

**RESOLUTION NO. 54 CONCERNING THE FITTING AND WEARING OF  
SEAT BELTS ON THE REAR SEATS OF CARS AND SAFER TRANSPORT  
OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

**[CM(88)29]**

The Council of Ministers of Transport, meeting in Paris on 29 November 1988,

**HAVING REGARD TO:**

- Resolution No. 28 of 14 June 1973 concerning seat belts.
- Resolution No. 33 of 18 and 19 June 1975 concerning the problem of young children carried in front seats of motor vehicles.
- Resolution No. 38 of 31 May and 1 June 1978 concerning the wearing of seat belts.

**CONSIDERING:**

- That the effectiveness of seat belts can not be contested and has been established by many scientific studies.
- That the studies made show that the wearing of seat belts, compared with the situation of non-wearing, reduce, by at least 50 per cent the risk of being killed or injured in a car accident.
- That this significant reduction of the risk not only concerns the occupants of the front seats of passenger cars but also the occupants of rear seats.
- That passengers in rear seats who do not wear seat belts are not only running a risk of being injured themselves but also endanger persons in front who are using seat belts particularly, for example, if they are thrown forward.
- That restraining devices are not effective solely for adults since similar results can be obtained in the case of children if the devices used are adapted to their age, size and weight.

**NOTING:**

- That it has not as yet been made compulsory in all countries to fit seat belts in the rear seats of new cars.
- That despite the progress recently made in this connection, only a few countries have made it compulsory to use restraining devices for passengers in rear seats.
- That only a few Member or Associate countries of the ECMT have made it compulsory to use restraining devices for children irrespective of their age or the seat in which they are travelling; that restraining devices for children are not used sufficiently because the public too often considers, incorrectly, that it is only dangerous for children to travel in the front seats and that they are safe enough in rear seats.
- That despite the fact that restraining devices are acknowledged to have a high degree of effectiveness, there are still too many cases in which their use is not compulsory.

**RECOMMENDS** the Member countries of the ECMT:

1. To make it compulsory for the rear seats of passenger cars to be fitted with seat belts.
2. To introduce as soon as possible provisions stating clearly that all occupants of rear seats of passenger cars, adults and children, should be protected by an adequate restraining system.
3. To make it also compulsory, for children travelling in front seats, to be protected by restraining devices adapted to their size, weight and age.
4. To limit as far as possible the number of categories of persons exempt from wearing seat belts.

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In 1973, the Council of Ministers of Transport of the ECMT in its Resolution No. 28, called upon the Conference Member countries to do everything in their power to promote the use of safety belts. In 1978, the Ministers of Transport took the subject up again in their Resolution No. 38 recommending strongly legal provisions concerning the fitting and the use of safety belts as well as accompanying measures of information. Both Resolutions made it clear that the positive effects of safety belts are undisputed. The Committee of Deputies was requested to watch the realisation in practice of the recommendations and to investigate the effects.

The Programme of Cooperation on Road and Road Transport Research of the OECD kept an eye on the development. In 1984-1985, a group of experts of this Programme (under the chairmanship of the United States) submitted the summary report "Effectiveness of safety belt usage programmes", which corroborated the high effectiveness of safety belts. But it was also noted that not all possibilities of improving safety belt usage had been utilised everywhere. Therefore, the following is recommended:

“Safety belt use is an area where the important recommendations are straightforward. First, the enactment of a safety belt use law must be one of the highest priorities of every traffic safety professional. Second, it is not unreasonable to establish belt use goals in excess of 90 percent. This level of belt use has been achieved in enough jurisdictions to make its accomplishment realistic.

It is further recommended that belt use laws should incorporate a meaningful sanction, that laws should be enforced and that the enforcement must be accompanied by public education.”

This situation gave reason to the Road Safety Committee of the ECMT again to work out recommendations for an improvement of the belt use behaviour. It is exactly inadequate and incomplete regulations that can be considered to be a danger for the lasting positive attitude of road users towards the safety belt. This might lead to a decrease in the safety belt wear rate, which again would jeopardize the great success that has widely been achieved to date, and would make the realisation of further improvements considerably more difficult. The Resolution is submitted to the Council of Ministers for its approval.