



Take 5

For Safety



U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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Go on and get belted!

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“Oh crap!” I yelled as slammed on the brakes. An Army vehicle with four Soldiers came across the intersection from my left, violating the right of way. Thanks to a tall brick wall, they couldn’t see me and I couldn’t see them until they entered the intersection. We were in Germany and they had deployed from Fort Carson, Colo., to participate in a field exercise.

“Wham!” I nailed them broadside as they crossed my lane. I heard them scream and saw the vehicle briefly tip up on its driver-side wheels before it rolled to my right. I was thrown forward maybe three inches before my shoulder strap bit into me, keeping me from being impaled on the steering wheel or eating the windshield.

After I caught my breath, I jumped out, put up a warning triangle on the road behind my Volkswagen and checked the Soldiers in their vehicle. They were all shaken but uninjured, thanks in part to the fact they’d all been wearing their seat belts.

The German police came, assessed the situation and cited the other driver for the accident. I looked and thought I’d hate to be him when he explains this to his first sergeant. Fortunately, no one had to be taken away in an ambulance – seat belts in both vehicles prevented that.

You know you’re responsible to make sure you and any passengers riding with you are wearing seat belts. But did you know there’s a right way and wrong way to wear them? Wearing a seat belt improperly reduces its ability to protect you and can actually increase your injuries. The National Safety Council offers the following tips for proper wear of seat belts:

Lap belt

- Ensure the belt is snug. Slack allows room for movement before or during a crash, increasing the risk of spinal cord or head injury.
- Be sure the belt is flat. A twisted belt concentrates stress on a small body area, increasing the likelihood of injury.

- Sit with your seat back upright. If the seat is reclined, you could slide under the belt, strike the dashboard or front seat and increase the possibility of abdominal injuries.
- Sit back deeply in the seat.

Shoulder belt

- Be sure the belt is snug. Too much slack could result in facial and chest injuries.
- Wear the belt over the shoulder, across the collarbone and diagonally across the chest.
- Never wear the belt under the arm. The collarbone is strong enough to distribute crash forces, but the ribs are likely to break and puncture the lungs, heart, liver or spleen, all of which lie beneath them.
- Never wear the belt in front of the face or neck.

For additional seatbelt information, visit <https://safety.army.mil/>.

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