

WHEELCHAIR SAFETY IN TRANSIT

When brakes are applied quickly or, worse yet, your vehicle is involved in a collision, anything or anyone not properly secured becomes a projectile!

If a mobility device isn't properly secured, and the vehicle comes to a sudden stop, both the wheelchair and its passenger will be thrown. Although this may seem obvious, just in the last short while, our office has been made aware of several instances in New Brunswick where persons using mobility aids traveling in accessible vehicles have not been properly secured.

Failure to properly secure a wheelchair or scooter will propel its passenger with the combined weight of their mobility device and the person's weight multiplied by the speed the vehicle is travelling. At best, the person may only fall out of their mobility device; not a pleasant experience for anyone let alone someone with a disability. At worst ...

DO'S & DON'TS

Don't recline the wheel chair; this could cause the person to "sub marine" slide out of the seat and shoulder belt.

Don't block or impede the person's breathing; regardless of how well secured the passenger or wheelchair are strapped in, if their breathing is restricted it makes for a potentially dangerous, let alone uncomfortable, journey.

Never run a seat belt or tie down over arm rests or objects that are attached to the wheelchair.

In the absence of securement points on a wheel chair, fasten the tie downs only to welded junctions on the mobility device, or to other structural areas where the frame is fastened together with hardened steel bolts indicated by 6 raised bumps.

Do not attach tie downs to moving or adjustable parts such as wheels or leg rests. As moving parts on a wheelchair or scooter are not designed to withstand the force of an accelerating object, any fastened tether will be the first point of failure.

Always insure that the passenger is using a seat belt and shoulder strap properly. These safety devices can cause considerable harm if they are fastened over soft tissue.

Always use the appropriate tie downs and insure that they are secured based on the manufacturer's directions.

Be certain that passengers are facing forward. Wheelchairs, seat belts and tie downs are designed to work with the passenger facing forward.

Remove any attachments such as tray-tables while in transport. These can easily be dislodged and quickly harm other occupants of the vehicle should a sudden stop occur.



1 Used with permission of the University of Michigan

