



Vehicle Safety Branch Information Bulletin

Seatbelt Replacement



Seatbelts save lives..... but only when they work properly.

Occasionally seatbelts do fail.

Will your seatbelt fail when you need it?

You should replace a seatbelt if there is evidence:

- of nicks on the webbing or other webbing damage
- of excessive wear and tear which comes with age
- of a malfunctioning buckle, retractor or fittings
- that a particular seatbelt was in use during a crash.

If your vehicle is involved in a serious crash, you should consult with your car repairer as to whether to replace all seatbelts that were occupied at the time.



Seatbelts are essential for safety.

Don't wait for an accident to occur before finding out that your seatbelt needed replacing.

You should always replace the driver's seatbelt vehicle after it has been involved in a serious crash. You should also replace any other occupied seatbelt in the crashed vehicle. It should be appreciated that damage to webbing and mechanism is often invisible to the eye.

Vehicle Owner's Obligations

Vehicle owners have an obligation to ensure that all seatbelts in their vehicle meet the requirements of the Australian Design Rules and other pertinent standards.

Malfunctioning and deteriorated seatbelts do not meet these standards.

You should use the *Seatbelt Safety Checklist* on the back page of this publication to assist you in determining whether the seatbelts in your vehicle are still fit for purpose.

A defective seatbelt is contrary to the regulations and the vehicle may be issued with a compliance notice (yellow sticker) and the owner, with a fine.

Seatbelts wear out

Seatbelts should be checked at least annually as a matter of course.

In some cases, maintenance or replacement may be required.

A cut as small as 5 millimeters can reduce the performance of a seatbelt significantly.

Besides the normal aging process, other causal factors can result in more rapid seatbelt deterioration:

- exposure to fine dust as found in the regional areas of the state or off-road environments
- excessive exposure to solar radiation (particularly open top vehicles)
- abnormal tensioning of seatbelts continuously for long periods (such as when used for securing child restraints)
- frequent fastening and unfastening of the seatbelt (such as may occur in some delivery vehicles)
- tampering or damage to the mechanisms by young children.



Seatbelt replacement following vehicle a crash

Seatbelts are important safety devices that are designed to work effectively only once. Therefore seatbelts that were occupied in a significant crash must be replaced.

The webbing is designed to stretch without breaking in order to absorb deceleration forces in a crash. Once the webbing has been subjected to the forces resulting from a crash it is usually stretched permanently and loses its vital elasticity.

If used in a subsequent crash the webbing may not stretch as originally designed and thereby can cause serious injury by increasing the risk of chest, neck and back injuries to the occupant.

Besides the webbing, the retractor and buckle assemblies should not be relied upon to function correctly again after crash forces have been applied to them.

Some vehicles are fitted with “pretensioners” or Pyrotechnical Buckle Pretensioners. These pyrotechnic devices, which pull the seatbelt tight at the time of a crash, can only function once and must then be replaced.

If a pyrotechnic device has fired then the seatbelt stalk cover will be deformed and the buckle will sit low on the seat. The entire seatbelt assembly must be replaced.

The depreciation factor

Obviously the main reason to replace a seatbelt is so you can be assured it will protect you from harm in an accident. However, it can also make good sense to replace seatbelts for cosmetic reasons.

Worn and damaged seatbelts can decrease the value of your car. It is worth noting that seatbelts can now be supplied in different webbing colours, and these can improve the aesthetic appeal of a vehicle to a potential purchaser.

Second hand seatbelts

For many cars replacement seatbelts are not overly expensive to purchase new and are readily available.

However for some vehicles and in some circumstances the correct seatbelt may be difficult to source new, or the original manufacturer’s seatbelt assembly may be very expensive. It is not illegal to use second hand seatbelts in good condition to replace worn and damaged belts.

A seat belt that has been worn during a crash is not deemed to be in ‘good condition’ and must not be re-used.



Vehicle owners and car repairers should be aware that there can be disadvantages in using second hand seatbelts.

- They may have missing essential parts.
- They have no recognized warranty in relation to their safety performance.
- They lack installation instructions, hence a correct installation may be difficult to achieve.

Motor Vehicle Auto Parts Recyclers

When you source a secondhand seatbelt assembly from a Motor Vehicle Auto Parts Recycler, or anyone else wishing to sell a secondhand seatbelt assembly, you should ask if they have checked the assembly and the associated components prior to the sale.

The business should be aware that any defective or faulty seatbelt sold could involve it in litigation and therefore reasonable precautions should have been taken to reduce the risk to the business.

The Department of Transport recommends that:

- The supplier should be aware of the seatbelt's history (in relation to vehicle crashes).
- The assembly should comply with all items on the checklist over-page.

If a supplier finds that the seatbelt fails any criteria, then the seatbelt webbing should be cut through prior to discarding the whole assembly.

If a purchaser finds that the seatbelt fails any criteria do not use it, please advise the Vehicle Safety Branch in the Department of Transport.



Seatbelt Safety Checklist

Tongue and Buckle Assembly Pass/Fail

Tick or cross

Check the engagement of tongue and buckle. The buckle and tongue assembly should securely latch together with no free play.



➤ The tongue should eject actively when released. (It should spring out.)



➤ There should be no visible cracks on the buckle and the buckle cover must be intact.



➤ The tongue should have no metal deformation, webbing marks, or visible cracks on metal or plastic sections.



Retractor Pass/Fail

Pull the belt out as far as it will go, and then release it. The belt should return all the way into the retractor without sticking, gripping or stalling.



The retractor should lock when the webbing is pulled out suddenly.

Webbing Pass/Fail

The webbing should be securely attached to its end fittings display no sign of stretching or pulled stitching.



The webbing should be flat throughout its entire length, with no fraying, nicks or tears.



There should be no burn marks, frayed stitching or any signs of rippling.



There should be no excessive fading of the webbing – over time exposure to harsh sunlight can considerably reduce the webbing strength.



Anchorage Pass/Fail

All anchorages should be free from corrosion and securely fastened to the vehicle structure.



There should be no signs of any deformation at the anchorage points.



**If there are any failed criteria,
if there is any evidence that the seatbelt was in use at the time of a substantial crash,
or if there is any doubt,
then the seatbelt should be destroyed.**

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