The first seat belt law went into effect January 1, 1968, a full 15 years after the first Corvette rolled off the assembly line. The law required all vehicles, except buses, to be fitted with seat belts for all passengers. From there, the law has been modified to the current law, requiring 3-point seat belts in all seating positions. It is important to know your options — for safety and for correct restoration — to ensure that you and your Corvette have many miles ahead.

Seat Belts By State
Most seat belt laws are left to the individual state to create and enforce, with variations on enforcement and even if a seat belt is required. New Hampshire is the only state in the U.S. that doesn’t currently require adult drivers to wear a seat belt. Some states follow primary enforcement, where an officer can stop and ticket the driver for the sole offense of not wearing a seat belt. Others follow secondary enforcement, where an officer can cite a driver if he/she was speeding, running a stop sign, or another primary violation in addition to not wearing a seat belt. See where your state falls with this chart, including fines for first-time seat belt violations.

The Evolution of Corvette Seat Belts

C1 Corvette Seat Belts
The earliest Corvettes in the C1 Generation were manufactured without seat belts of any kind. Beginning in 1956, General Motors made provisions for mounting seat belts in Corvettes, but belts were not factory options until 1958. Corvette owners could purchase seat belts and supplies at some automotive parts stores, or directly from the dealer, to install lap belts.

Seat belt laws for front seat passengers in the U.S. as of 2009

- Primary enforcement
- Secondary enforcement, but primary under certain ages
- Secondary enforcement
- Primary enforcement for minors, no enforcement for adults
1959 – Seat belts were standard from the factory in all Corvettes. The lap belt design consisted of 2 straps that came across the lap with a latch in the middle. There were no retractors on the belts, meaning that when they were not in use, they hung at either side of the seat.

**C2 Corvette Seat Belts**

The lap belt design remained more or less the same, with the addition of a tongue on the inboard console to secure the belt out of the way.

1965 – A retractor was added to the base of the outboard belt. A plat was also added, almost as an afterthought, to hold the outboard belt in place.

1966 – Shoulder belts became an option. They were not originally available with a retractor and lay behind the seat, creating somewhat of a mess every time the driver tried to use them. The shoulder belt was a separate piece from the lap belt.

1967 – Although the outboard belt had a retractor to keep it out of the way when not in use, it still got caught in the seat when it was tilted forward. A change to the winding mechanism helped alleviate this problem.

**C3 Corvette Seat Belts**

1968-1971 – Lap belts were designed without retractors for this period, while the shoulder belts did have retractors.

1969 – A tongue was added to the center bottom of the seat, moving the lap belt out of the way for entering and exiting the Corvette.

1968-1969 – Shoulder belts looped around the seat and were held in place by the headrest or the outboard side of the seat. They fit into a bracket that latched into the inboard lap belt buckle, securing the entire seat belt together.

1969 – A sheath was added for the inbound belt instead of the tongue to give it more stability and keep it out of the way when not in use.

1970 – High back seats allowed for a design that incorporated the shoulder belts into the seat. Shoulder belts became standard in all Coupes at this time.

1972 – The lap belt retractor was positioned under the seat.

1972-1975 – On Convertibles, the shoulder belt came through the seat and hooked into the lap belt. This was because there was no B Pillar.
1974-1977 – On Coupes, the retractor was positioned under the seat for lap belts and behind the seat for shoulder belts. The shoulder belt came out of the B Pillar. A tongue connected the shoulder and lap belts so they buckled together.

1978 – 3-point seat belts were first used in the Corvette. The lap belt was bolted to the outboard frame of the car, the shoulder belt creates a loop and a sliding tongue latches into the buckle on the inboard side. The retractor was located in the B Pillar, making the belt much easier to use.

C4 Corvette Seat Belts

1984-1996 – Few changes were made once the 3-point seat belt came into use. C4 Corvette seat belts featured dual retractors, both positioned in the lower quarter trim panel/sill area of the vehicle. Belts were manufactured of nine panel webbing.

C5 Corvette Seat Belts

1997-2004 – With the addition of the air bag, an inertia switch was incorporated into the Corvette seat belt restraint system. The air bag will not function without the seat belt being engaged, avoiding potential injury if the driver would be too close to the air bag when it deploys. C5 Corvette seat belts featured dual retractors. The shoulder belt retractor was located in the upper quarter trim panel and the lap belt retractor was located at the rear of the sill next to the seat. Belts were manufactured of nine panel webbing.

C6 Corvette Seat Belts

2005-2013 – C6 Seat belt restraint system included the same air bag/supplemental restraint system originally release on the C5 model. One major between the C5 and C6 model seat belts was the C6 passenger restraint system utilized a single retractor mechanism, compared to the two used on C5 models. The single retractor was attached to the shoulder belt and located in the upper rear quarter trim panel. Belts were manufactured of nine panel webbing like prior C4 and C5 models.

C7 Corvette Seat Belts

2014-2015 – Seventh Generation Corvette Stingray seat belt restraint system are nearly identical the design found on C6 models. C7 model seat belts feature the same single retractor design and mounting locations as the C6 model. Belts are also manufactured of the same nine panel webbing and available in black only.

Webbing is the part of the seat belt in contact with the passenger that receives and softens the shock of an impact. It is made of polyester and woven from about 300 warp strands and one weft strand. The width of the webbing is about 48mm and has a tensile strength sufficient to support approximately three metric tons.
Daily Driver Or Show Stopper – Quality Matters

At Mid America Motorworks, we know that owning a Corvette is all about options! Those options apply to seat belts as well.

For restorations, choose a direct replacement of original equipment, designed to reproduce the OE set belt assemblies and interior colors very closely. Retro Belt USA Seat Belt Kits conform to FMVSS 209 and 302 government specifications and are manufactured under the strictest quality standards.

For daily drivers or racers that don’t need to look factory-correct, replacement seat belts do the trick. In some cases, you can even choose the webbing color to complement your interior.

If your budget doesn’t allow for OE-style or color-matching seat belts, there are basic black Seat Belt Sets that will keep you safe behind the wheel. They provide the same quality, safety and legal compliance as other belts and cost much less than OE replacements.

Seat Belt Extras

Once your worn or faulty seat belts have been replaced, you can customize your safety! Products are available to give you added comfort or better driving performance.

Seat Belt Pads and Cushions are designed to relieve uncomfortable rubbing and chaffing that can occur during long road trips. They also add a personal touch, with Corvette script or logos.

Seat Belt Locks are available for the latest generations of Corvettes, giving your daily driver the “racing harness tight” feel to prevent you from sliding around in your seat.

While the 3-point style is the most commonly used in daily drivers, racing seat belts often use 4- to 6-point belts. Some avid race enthusiasts have even carried that style over to their daily driver.