

# Loss Prevention News

Provided by the Texas Municipal League Intergovernmental Risk Pool

## Rules to Live By – Riding in Vehicles

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You see it all the time, people riding in vehicles in an unsafe manner. A split second of inattention, a small bump or hole in the road, or a seemingly minor mistake can have severe consequences.

One example of unsafe behavior is using the cargo area of a pickup truck as passenger space. Riding in the cargo area of a pickup truck, even at low speeds, can be an extremely dangerous practice. A parks department employee fell from the side of a pickup truck that was transporting trash in a park. The vehicle hit a small hole in the ground, causing the employee to fall backwards out of the truck, striking her head on the pavement. Although this employee is recovering from her injuries, the results could have been much more tragic.

Drivers seem to forget that there are simple laws of physics that come into play in the operation of a motor vehicle and these laws can't be broken. The law of inertia says that an object in motion will remain in motion until stopped by an opposing force. That means that a passenger, unrestrained in the cargo area of a pickup truck, will continue in motion if the truck suddenly stops, turns or hits a bump in the road. No matter how strong a person might be, it is very difficult to overcome these forces just by trying to hold on.

Using vehicles and equipment in ways they were not designed for can invite disastrous consequences. Employees should never be allowed to ride in the bucket of a backhoe or use the bucket as an elevated platform. As a general rule, riders should not be allowed in cargo areas, on running boards, tailgates, fenders, bumpers, atop cabs, on tow bars, towed equipment or anywhere on moving vehicles or equipment that are not designed for passengers. Some exceptions may include operator trainees, mechanics sharing operator positions, and certain types of refuse vehicles.



**Seat belts should fit securely with the shoulder belt across the chest.**

Seat belts are the law and for good reason. Seat belts save lives. In Texas, a law was recently passed that requires occupants in rear seats of passenger vehicles to wear seatbelts, in addition to those riding in the front.

Owner/operator manuals are good resources for determining the safe operation of vehicles and equipment. In addition, your entity should establish a fleet safety program that addresses such issues as driver selection, motor vehicle record checks, training, use of safety belts, backing of vehicles/equipment, hauling loads, maintenance, and accident reporting procedures.



**It may seem a like a quick way to get the job done, but riding in a bucket is hazardous!**

For more information on a driving safety program, refer to the TML-IRP Sample Safety Manual. For refresher training, some programs in the TML-IRP Loss Prevention Media Library include #584 *Defensive Driving for Government Employees*, #178 *Driven to Distraction*, and #134 *Don't Meet by Accident: A Guide to Safe Driving*. Please refer to [www.tmlirp.org](http://www.tmlirp.org) for training opportunities.