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Are You Following California's Child Safety Seat Laws?

Our Friends · Thursday, February 6th, 2025

Parents typically have one thing in common. They all want their children to be safe at all times and tend to keep a close eye on them. But what about your child's safety when riding in a motor vehicle? Are you successfully [navigating California child safety seat laws](#)? Yep, there's more than one state law and parents must adhere to each one if they want to keep their children safe in a car, truck, or SUV.

California Laws Vary Depending on the Child's Age

You've probably already figured out that infants have different needs than toddlers. Older kids' needs also aren't the same as infants or toddlers. So, it just makes sense that the law changes to meet the different needs.

Car Seat Requirements for Children Under the Age of 2

All children two years old and younger must ride in a [rear-facing car seat](#). Nope, there aren't any exceptions to this state law. We know your child is probably going to start complaining about their lack of a view. Staring at a seat back isn't a ton of fun. However, the law's in place for an excellent reason dealing with your child's safety.

Rear-facing car seats provide extra support in the head, neck, and spine areas. These areas are always vulnerable to injuries regardless of your age, but especially so in infants and young toddlers. Their bodies are still developing, bones are strengthening, you get the general idea. So simply put, younger children need the added protection they get from a rear-facing car seat.

Child Safety Seat Requirements for Children Ages 2 – 8

By the time your child turns two, you're both ready to transition to a forward-facing car seat. Your child finally gets a view and you may get a bit of peace and quiet on car rides. However, before you strap your little one in a forward-facing car seat, the Golden State also has [height and weight requirements](#). Just because your toddler celebrates their second birthday doesn't automatically mean they're ready to move out of their rear-facing safety seat.

All children must weigh at least 40 pounds and measure 40 inches or more in height. If your child hasn't quite reached the height or weight requirements, they must stick with a rear-facing car seat. Sure, it can be disappointing for children but safety always comes first.

Older Children and Booster Seats

Just because your child turns 8 years old doesn't necessarily mean it's time to ditch the forward-facing car seat. Children can't switch to a booster seat until they've outgrown their forward-facing car seat. When this happens depends on your child's growth rate, along with the car seat's height and weight specifications. These can differ a bit by manufacturer so read the height and weight limits carefully.

When it's time to break out the booster seat, California has a bit of guidance. The lap belt must be securely fastened and should rest against your child's hips. Yep, the shoulder harness is a state requirement so buckle it up. Your child should stay in the booster seat until they outgrow it. Now, it's finally time to let them use the vehicle's built-in safety belt. While it's not state law, experts recommend keeping children in the back seat at least until they turn 13.

Potential Penalties For Violating California Child Safety Seat Laws

The Golden State isn't playing around when it comes to child safety in motor vehicles. California has some pretty strict penalties for not following all safety seat laws.

Fines are Possible

You may get lucky and only get a warning the first time you're pulled over for a possible safety seat violation. However, don't hold your breath. As we mentioned earlier, California is serious about child safety. Chances are, you're going to get a ticket and fines typically run around \$100.

Yep, fines increase for your second offense, around \$250. While these fines aren't exactly astronomical, they're also not cheap. These fines are also easily avoidable if you follow the law.

You May Get Points Added to Your License

Sometimes being given points is a good thing. Extra points can be the difference between winning and losing a game. Your child's safety isn't something to play around with and [points on your license](#) aren't beneficial.

If you get four points on your California driver's license within one year, the DMV automatically suspends your license for 6 months. Ending up with points on your license actually isn't too hard. Pretty much any traffic violation like speeding results in a point. Getting your license back after a suspension isn't as easy as asking the DMV to restore your driving privileges. There's a whole process you need to go through, and it's rarely cheap.

Expect Insurance Rates to Go Up

Even if you're sticking with the state's absolute minimum insurance requirements, monthly premiums aren't exactly low. The last thing you want is for your auto insurance rates to go up or worse your carrier drops your coverage.

Insurance companies tend to base their rates on driving records. So, if you have points on your license the insurer considers you a risky driver. Yep, failing to follow car seat laws can indicate you're not concerned with safety.

Your Child's Safety is the Best Reason to Follow Car Seat Laws

Sure, fines and other penalties are a great reason to follow all child safety seat rules. As a parent, your child's safety should be your primary concern. We know car seats can be pricey, even when you go with convertible models. You know the ones that transition from rear to forward-facing and finally into a booster seat.

Then there's the chore of installing a car seat and it's never as easy as it sounds. Did you know your child's pediatrician, the staff at the hospital, and even your local fire department are all here to help install a child safety seat? They'll even go over state laws to help ensure you're not in violation, all to ensure your child is safe.

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