



Safely Securing Your Wheelchair Passengers

Your elderly or disabled customers rely on you to provide them a feeling of safety and independence. Your reputation and future funding depend on you transporting your passengers safely from one destination to the next. However, wheelchair passengers pose unique risks that require extra diligence to ensure all passengers are safe during their trips with you. **Do you have a safety plan in place for securing your wheelchair passengers?**

Having a documented, thought-out safety routine will help reduce the number of injuries and accidents your customers may experience. Therefore, consider implementing a daily safety checklist and routine for all of your drivers, maintenance staff, and mechanics.

Pre-Trip Checklist

- Ensure the vehicle has four securement straps, along with shoulder and lap belts. These straps and belts should be stored in a clean, dry container.
- Inspect the straps and belts to make sure they are in good working condition. Frayed, cut, or damaged materials should be replaced before any trip begins.
- Examine all hardware and buckles to confirm they function properly. Broken or worn parts require replacement of the entire strap or belt assembly.
- Confirm floor anchorages (i.e., tracks or plates) are clear of dirt and/or debris to allow for proper attachment fitting.

Securing the Wheelchair

Position chair appropriately

- Wheelchair should be forward facing and centered between tracks or plates
- Brakes need to be locked and gears engaged (if motorized)

Properly place attachments

- Do not attach straps to wheels or any detachable portion of the wheelchair
- Do not cross straps, as this can place added stress or unequal load forces on the wheelchair frame, causing it to collapse or tip

Properly connect front and rear tie-downs

- Position both front and back securement strap fittings in the floor tracks (or hook plates) three to eight inches from the tires on the wheelchair
- Left and right straps should be hooked at the same position on each side of the wheelchair at a 45° degree angle, with no crossing or twisting of the belts

Secure chair tightly

- Pull on strap to ensure fitting is firmly engaged and locked into slot
- Once secured, the wheelchair should not move more than two inches back and forth
- In some cases, an additional strap may be needed to accommodate various chair designs

Passenger Safety

Attach seat belt

- Attach seat belt in three locations:
 1. To the vehicle anchorage points on the van
 2. To the wheelchair securement system on the tracks
 3. To the wheelchair itself

Position and attach lap belt

- Place the belt over the pelvic and hip bones (not abdomen)
- Ensure buckle of lap belt is placed opposite of where shoulder belt is attached to wall
- Place belt inside armrests, between side panel seat back and seat cushion
- Adjust the lap belt so it is firmly snug

Position and attach the shoulder belt

- Ensure strap does not cross rider's face, neck, or rib cage
- Adjust shoulder belt to achieve firm but comfortable tension
- Check for proper tightness of shoulder strap—no more than three fingers' width of room should fit between the shoulder belt and the passenger's body
- Seatbelts should never be twisted and should always lie flat against the body

Always use seatbelts, obey all traffic laws, and arrive safely.