

## **DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER 04-04**

OFFICE of the CHIEF OF POLICE  
REPLACES: SOP 501.76.00

DATE: February 16, 2004

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### **VEHICLE SEAT BELT AND RESTRAINT SYSTEMS**

#### **I. PURPOSE.**

The physical well being of department employees and customers is of paramount concern to the Police Department. As a result, sworn and non-sworn employees, as well as all passengers, will utilize seat belts and air bags as required by law (RSMo 307.178) and/or department policy while operating or riding as a passenger in a department-owned motor vehicle. The intent behind this requirement is to prevent injury during traffic crashes or to reduce the severity of such injuries.

#### **II. DEFINITIONS.**

Air Bags – A bag that inflates automatically inside an automobile in a collision, to protect the vehicle occupants from being thrown forward into the dashboard or windshield.

Seat Belts – An anchored belt designed to be fastened across a person's lap and chest while operating or riding in a motor vehicle in order to hold the person in their seat during a collision.

#### **III. SEAT/SHOULDER BELTS.**

All motor vehicles purchased and used by the department for official business are equipped with safety belts in accordance with current federal motor vehicle standards. As such, all employees shall fasten and use the safety belt system, either as the operator or passenger, every time a department vehicle is driven on a public or private roadway or alley. Non-departmental passengers (to include prisoners, ride-alongs, civilian conveyances, etc.) will also be belted in and/or secured prior to a vehicle being placed in motion.

In the event department personnel need to transport a small child, car seats are available through the Community Services Unit. As circumstances permit, officers will enlist the aid of a Community Services officer to install the car seat prior to transport. The child will then be properly secured in the car seat and conveyed to the intended destination.

Safety restraint devices should be inspected prior to the operation of any department vehicle to enhance individual safety in the event of an automobile accident. Should the device be found in good working order, it shall be applied and adjusted to a comfort level consistent with safety considerations. In the event a seat belt or shoulder harness is found to be defective, the employee should immediately file a vehicle work order to have the situation corrected.

No department employee shall modify, remove, or otherwise tamper with vehicle safety belts except when involved in an emergency escape from a severely damaged vehicle, and then when such actions are the only viable option to the employee.

#### IV. AIR BAGS.

Department vehicles are equipped with dual airbags. One is located on the driver's side while the second is designed for the front seat passenger. The air bags are intended to deploy when the vehicle is involved in a front-end collision. Similar to safety belts, the intent of the air bags is to prevent vehicle occupants from being thrown forward into the dashboard and windshield.

No department employee shall modify, remove, tamper with, or deactivate vehicle air bags except in accordance with the following protocols.

##### A. Deactivation Switch

All department vehicles equipped with a mobile data terminal will also be equipped with a passenger side AIR BAG DEACTIVATION SWITCH. A sticker will be posted declaring that the vehicle is outfitted with the deactivation switch. The switch is key operated and will be located in the mid-console area of the dash. The key will remain with the switch at all times. Two lights will be present on the face of the switch: green and yellow. When the air bag system is activated ("on" position), the light will show green. When the air bag system is deactivated ("off" position), the light will show yellow.

Department personnel operating a vehicle equipped with dual air bags and a mobile data terminal shall ensure the device is in the OFF-POSITION, unless the front passenger seat is occupied. This is intended to prevent the mobile data terminal from becoming a potential airborne missile should the air bag deploy following an accident.

Immediately upon a passenger being seated in the front right-hand seat, the vehicle operator will activate the air bag and verify that a green light is visible on the control box.

Department personnel shall not modify or tamper with the air bag deactivation System.

BY ORDER OF:

THOMAS J. BYRNE  
Chief of Police

TJB:dld

CALEA Reference 41.3.3