

Laws You Should Know



2009 Occupant Protection Laws in Texas

SECTION 545.412: CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY SEAT SYSTEMS

OFFENSE:

1. A person commits an offense if the person operates a passenger vehicle, transports a child who is younger than eight years of age, unless the child is taller than four feet, nine inches, and does not keep the child secured during the operation of the vehicle in a child passenger safety seat system according to the instructions of the manufacturer of the safety seat system.

SECTION 545.413: SAFETY BELTS

OFFENSE:

1. (A) A person commits an offense if the person:
(1) is at least 15 years of age; (2) is riding in a passenger vehicle while the vehicle is being operated; (3) is occupying a seat that is equipped with a safety belt; and (4) is not secured by a safety belt.

OFFENSE:

2. (A) A person commits an offense if the person:
(1) operates a passenger vehicle that is equipped with safety belts; and (2) allows a child who is younger than 17 years of age and who is not required to be secured in a child passenger safety seat system under Section 545.412 to ride in a passenger van designed to transport 15 or fewer passengers, including the driver, without securing the child individually by a safety belt, if the child is occupying a seat that is equipped with a safety belt.

SECTION 545.414: RIDING IN OPEN BEDS

OFFENSE:

1. A person commits an offense if the person operates an open-bed pickup truck or an open flatbed truck or draws an open flatbed trailer when a child younger than 18 years of age is occupying the bed of the truck or trailer.

2009 Occupant Restraint Laws				
Age	System Required	Front Seat	Back Seat	Citation Given to
Birth to 8 years unless taller than 4'9"	Child Safety Seat System	Yes	Yes	Driver
9-14 years	Safety Belt	Yes	Yes	Driver
15+ years	Safety Belt	Yes	Yes	Violator

Best Practice

All children should ride properly restrained.

- Infants should be in a rear-facing child safety seat until they reach the maximum limit of their seat (at least 1 year **AND** at least 20 pounds).
- Children should remain in a 5-point harness system until they reach the upper weight limit of their seat (usually 40 pounds). Higher harness weight seats are available.
- Children 4 years and older, 40 pounds and under 4'9" tall can be in booster seats.
- Children over 4'9" tall will usually fit safely in vehicle lap/shoulder belts.

How Effective Are Safety Belts?

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:



Correctly used child restraint systems are **71%** effective in preventing infant fatalities, **54%** effective in preventing fatalities for 1-4 year olds, and **67%** effective in reducing the need for hospitalization.



Booster seats are 59% effective in reducing serious injury.



Lap/shoulder belts are **50-65%** effective in preventing serious injury.