

Title

**School Purpose Vehicles (Vans) Equipped with Seat Belts**

Section

**Human Resources**

Approved Date

April 16, 2013

Revised

**Associated Documents: NA**

Student Transportation of Eastern Ontario (STEO) identifies the safe transportation of students as a priority issue in the development of policy and procedure. STEO's policy around the use of seat belts in specialized school purpose vehicles (e.g. vans) has been developed in accordance with the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) guidelines for the legal, safe and effective use of seat belts.

While Transport Canada has determined that seat belts may actually adversely affect the safety of children on school buses, non-yellow school vehicles such as vans are equipped with seat belts to enhance passenger safety.

MTO Guidelines around proper use of seat belts includes the following. Refer to MTO's website for complete guidelines <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca>

## **One person, one seat belt – it is the law.**

A typical seat belt assembly consists of a lap and shoulder belt. The shoulder belt should be worn closely against the body and over the shoulder and across the chest, never under the arm. The lap belt should be firm against the body and low across the hips.

Booster seats are required for children under the age of eight, weighing 18 kg or more but less than 36 kg (40-80 lbs) and who stand less than 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall. A child can start using a seatbelt alone once any one of the following criteria is met:

- Child turns eight years old
- Child weighs 36 kg (80 lb.)
- Child is 145 cm (4 feet 9 inches) tall

There are limited exemptions from wearing seat belts.

<http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/seatbelt.shtml> (June 2012)

Over and above MTO requirements, STEO has implemented the following policy and procedure as relates to seat belt use in vehicles transporting students.

- In vehicles equipped with seat belts, it is the Driver's responsibility to ensure that **all** passengers are using the seat belt in a properly adjusted and securely fastened manner prior to putting the vehicle in motion. This includes passengers who are 16 years of age and older.

- If it is determined that a student being transported has unfastened or adjusted his or her seatbelt in an unsafe manner as per MTO guidelines, the Driver will observe the following procedure:

## **Seat Belt Procedure (Non Compliance)**

1. At the first safe and appropriate opportunity, the Driver will pull over and stop the motor vehicle in a secure location. The Driver will inform the non-compliant student passenger of the Driver's obligation under STEO policy to ensure that all passengers are using their seat belt in a securely fastened manner. The student passenger will be given an opportunity to fasten their seat belt appropriately, with the Driver's assistance if necessary. If the student complies with the Driver's request, the Driver will continue with his/her route as usual. The Driver will document the incident on a **School Bus Misconduct Report** (provided) including the student's name, the date, and the outcome of the incident and will submit same to the Bus Operator for their records. The Bus Operator will forward a copy of the completed form to STEO.
2. In the event that the student fails to comply with the Driver's request to use their seat belt appropriately, the Driver will contact by phone the Bus Operator, who will attempt to contact the non-compliant student's parents/guardians to arrange for safe pick-up of the student. Where parents/guardians cannot be reached immediately, the Bus Operator will contact STEO and the student's school to determine next steps. In cases where the safe pick-up of the student cannot be arranged through these actions, the police will be contacted to provide same. The Driver is to stay with the non-compliant student until safe pick-up arrives. The Driver will document the incident on a **School Bus Misconduct Report** (provided) including the student's name, the date, and the outcome of the incident and will submit same to the Bus Operator for their records. The Bus Operator will forward a copy of the completed form to STEO.
3. Upon second documented infraction, the Bus Operator will cease to provide transportation to the non-compliant student. STEO will contact parents/guardians and inform them that they are responsible to provide or arrange alternate transportation going forward.