



## SEATBELTS: CRITICAL TO OFFICER SAFETY

According to a study by the National Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial Fund ([NLEOMF](#)), between 2015 and 2019, 47% of officers involved in fatal crashes were not wearing a seat belt. The wearing of seatbelts by police officers is required by [New Jersey Law](#), and the International Association of Chiefs of Police encourages, by resolution, [Mandatory Seatbelt Use by Police Officers](#). Police leaders should take all necessary steps to promote the use of seatbelts by all officers and employees to help prevent injury and death.

Some considerations for the Chief of Police:

1. Ensure the agency has a policy governing seatbelt usage by all employees.
2. Evaluate existing policies and procedures concerning seatbelts to determine if any changes are needed. A sample policy is available [here](#).
3. Ensure that supervisors are holding officers accountable for not wearing seatbelts. Develop an agency remedial training program for officers who do not wear their seatbelts.
4. Review the agency's current training program concerning employees' usage of seatbelts or develop one if one does not exist.
5. Review motor vehicle crashes involving police vehicles and determine if the officers wore their seatbelts. Compliment those officers who did and direct remedial training for those who did not.
6. Regularly discuss the usage of seatbelts by employees at Safety and Wellness Committee meetings.
7. Ensure the agency and command staff model appropriate behavior by wearing a seatbelt.
8. Remind front-line supervisors of the significant influence they have concerning officer behavior, including the wearing of seatbelts. Ensure front-line supervisors model appropriate behavior and understand the importance of directing officers to wear their seatbelts.

Some training considerations:

1. Include in the agency training program recent research findings that break the myth that wearing a seat belt delays an officer's exit from their patrol vehicle. A [2022 study](#) by the Maryland State Police concluded that wearing a seatbelt does not create a delay when exiting the police vehicle.
2. Display posters throughout the agency to reinforce the training program and mandatory seatbelt usage. [Small Seatbelt Posters](#) and [Large Seatbelt Posters](#) specifically for police officers are available for download. Additional seatbelt posters for police officers are available [here](#).

3. Require all officers to watch the video [Seatbelt Reality Check](#). This video is less than two minutes long and describes explicitly the persistent failure of police officers not wearing their seatbelts and the tragedy that follows.
4. Include a [Below 100](#) training course as part of your seatbelt training initiatives, which is available at no cost.
5. Have officers complete the [4-Hour Defensive Driving Program](#), which is available at no cost for MEL-affiliated JIF employees.
6. Ensure seatbelt usage is integrated into the agency's Field Training Program. Furthermore, like front-line supervisors, Field Training Officers (FTO) will likely have tremendous influence and must model appropriate behavior by wearing seatbelts. Agency supervisors must take corrective action when any officer is found not wearing their seatbelt, and such correction is imperative concerning an FTO not wearing a seatbelt.

If you have any questions, please contact your Law Enforcement Risk Control Consultant.