FMCSA’s most recent Seat Belt Usage by Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers Survey, published in March 2014, found that commercial motor vehicle (CMV) passengers use seat belts at a lower rate (73 percent) than CMV drivers (84 percent).

Federal rules have long required all commercial drivers to use seat belts. By law, CMV drivers must use safety belts; as of 2016 passengers in large commercial trucks must now also wear safety belts, according to the FMCSA.

Federal Regulations
Section 393.93(b)(2)-(3) of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) requires every truck and truck tractor manufactured after the early 1970s to comply with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s (NHTSA) Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 208 (49 CFR 571.208), relating to the installation of seat belt assemblies, as well as FMVSS 210, dealing with the installation of seat belt assembly anchorages, and FMVSS 207, addressing seating systems more generally. Under FMVSS 208, trucks with a GVWR of more than 10,000 pounds manufactured on or after September 1, 1990, are allowed by S4.3.2.1 an option to comply by providing a “complete passenger protection system,” but nearly all CMV manufacturers choose the second compliance option (S4.3.2.2) and install a “belt system.” This second option requires a seat belt assembly “at each designated seating position.”

In short, the FMVSS and FMCSRs require seat belts at every seating position in a CMV. In addition, 49 CFR 392.16 requires that a property-carrying CMV which has a seat belt assembly installed at the driver’s seat shall not be driven unless the driver has properly restrained himself or herself with the seat belt assembly. As of June 2016 FMCSA rules now require passengers riding in property-carrying CMVs to use seat belts when the vehicle is operated on public roads.

Myths/Facts about wearing a seatbelt

- **Myth - Safety belts aren’t necessary for low-speed driving.**
  - **Fact -** In a frontal collision occurring at 30 mph, an unbelted person continues to move forward at 30 mph causing them to hit the windshield at about 30 mph. This is the same velocity a person falling from the top of a three story building would experience upon impact with the ground.

- **Myth - Wearing a safety belt is a personal decision that doesn’t affect anyone else.**
  - **Fact -** Not wearing a safety belt can affect your family and loved ones. It can also affect other motorists since wearing a safety belt can help you to avoid losing control of your truck in a crash.

- 52% of truck-occupant-fatalitys in large trucks involve a rollover. Rollover in a large truck increases the likelihood of fatality by 30 times. In a rollover, a truck driver is 80% less likely to die when wearing a safety belt.

- 73% of truck drivers killed, who were not wearing a safety belt, were involved in single vehicle crashes.


The good news is, the vast majority of people wear seat belts. The FMCSA says that safety belt usage by CMV drivers rose to a new record level of 86% in 2016, compared to 65% usage in 2007, according to the results of a national survey.

Since 2007, FMCSA, in collaboration with the NHTSA has conducted the Safety Belt Usage by Commercial Motor Vehicle Drivers Survey six times. In each survey, safety belt usage by commercial drivers has been shown to be steadily increasing.