

 <p><b>Cambridge Police Department</b></p>	<b>POLICY &amp; PROCEDURES</b>		<b>No. 413</b>
	Subject/Title: <b>Use of Seatbelts in Police Vehicles</b>		
	Issuing Authority: 	Review Date: <b>June 16, 2011</b>	Issue Date: <b>July 1, 2011</b>
	Robert C. Haas Police Commissioner	Effective Date: <b>July 17, 2011</b>	Rescinds: <b>Policy #2004-2</b>
References/ Attachments:	Accreditation Standards: <b>41.3.3</b>		

## I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this directive is to describe the circumstances when seatbelts are to be used in police department vehicles.

## II. POLICY:<sup>1</sup>

As a prudent safety measure, all employees of the police department are required to properly wear factory installed seatbelts while operating or riding in any departmental vehicle.

- A. Bypassing Safety Devices:** Personnel shall not buckle the seatbelts behind the front seats of the vehicle in order to bypass or disengage the seatbelt warning signals. Such action also disengages other collision safety features of the vehicle, particularly the deployment of airbags. Therefore, rendering inoperable any of the other safety devices within the vehicle is strictly prohibited.
- B. Requirements for Non-Police Personnel:** Whenever officers transport non-sworn personnel or members of the general public in a police vehicle, officers are required to make sure all passengers use seatbelts in the vehicle while the vehicle is being operated.
1. This requirement also pertains to any detainees who might be transported as a passenger in a marked or unmarked police cruiser.
  2. In terms of transporting detainees in Police Prisoner Wagons, officers will be guided by *Policy #650 – Transportation of Detainees*.

<sup>1</sup> CALEA Std. **41.3.3** – A written directive specifies the requirements for the use of occupant safety restraint devices in every vehicle.

3. Children being transported in a police vehicle may be transported without a car seat, if car seats are not available. In any event, a child being transported in a police vehicle should not be left unattended by an adult, and should always have a seatbelt in use while the vehicle is in operation.

### **III. GENERAL GUIDELINES & CONSIDERATIONS:**

The use of seatbelts can have a significant effect in reducing the number of deaths and the severity of injuries resulting from traffic crashes and assist officers in maintaining proper control of their vehicles during pursuit or emergency high speed operations.

Given the number of hours and the conditions under which police officers are expected to operate an emergency vehicle, the probability of an officer being involved in a traffic crash is significantly higher than that of the average driver. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recently completed a study where it looked at 733 fatal police-related crashes (over three decades) and found that 42% of those deaths involved police officers not wearing seatbelts or other safety restraints. A separate study just released indicated that fatal traffic incidents was the leading cause of police officer fatalities for 2010 and has remained so for the thirteenth straight year.

Over the last several years, automobile manufacturers have designed the safety features in motor vehicles to work as an integrated safety system. The sensors now used in motor vehicles are designed to have the seatbelt and airbag devices to work in concert with one another. When the seatbelt is rendered inoperable, it actually will compromise the overall effectiveness of the entire safety system within the vehicle. This is the reason why personnel are not to render the seatbelts in the vehicle inoperable.