



Ohio Revised Code

Section 4513.263 Occupant restraining devices.

Effective: April 9, 2025

Legislation: House Bill 37

(A) As used in this section and in section 4513.99 of the Revised Code:

(1) "Automobile" means any commercial tractor, passenger car, commercial car, or truck that is required to be factory-equipped with an occupant restraining device for the operator or any passenger by regulations adopted by the United States secretary of transportation pursuant to the "National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966," 80 Stat. 719, 15 U.S.C.A. 1392.

(2) "Occupant restraining device" means a seat safety belt, shoulder belt, harness, or other safety device for restraining a person who is an operator of or passenger in an automobile and that satisfies the minimum federal vehicle safety standards established by the United States department of transportation.

(3) "Passenger" means any person in an automobile, other than its operator, who is occupying a seating position for which an occupant restraining device is provided.

(4) "Commercial tractor," "passenger car," and "commercial car" have the same meanings as in section 4501.01 of the Revised Code.

(5) "Vehicle" and "motor vehicle," as used in the definitions of the terms set forth in division (A)(4) of this section, have the same meanings as in section 4511.01 of the Revised Code.

(6) "Tort action" means a civil action for damages for injury, death, or loss to person or property. "Tort action" includes a product liability claim, as defined in section 2307.71 of the Revised Code, and an asbestos claim, as defined in section 2307.91 of the Revised Code, but does not include a civil action for damages for breach of contract or another agreement between persons.

(B) No person shall do any of the following:



(1) Operate an automobile on any street or highway unless that person is wearing all of the available elements of a properly adjusted occupant restraining device, or operate a school bus that has an occupant restraining device installed for use in its operator's seat unless that person is wearing all of the available elements of the device, as properly adjusted;

(2) Operate an automobile on any street or highway unless each passenger in the automobile who is subject to the requirement set forth in division (B)(3) of this section is wearing all of the available elements of a properly adjusted occupant restraining device;

(3) Occupy, as a passenger, a seating position on the front seat of an automobile being operated on any street or highway unless that person is wearing all of the available elements of a properly adjusted occupant restraining device;

(4) Operate a taxicab on any street or highway unless all factory-equipped occupant restraining devices in the taxicab are maintained in usable form.

(C)(1) Division (B)(3) of this section does not apply to a person who is required by section 4511.81 of the Revised Code to be secured in a child restraint device or booster seat.

(2) Division (B)(1) of this section does not apply to a person who is an employee of the United States postal service or of a newspaper home delivery service, during any period in which the person is engaged in the operation of an automobile to deliver mail or newspapers to addressees.

(3) Divisions (B)(1) and (3) of this section do not apply to a person who has an affidavit signed by a physician licensed to practice in this state under Chapter 4731. of the Revised Code or a chiropractor licensed to practice in this state under Chapter 4734. of the Revised Code that states the following:

(a) That the person has a physical impairment that makes use of an occupant restraining device impossible or impractical;

(b) Whether the physical impairment is temporary, permanent, or reasonably expected to be permanent;



(c) If the physical impairment is temporary, how long the physical impairment is expected to make the use of an occupant restraining device impossible or impractical.

(4) Divisions (B)(1) and (3) of this section do not apply to a person who has registered with the registrar of motor vehicles in accordance with division (C)(5) of this section.

(5) A person who has received an affidavit under division (C)(3) of this section stating that the person has a permanent or reasonably expected to be permanent physical impairment that makes use of an occupant restraining device impossible or impracticable may register with the registrar attesting to that fact. Upon such registration, the registrar shall make that information available in the law enforcement automated data system. A person included in the database under division (C)(5) of this section is not required to have the affidavit obtained in accordance with division (C)(3) of this section in their possession while operating or occupying an automobile.

(6) A physician or chiropractor who issues an affidavit for the purposes of division (C)(3) or (4) of this section is immune from civil liability arising from any injury or death sustained by the person who was issued the affidavit due to the failure of the person to wear an occupant restraining device unless the physician or chiropractor, in issuing the affidavit, acted in a manner that constituted willful, wanton, or reckless misconduct.

(7) The registrar shall adopt rules in accordance with Chapter 119. of the Revised Code establishing a process for a person to be included in the database under division (C)(5) of this section. The information provided and included in the database under division (C)(5) of this section is not a public record subject to inspection or copying under section 149.43 of the Revised Code.

(D) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, no law enforcement officer shall cause an operator of an automobile being operated on any street or highway to stop the automobile for the sole purpose of determining whether a violation of division (B) of this section has been or is being committed or for the sole purpose of issuing a ticket, citation, or summons for a violation of that nature or causing the arrest of or commencing a prosecution of a person for a violation of that nature, and no law enforcement officer shall view the interior or visually inspect any automobile being operated on any street or highway for the sole purpose of determining whether a violation of that nature has been or is being committed.



(E) All fines collected for violations of division (B) of this section, or for violations of any ordinance or resolution of a political subdivision that is substantively comparable to that division, shall be forwarded to the treasurer of state for deposit into the state treasury to the credit of the trauma and emergency medical services fund, which is hereby created. In addition, the portion of the driver's license reinstatement fee described in division (F)(2)(f) of section 4511.191 of the Revised Code, plus all fees collected under section 4765.11 of the Revised Code, plus all fines imposed under section 4765.55 of the Revised Code, plus the fees and other moneys specified in section 4766.05 of the Revised Code, and plus five per cent of fines and moneys arising from bail forfeitures as directed by section 5503.04 of the Revised Code, also shall be deposited into the trauma and emergency medical services fund. All money deposited into the trauma and emergency medical services fund shall be used by the department of public safety for the administration and operation of the division of emergency medical services and the state board of emergency medical, fire, and transportation services, and by the state board of emergency medical, fire, and transportation services to make grants, in accordance with section 4765.07 of the Revised Code and rules the board adopts under section 4765.11 of the Revised Code. The director of budget and management may transfer excess money from the trauma and emergency medical services fund to the public safety - highway purposes fund established in section 4501.06 of the Revised Code if the director of public safety determines that the amount of money in the trauma and emergency medical services fund exceeds the amount required to cover such costs incurred by the emergency medical services agency and the grants made by the state board of emergency medical, fire, and transportation services and requests the director of budget and management to make the transfer.

(F)(1) Subject to division (F)(2) of this section, the failure of a person to wear all of the available elements of a properly adjusted occupant restraining device in violation of division (B)(1) or (3) of this section or the failure of a person to ensure that each minor who is a passenger of an automobile being operated by that person is wearing all of the available elements of a properly adjusted occupant restraining device in violation of division (B)(2) of this section shall not be considered or used by the trier of fact in a tort action as evidence of negligence or contributory negligence. But, the trier of fact may determine based on evidence admitted consistent with the Ohio Rules of Evidence that the failure contributed to the harm alleged in the tort action and may diminish a recovery of compensatory damages that represents noneconomic loss, as defined in section 2307.011 of the Revised Code, in a tort action that could have been recovered but for the plaintiff's failure to wear all



of the available elements of a properly adjusted occupant restraining device. Evidence of that failure shall not be used as a basis for a criminal prosecution of the person other than a prosecution for a violation of this section; and shall not be admissible as evidence in a criminal action involving the person other than a prosecution for a violation of this section.

(2) If, at the time of an accident involving a passenger car equipped with occupant restraining devices, any occupant of the passenger car who sustained injury or death was not wearing an available occupant restraining device, was not wearing all of the available elements of such a device, or was not wearing such a device as properly adjusted, then, consistent with the Rules of Evidence, the fact that the occupant was not wearing the available occupant restraining device, was not wearing all of the available elements of such a device, or was not wearing such a device as properly adjusted is admissible in evidence in relation to any claim for relief in a tort action to the extent that the claim for relief satisfies all of the following:

- (a) It seeks to recover damages for injury or death to the occupant.
- (b) The defendant in question is the manufacturer, designer, distributor, or seller of the passenger car.
- (c) The claim for relief against the defendant in question is that the injury or death sustained by the occupant was enhanced or aggravated by some design defect in the passenger car or that the passenger car was not crashworthy.

(G)(1) Whoever violates division (B)(1) of this section shall be fined thirty dollars.

(2) Whoever violates division (B)(3) of this section shall be fined twenty dollars.

(3) Except as otherwise provided in this division, whoever violates division (B)(4) of this section is guilty of a minor misdemeanor. If the offender previously has been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a violation of division (B)(4) of this section, whoever violates division (B)(4) of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor of the third degree.