

Final Ruling Changes to School Bus Seating

NHTSA published the “Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards; Seating Systems, Occupant Crash Protection, Seat Belt Assembly Anchorages, School Bus Passenger Seating and Crash Protection” Final Rule on Oct. 21, 2008.

The final rule created changes to school bus seating in three areas:

I. Changes to All School Bus Seats; Effective Oct. 21, 2009

- All seats must be constructed with the seat back height at a minimum of 24” above the Seating Reference Point (SRP). This is equivalent to the high back seats currently required by some states.
- All seat bottom cushions that are designed to flip up or be removable must have self-latching mechanisms.

II. Changes to All School Buses; Effective Oct. 21, 2011

- School buses with a GVWR of 10,000 pounds or less must have lap-shoulder belt restraints for all seating positions.
- School Buses with a GVWR of greater than 10,000 pounds are not required to have any type of restraints for passenger seating positions. Installation of lap-shoulder belts is voluntary.
- Lap belts are acceptable, though not preferred, for school buses with a GVWR of greater than 10,000 pounds.

III. Changes to Lap-Shoulder Belt School Bus Seats; Effective Oct. 21, 2011

- Design and performance standards for seats with lap-shoulder belts are established and must be met. Standards were developed to ensure both the strength of the anchorages and the compatibility of the seat with compartmentalization. Standards differ for seats on school buses with a GVWR of 10,000 pounds or less than those seats on school buses with a GVWR of greater than 10,000 pounds.
- A “Quasi-Static” test is established as a means to verify seat performance with respect to the established standards. Test standards were revised to accommodate seat designs using dual frame technology.
- Flexible-seating technology is recognized by including design and performance standards unique to it.*

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* *The new ruling allows for flexible seating, pioneered by SafeGuard in 2007. NHTSA recognizes flexible capacity technology found on the SafeGuard FlexSeat.® With this update, the industry now has design parameters and testing standards for belted seating, along with an ongoing requirement for true compartmentalization, provided exclusively by SafeGuard through SmartFrame™ technology.*