in the front seat of such vehicles provided this positioning meets federal safety standards and the vehicle and child restraint system manufacturer's design and use recommendations. In the event that a child is transported in the front seat of a vehicle, the seat should be pushed back as far as possible and the passenger-side airbag should be deactivated. If this is not possible, members should arrange alternate transportation when feasible.

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811.5 TRANSPORTING PERSONS IN CUSTODY

Persons in custody should be in a seated position and secured in the rear seat of any department vehicle with a transport restraint system or, when a transport restraint system is not available, by safety belts provided by the vehicle manufacturer. The transport restraint system is not intended to be a substitute for handcuffs or other appendage restraints. See the Transporting Persons in Custody Policy.

Persons in custody in leg restraints shall be transported in accordance with the Handcuffing and Restraints Policy.

811.6 INOPERABLE SEAT BELTS

Department vehicles shall not be operated when the safety belt in the driver's position is inoperable. Persons shall not be transported in a seat in which the safety belt is inoperable.

Department vehicle safety belts shall not be modified, removed, deactivated, or altered in any way, except by the vehicle maintenance and repair staff, who shall do so only with the express authorization of the Chief Probation Officer.

Members who discover an inoperable restraint system shall report the defect to the appropriate supervisor. Prompt action will be taken to replace or repair the system.

811.7 VEHICLES MANUFACTURED WITHOUT SAFETY BELTS

Vehicles manufactured and certified for use without safety belts or other restraint systems are subject to the manufacturer's operator requirements for safe use.

811.8 VEHICLE AIRBAGS

In all vehicles equipped with airbag restraint systems, the system will not be tampered with or deactivated except as outlined in Section 811.4. All equipment installed in vehicles equipped with airbags will be installed as per the vehicle manufacturer specifications to avoid the danger of interfering with the effective deployment of the airbag device.