

Washington State Child Occupant Protection Law

Effective Date

June 1, 2007

Law Mandate

- Children 15 and under must be restrained in some manner regardless of seating position.*
- Children ages 7 and under must use an appropriate child safety seat.
- Children ages 8 or older, or 4'9" in height or taller can be restrained by a safety belt or an appropriate child safety seat. If the child does not meet either of the two restrictions, the child needs to remain in a booster until either criteria is met.
- If a child is 8 years old, or 4'9", *but does not fit the seat belt properly when worn alone*, the child needs to remain in a booster until the seat belt fits the child properly, according to vehicle manufacturer instruction.
- Children ages 12 and under should sit in the back seat when practical.
- If a seating position is equipped with lap belts only, children weighing more than 40 pounds do not need to use a child safety seat.
- When Washington does mandate restraint use, it requires the driver to secure both the child safety seat and the child properly.

*As Safe Kids Worldwide focuses on accidental injury for children, this website posting merely addresses restraint coverage through age 15. This statement does not take into account any provisions mandating coverage for individuals ages 16 and over.

SAFE KIDS Lower Columbia, serving Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties, provides free car seat checks to the public to ensure that children are properly restrained and protected in a vehicle. If you would like to schedule an appointment to get your seat checked, please call Brandi at Cowlitz 2 Fire & Rescue at 360-575-6280, or Delaney at the Cowlitz County Sheriff's Office at 360-577-3092.

Public Education

Washington law requires a public education program about the use of child restraints. SAFE KIDS Lower Columbia periodically holds events to educate the public about new and/or changing laws regarding children and safety restraint systems in vehicles. They also have hands-on instruction available so that parents and caregivers learn how to properly install a car seat.

Enforcement

- Driver fined maximum \$37 for child restraint violation.*
- Driver fined maximum \$50 for safety belt violation by occupants under 16
- Offender fined maximum \$50 for safety belt violation if 16 and older
- Primary enforcement.

*This law contains a waiver provision. Generally, this means that the penalty may or must be waived or reduced if the offender provided proof of purchase, rental or acquisition of an approved child safety seat within a specified period of time or if the court determines that such a penalty would impose undue economic hardship to the offender.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the new child safety seat law or any other child safety related topic, or would like to find out more about SAFE KIDS Lower Columbia and their commitment to keeping our children safe from accidental injury, please contact our Coordinator, Delaney Heston, at the Cowlitz County Sheriff's Office at 360-577-3092.