

**Bristol Police Department
Seat Belt Policy**

This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline.

- I. **Introduction:** Research clearly shows that the use of safety belts has a significant effect in reducing the number of deaths and the severity of injuries resulting from motor vehicle crashes. The use of safety restraints reduces the risk of death and serious injury and assists officers in maintaining proper control of their vehicles in pursuit and/or emergency high-speed operations. According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund the second leading cause of officer on-duty death results from automobile crashes.
- II. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy to help ensure maximum operator and passenger safety, minimizing the possibility of death or injury resulting from motor vehicle crashes.
- III. **Policy:**
 - A. **USE OF SEAT BELTS:** It is the policy of the Bristol Police Department to ensure the safety of all personnel and citizens while traveling in a Bristol Police Department vehicle. Safety belts shall be worn by drivers and passengers in all vehicles owned, leased or rented by the Bristol Police Department when in motion This also applies to the operation of privately owned or other vehicles used on duty. Bristol Police Department personnel shall use properly adjusted and securely fastened safety belts when operating or riding in any vehicle so equipped.
 - B. **DRIVER'S RESPONSIBILITY:** The vehicle's driver is responsible for ensuring compliance by all passengers.
 - C. **OPERATION OF DEPARTMENT VEHICLES:** No person shall operate a Bristol Police Department vehicle or transport anyone when he/she does not have an operable seat belt.
 - D. **REMOVAL OF SEAT BELTS.** When arriving at an emergency call, a potentially dangerous situation or making a vehicle traffic stop, officers may remove the safety restraint for a quick exit just prior to stopping. In traffic stops, the officer must be reasonably sure that the violator is going to stop before removing the safety restraint.
 - E. **EXEPTIONS FOR UNDERCOVER OFFICERS:** Officers functioning in an undercover capacity are exempt from this policy when:
 - a. The wearing of the belt could pose safety problems when the officer anticipates being in proximity to a suspect while conducting undercover operations.
 - b. The wearing of the belt could compromise the officer's identity.
 - F. This exemption is intended to facilitate the undercover officers in conducting their duties when they are about to contact persons of interest and or persons involved in an active investigation. Officers working a plainclothes detail or on routine patrol are

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not exempted. Undercover officers merely in transit or on an administrative assignment are not exempted.