

# Seatbelts, Child Restraint, and Riding in Truck Beds Information

## Riding in Truck Beds

### Children Are Placed At High Risk in Pickup Trucks

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) warns that **Kids Don't Belong in the Cargo Areas of Pickup Trucks**. A number of states already have laws or restrictions on carrying passengers in the cargo area of a pickup truck.

Trucks are becoming a popular form of transportation for family travel. Unfortunately, occupant protection inside the cab is limited by space, number of safety belts, and the fact that pickup trucks are not required to meet all passenger car safety standards. Space limitations often lead parents to allow children to ride in the cargo area.

Each year more than 200 people die as a result of riding in the cargo area of pickup trucks. More than half of these deaths are children and teenagers.

### The Facts

- The cargo area of a pickup truck, with or without a canopy, has proven to be a source of injuries and death to children and adults. In addition to the possibility of being ejected, passengers riding in covered cargo beds are exposed to carbon monoxide from exhaust fumes.
- Ejection from the cargo area during a collision was the major cause of injury and death for pickup truck passengers.
- Most noncollision deaths were caused by falls due to swerving, braking, or rough roads. In one third of these cases, the victim was standing up, sitting on the tailgate, or "horsing around."

### NHTSA Safety Tips

These safety tips from NHTSA are aimed at making your next ride in a pickup safer:

- Child passenger seats must not be used on side-facing jump seats.
- Child safety seats must have at least 80 percent of the safety seat base on the bench seat. Installing a tether strap to the vehicle frame may prevent the safety seat from moving too far forward and the child from hitting his or her head on the front seat in a crash.
- A rear-facing child seat must never be secured in either the center or right front seat, if a pickup is equipped with a passenger air bag and does not have an air bag on-off switch.

- If there is no other seating available, children over one year of age must be properly secured in a forward-facing child restraint or vehicle lap and shoulder belt positioned as far back from the dashboard as possible.
- All children should ride in properly installed child safety seats or lap and shoulder belts appropriate for their size.

### Safety Tips for Pickup Trucks

- Consult the vehicle owner's manual.
- Child safety seats must not be used on side-facing jump seats.
- Child safety seats must have at least 80% of the safety seat base on the bench seat. Booster seats require both lap and shoulder belts!
- Never place an infant in front of an air bag!
- Neither children nor adults should ride in the cargo area of a pickup truck, even if the cargo area is covered with a hard shell.

### Tennessee Transporting a Child in a Truck Bed Law (TCA 55-8-189)

- (a) A person commits an offense who, on the streets of any municipality, roads of any county, or the highways of this state, transports a child under six (6) years of age in the bed of a truck with a manufacturer's ton rating not exceeding three-quarter (3/4) ton and having a pickup body style.
- (b) (1) A person commits an offense who, on any interstate defense highway or state highway, transports a child between six (6) years of age and under twelve (12) years of age in the bed of a truck with a manufacturer's ton rating not exceeding three-quarter (3/4) ton and having a pickup body style.
- (2) A city or county may prohibit, by ordinance or resolution, a person transporting a child between six (6) years of age and under twelve (12) years of age in the bed of a truck with a manufacturer's ton rating not exceeding three-quarter (3/4) ton and having a pickup body style on city or county roads or highways.
- (c) This section does not apply to a person transporting a child in the bed of such vehicle when that vehicle is being used as part of an organized parade, procession, or other ceremonial event, and when that vehicle is not exceeding the speed of twenty miles per hour (20 mph).
- (d) The provisions of this section do not apply when the child being transported is involved in agricultural activities.
- (e) A violation of (a) or (b)(1) is a Class C misdemeanor. [Acts 1996, ch 635, § 1;1999, ch. 325, § 1.]

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