

Executive summary of:

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
49 CFR Part 571
Docket No. NHTSA-2013-0121
RIN 2127-AK56

NHTSA is amending FMVSS No. 208 to require lap/shoulder belts at all seating positions on:

- A. Over-the-road buses; and
- B. Non-over-the-road buses with a GVWR greater than 11,793 kg (26,000 lb), exceptions being: “transit buses”, “school buses”, “prison buses”, and “perimeter-seating buses”.

Key definitions:

- Over-the-road bus means a bus characterized by an elevated passenger deck located over a baggage compartment.
- A perimeter-seating bus is a bus that has 7 or fewer designated seating positions rearward of the driver’s seating position that are forward-facing or can convert to forward-facing without the use of tools.
- Prison bus means a bus manufactured for the purpose of transporting persons subject to involuntary restraint or confinement and has design features consistent with that purpose.
- Transit bus means a bus that is equipped with a stop-request system sold for public transportation provided by, or on behalf of, a State or local government.
- Stop-request system means a vehicle-integrated system for passenger use to signal to a vehicle operator that they are requesting a stop.
- A Bus is defined as: “a motor vehicle with motive power, except a trailer, designed for carrying more than 10 persons.”
- A School bus is a bus that is sold, or introduced in interstate commerce, for purposes that include carrying students to and from school or related events, but does not include a bus designed and sold for operation as a common carrier in urban transportation.

When will this be mandated?

Beginning in November 2016 newly manufactured over-the-road buses and non-over-the-road buses with a GVWR greater than 11,793 kg (26,000 lb), will be required to be equipped with lap and shoulder belts for each driver and passenger seat. Exceptions being: “transit buses”, “school buses”, “prison buses”, and “perimeter-seating buses”.

Relevant Requirements:

- Lap/shoulder belt system for passenger seats to meet provisions for seat belt adjustment and fit, so that the seat belts can accommodate children as well as large (95th-percentile) adult males, be lockable for use with a child restraint system, and be releasable at a single point and by a pushbutton action.
- Seat belt anchorages, both torso and lap, on passenger seats to be integrated into the seat structure, so as not to impede emergency egress.
- *Driver’s Seat* FMVSS No. 208 to require lap/shoulder belts for the driver seating (buses with a GVWR greater than 11,793 kg (26,000 lb) except transit and school buses) and in “large” (GVWR over 4,536 kg (10,000 lb)) school buses. (“Small” school buses (GVWR less than or equal to 4,536 kg (10,000 lb)) are already required to be equipped with lap/shoulder belts for the driver’s seating position.)

FAQ’s

My bus is between 10,000 and 26,000 lbs. GVWR. Do I need seat belts?

If the bus has an elevated passenger deck located over a baggage compartment, the answer is yes. If not, no.

What about accommodations for securing child seats?

If a bus gets seat belts, the seat belts must be lockable so they can be safely used with a child restraint system. Freedman Seating’s 3PT seats have switchable retractors so they are converted to being lockable once all the webbing has been pulled out of the spool. Amaya products will meet this standard well before the 2016 implementation date.

Are CRS-225 latches required?

No. They are not included in this ruling.

What standard do the seating systems/seat belts need to meet?

For purposes of today’s conversation, we are concerned with FMVSS 210. The lap and shoulder belts must each hold a load of 3,000 lbs. all pulled simultaneously.

Do older buses need to be retrofitted?

No, they do not. You may do this voluntarily, but there is no regulation or standard to apply.

My bus is part of a “transit system”, do I need lap/shoulder belts?

- *If it is an “over-the-road bus”, the answer is yes.*
- *If it is not an “over-the-road bus, and the bus lacks a stop-request system, the answer is yes.*

In order to be qualified as a “transit bus” (and exempt from having seat belts) the bus must:

- 1. Not be an “over-the-road” bus and be*
- 2. With a GVWR greater than 11,793 kg (26,000 lb) and be*
- 3. Sold for public transportation provided by, or on behalf of a State or local government and be*
- 4. Equipped with a stop-request system.*

Can shoulder belts on seats next to a wall be attached to the wall or a bar?

No. All seat belts (lap and shoulder) must be anchored to the seating structure. There are exceptions for the belt anchorages in the last row of the coach (if there is no wheelchair position or side emergency door behind these seats) and in the driver seating position.

Do “limo” or aisle facing buses need to have lap/shoulder belts?

- *If the bus is an “over-the-road bus, yes it must have lap/shoulder belts.*
- *If the bus has 7 or fewer forward-facing designated seating positions or positions that can be converted to forward-facing without the use of tools (rearward of the driver’s seating position), you do not need belts.*

The descriptions and summary provided in this document have been prepared for use as a ready reference and do not have legal force or effect. Always refer to the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) within the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), which is established, prescribed, and enforced by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).