

What does the recent rule change for seatbelts mean for children being transported in OSCAR services?



You may be aware of the rule change concerning seat belt and restraint requirements for children traveling in motor vehicles. The NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) has issued guidelines regarding the changes. The overall intention of the rule change is to help reduce preventable deaths and serious injuries to children traveling in vehicles.

If you transport children (excluding the use of buses, taxis and other passenger service vehicles) there are significant changes to the regulations and we recommend that you read [the full information on the rule change](#), as well as the clarifications below.

- From 1 November 2013 the mandatory use of approved child restraints will be extended to passengers who are aged under seven (i.e. until their seventh birthday).
- Approved child restraints are those that meet a specified standard and for children under the age of 7 this does not include lap belts.
- Exemptions to these rules do apply for operators of "Passenger Service Vehicles" (PSVs), which includes buses and taxis.
- If you operate a light vehicle with 12 or fewer seats (including the driver's seat) that is not used for "hire and reward", then this vehicle is not classed as a PSV and the new restraint rules will fully apply.
- Additionally, unless you are operating or using a PSV, the use of an approved child restraint (not a lap belt), is also mandatory for children up to their eighth birthday, if an approved restraint is available in the vehicle. If an approved restraint is not available in this situation, it is essential that the child travel as safely as possible, in the back seat(s) and restrained securely using any restraint that is available.

We would estimate that about 25% of OSCAR services provide some form of transport service. While some OSCAR services have their own fully licensed mini-buses, which qualify as PSVs, many of the services who transport children do not.

We offer this brief snapshot of the rule change in order to draw attention to its general impact. Please refer to the more specific guidance at the link above.

Further reading: ["The OSCAR Drivers Handbook"](#)