

### **ARTICLE 3. Safety Belts and Inflatable Restraint Systems [27302 - 27319]**

*( Heading of Article 3 amended by Stats. 1999, Ch. 449, Sec. 1. )*

#### **27315.**

(a) The Legislature finds that a mandatory seatbelt law will contribute to reducing highway deaths and injuries by encouraging greater usage of existing manual seatbelts, that automatic crash protection systems that require no action by vehicle occupants offer the best hope of reducing deaths and injuries, and that encouraging the use of manual safety belts is only a partial remedy for addressing this major cause of death and injury. The Legislature declares that the enactment of this section is intended to be compatible with support for federal motor vehicle safety standards requiring automatic crash protection systems and should not be used in any manner to rescind federal requirements for installation of automatic restraints in new cars.

(b) This section shall be known and may be cited as the Motor Vehicle Safety Act.

(c) (1) As used in this section, "motor vehicle" means a passenger vehicle, a motortruck, or a truck tractor, but does not include a motorcycle.

(2) For purposes of this section, a "motor vehicle" also means a farm labor vehicle, regardless of the date of certification under Section 31401.

(d) (1) A person shall not operate a motor vehicle on a highway unless that person and all passengers 16 years of age or over are properly restrained by a safety belt. This paragraph does not apply to the operator of a taxicab, as defined in Section 27908, when the taxicab is driven on a city street and is engaged in the transportation of a fare-paying passenger. The safety belt requirement established by this paragraph is the minimum safety standard applicable to employees being transported in a motor vehicle. This paragraph does not preempt more stringent or restrictive standards imposed by the Labor Code or another state or federal regulation regarding the transportation of employees in a motor vehicle.

(2) For purposes of this section the phrase, "properly restrained by a safety belt" means that the lower (lap) portion of the belt crosses the hips or upper thighs of the occupant and the upper (shoulder) portion of the belt, if present, crosses the chest in front of the occupant.

(3) The operator of a limousine for hire or the operator of an authorized emergency vehicle, as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 165, shall not operate the limousine for hire or authorized emergency vehicle unless the operator and any passengers eight years of age or over in the front seat, are properly restrained by a safety belt.

(4) The operator of a taxicab shall not operate the taxicab unless any passengers eight years of age or over in the front seat, are properly restrained by a safety belt.

(e) A person 16 years of age or over shall not be a passenger in a motor vehicle on a highway unless that person is properly restrained by a safety belt. This subdivision does not apply to a passenger in a sleeper berth, as defined in subdivision (x) of Section 1201 of Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations.

(f) An owner of a motor vehicle, including an owner or operator of a taxicab, as defined in Section 27908, or a limousine for hire, operated on a highway shall maintain safety belts in good working order for the use of the occupants of the vehicle. The safety belts shall conform to motor vehicle safety standards established by the United States Department of Transportation. This subdivision, however, does not require installation or maintenance of safety belts if it is not required by the laws of the United States applicable to the vehicle at the time of its initial sale.

(g) This section does not apply to a passenger or operator with a physically disabling condition or medical condition that would prevent appropriate restraint in a safety belt, if the condition is duly certified by a licensed physician and surgeon or by a licensed chiropractor who shall state the nature of the condition, as well as the reason the restraint is inappropriate. This section also does not apply to a public employee, if the public employee is in an authorized emergency vehicle as defined in paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 165, or to a passenger in a seat behind the front seat of an authorized emergency vehicle as defined in paragraph (1) of subdivision (b) of Section 165 operated by the public employee, unless required by the agency employing the public employee.

(h) Notwithstanding subdivision (a) of Section 42001, a violation of subdivision (d), (e), or (f) is an infraction punishable by a fine of not more than twenty dollars (\$20) for a first offense, and a fine of not more than fifty dollars (\$50) for each subsequent offense. In lieu of the fine and any penalty assessment or court costs, the court, pursuant to Section 42005, may order that a person convicted of a first offense attend a school for traffic violators or another court-approved program in which the proper use of safety belts is demonstrated.

(i) In a civil action, a violation of subdivision (d), (e), or (f), or information of a violation of subdivision (h), does not establish negligence as a matter of law or negligence per se for comparative fault purposes, but negligence may be proven as a fact without regard to the violation.

(j) If the United States Secretary of Transportation fails to adopt safety standards for manual safety belt systems by September 1, 1989, a motor vehicle manufactured after that date for sale or sold in this state shall not be registered unless it contains a manual safety belt system that meets the performance standards applicable to automatic crash protection devices adopted by the United States Secretary of Transportation pursuant to Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 208 (49 C.F.R. 571.208) as in effect on January 1, 1985.

(k) A motor vehicle offered for original sale in this state that has been manufactured on or after September 1, 1989, shall comply with the automatic restraint requirements of Section S4.1.2.1 of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 208 (49 C.F.R. 571.208), as published in Volume 49 of the Federal Register, No. 138, page 29009. An automobile manufacturer that sells or delivers a motor vehicle subject to this subdivision, and fails to comply with this subdivision, shall be punished by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars (\$500) for each sale or delivery of a noncomplying motor vehicle.

(l) Compliance with subdivision (j) or (k) by a manufacturer shall be made by self-certification in the same manner as self-certification is accomplished under federal law.

(m) This section does not apply to a person actually engaged in delivery of newspapers to customers along the person's route if the person is properly restrained by a safety belt prior to commencing and subsequent to completing delivery on the route.

(n) This section does not apply to a person actually engaged in collection and delivery activities as a rural delivery carrier for the United States Postal Service if the person is properly restrained by a safety belt prior to stopping at the first box and subsequent to stopping at the last box on the route.

(o) This section does not apply to a driver actually engaged in the collection of solid waste or recyclable materials along that driver's collection route if the driver is properly restrained by a safety belt prior to commencing and subsequent to completing the collection route.

(p) Subdivisions (d), (e), (f), (g), and (h) shall become inoperative immediately upon the date that the United States Secretary of Transportation, or his or her delegate, determines to rescind the portion of the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 208 (49 C.F.R. 571.208) that requires the installation of automatic restraints in new motor vehicles, except that those subdivisions shall not become inoperative if the secretary's decision to rescind that Standard No. 208 is not based, in any respect, on the enactment or continued operation of those subdivisions