

# Seatbelt Failure Accident Lawyer in California

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No safety mechanism is more critical to drivers and passengers than a working seatbelt. But a malfunctioning seatbelt can be treacherous. Seatbelt failure can lead to injury and even death. Many makers have recalled cars over seatbelt flaws, yet problems continue. When seatbelts fail, both [product liability](#) and personal injury claims arise. If you've been injured in a car accident because of a seatbelt malfunction, you'll want the facts examined by a [California car accident lawyer](#) experienced in handling these overlapping issues. Legal expertise enables the correct determination of claims to file.

**Protect your legal rights and interests promptly; schedule a consultation with Johnson Attorneys Group at 1.800.208.3538 for a preliminary consultation at no cost to you.**

## Types of Seatbelt Failure

How can a seatbelt fail to properly restrain a driver or passenger? Two major reasons: design defects, or a flawed manufacturing process. Malfunctions occur under a wide range of circumstances. Below, we summarize the most common scenarios.

- **Inertial Unlatching:** In some accidents, an unbelted, injured driver or passenger insists that the safety belts were on at the time of the incident. Yet people were thrown from the car or found without seatbelts on inside it. What happened to their seatbelts during the crash? It's possible that an elbow or other body part hit and depressed the seatbelt release. Can the jolt of a crash itself pop a seatbelt and unlatch it? Auto makers claim that seatbelts never allow for the latch plate to pop from the buckle. But testing has shown that the force of a collision can occasionally cause the buckle button to depress, disconnecting the latch plate. Millions of cars' seatbelt systems have a known susceptibility to such force—called **inertial**
- **False Latching:** What if a belt seems to be latched, but isn't? The occupant can then become unrestrained and even thrown from the car during a crash—due to **false latching**. In this case, the seatbelt clicks and feels secure, but it's not fully locked. Even minor force can cause a falsely latched buckle to pop open. In either case, the occupant claims to have taken proper initial action, by buckling up. But the police report may describe the person as unrestrained. Could this person have a case? Definitely. Almost a million vehicles were recalled for defective seatbelts in one case [this season](#). Historically, the auto parts supplier Takata Corp. had a seatbelt recall that became one of the biggest recalls in automotive history. Defective latches were installed in certain Hondas, Nissans, Subaru's, Suzuki's, Isuzu's, Mitsubishi's, Mazda's, Dodges, Fords, Chryslers, and GM cars, then [recalled in the millions](#).
- **Retractor Failure:** The seatbelt retractor causes the locking effect of the seatbelt material. It prompts the belts to fix their positions and to snugly hold the torsos of drivers and passengers. If a seatbelt is not taut, and there is too much slack between the material and an occupant's body, safety can be lost. An accident now becomes a catastrophe. Instead of a snugly fitted shoulder belt holding the occupant safely in the seat, what happens is a slam into the steering wheel or windshield. This problem can also implicate faulty software. In 2016, [GM recalled](#) more than 4 million cars and trucks due to a software glitch. The company examined a crash involving a 2014 Chevrolet Silverado pickup, in which certain driver's airbag and seatbelt equipment, called pretensioners, failed to deploy. Pretensioners tighten up any slack in the seatbelt in case of a crash. Pretensioners are so important because an accident can damage the seats or crush the car frame. If the frame of the car is crushed enough, the seatbelts can't work optimally. In many accidents, people are hurt or killed on account of combined vehicle failures, such as the roof crushing and failure of the seatbelts to achieve their purpose.
- **Seatbelt System Failure:** Recent recalls include the 2016 recall affecting 4 million [Nissan cars](#). The defect involved a sensor in some cars, and a front passenger seatbelt bracket defect in others. There have even been cases of collisions in which belt material was found ripped apart. The material is designed to withstand the forces of a crash. So in these cases, investigators look for a fabric

manufacturing defect. Or the rip could be the result of sharp edges of some part of the car having cut through the belt. The pertinent question becomes whether there is another defect to look for in the car.

- **Lap-Only, Door-Mounted, and Other Risky Seatbelt Systems:** Many dangers can exist in door-mounted systems. People have been ejected when a car door breaks open in a collision. Severe spinal injuries have resulted because an automatic shoulder belt was in place yet the manual lap belt was not. Less common today are injuries from lap-only seatbelts. Backseat shoulder belts became standard from the late 1980s. Earlier car models were leaving passengers vulnerable to severe head, [spinal](#), or internal injuries.



## Signs of Seatbelt Failure

Here are common indicators that lead people to seek a seatbelt failure accident lawyer in California.

- Different levels of injury to the car's occupants, particularly when one person is seriously injured but others can "walk away" from the crash scene.
- Injuries to car occupants who insist they had buckled up, yet were found without seatbelts on. This may be a sign of inertial unlatching or false
- Slack in the safety belt, visible when an injured person is recovered from the car
- The driver or front-seat passenger hits the windshield. This can signal excess slack, failure of the belt to retract, or a pretensioner
- Serious injury to a belted driver or passenger, but light apparent damage to the car. For example, the car rolls over, looks minimally damaged, yet a belted occupant has suffered serious head or neck
- Serious injuries in a minor accident. A good seatbelt and airbag system should physically protect people in such a collision
- Torn off or ripped seatbelt materials. This could point to a seatbelt defect or other malfunctioning car

**Important:** Preserve the car and its safety systems as they are found upon crashing. Seatbelt failures are hard to prove without physical evidence.

## **Who is Liable for Seat Belt Failure?**

First, there are the car makers. Often, it is prudent to also seek compensation from the equipment manufacturers who supplied the auto company with the safety systems in their cars and trucks. Ultimately, any parties involved in designing, making, and marketing a defective seatbelt system can be a party in shared liability for the harm you or your loved ones have suffered.

If you or someone you care about has been seriously injured in a car accident in California due to a seatbelt failure, you need a lawyer with expertise in handling these complex cases. Contact Johnson Attorneys Group to receive the strong and thorough legal representation you need.

## **Get Experienced Legal Representation for Those Injured Due to a Seatbelt Failure in California**

Call Johnson Attorneys Group and have us assist you now: 800-208-3538. Or begin your free consultation [on our website](#), 24/7. Because quick, thorough legal attention will make or break your eligibility for the highest compensation possible under the law.