

# Risk Assessment for Passengers with Special Needs:

To do a risk assessment for a passenger with special needs I would consider the following issues in order to address the problem.

## ***Does the passenger require additional postural support to maintain a good upright position when seated?***

The passenger may not have enough muscle tone to maintain a good postural position when sitting on a vehicle seat.

If so would a disabled person's restraint help?

The vehicle safety belt is usually an "inertia system" and can gradually slacken with the pressure of the special needs passenger and the motion of the vehicle to allow the passenger to slip over to one side or even submerge downwards wearing the belt.

A disabled person's restraint being of a static nature and not an inertia system would offer additional postural support when worn in conjunction with the safety belt over it.

## ***Is the passenger sitting too low in the seating?***

### ***Is the diagonal strap chaffing or causing discomfort to the passenger in any way?***

If the passenger is not tall enough, a booster cushion could assist the matter by enabling them to sit in a higher position.

Where there is chaffing an accessory which angles the shoulder strap away from the neck may resolve the problem (e.g. Sunshine Kids Sure Fix, seat belt adjuster).

Although these products are usually manufactured for children's use they may help small adults as well.

Comfort sleeves may be enough to prevent any chaffing and will make the belt generally more comfortable to wear.

A supportive harness/special needs restraint may assist the passenger to sit in a more upright position which would alleviate the problem.

## ***Does the passenger suffer from any kind of fit or seizure?***

If a passenger suffers from any kind of seizures they may need to be quickly released from a safety or disabled persons restraint.

In these circumstances we would recommend the use of a quick press release buckle rather than the steel safety buckle (which is more complicated to open).

However, if there is a high risk involved where the passenger who has seizures also has severe challenging behaviour and needs to be fitted in a more secure special needs harness with an alternative buckle mechanism to the quick press release type, it is strongly recommended that a Safety Knife Webbing Cutter (ref. SK) is kept in the vehicle for use in the event of an emergency.

***Is the passenger travelling in a disabled person's restraint but is still not maintaining a suitable and comfortable upright sitting position?***

To achieve the ultimate postural support for the patient it is very important to ensure that the passenger is sitting in the most upright position as possible.

Their bottom should be up against the seat back and their shoulders held back **BEFORE** fitting the harness to them.

If they start off in a "slumped" position to begin with it will impede the supportive harness from offering its full potential in maintaining the required postural support.

This could cause the passenger some discomfort during the course of their journey.

Ensure that the harness is suitable for the seating, fitted correctly and that all the straps are securely tight, but comfortable.

***Are regular inspections, reviews and general maintenance being carried out?***

It is most important that harnesses are regularly checked for any wear and tear, have been fitted and adjusted correctly in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and are still fulfilling the requirements for the user.

It is very important that they are maintained and cleaned in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Harnesses should be replaced where necessary.

If the passenger's needs have changed since providing the harness, it may no longer be fulfilling their requirements. It is possible that a different design or certain accessories need to be selected which are more suitable for this user.

Certain accessories or straps which can assist in the fitting of a harness may get removed. For example a Chest Strap which is needed to hold the shoulder straps into position or prevent the passenger with challenging behavior from maneuvering out of them.

It is most important that the Fitting Instructions and the General Maintenance documents are kept with each harness for correct identification and care of the equipment.

When goods are taken from stores they should be returned together with the relative documentation so that the appropriate information stays with the goods.

NB:

Copies of these instructions are always available on request from Crelling Harnesses and are also available for downloading from our website at [www.crelling.com](http://www.crelling.com)

Ensure that the harness is suitable for the seating and fitted correctly and that all the straps are securely fitted and are tight yet comfortable.

If harnesses are incorrectly fitted they may not function correctly and may not be covered under warranty.

Ensure that the harness design has not been modified or tampered with in any way which might interfere with the performance of the harness.

*Does the passenger have challenging behaviour?*

*Are they a potential escapologist and likely to unfasten the buckles or loosen the safety belt provided in order to get out of the safety restraint and if so what could be the possible result?*

*Would this be a danger to themselves, other passengers and the driver of the vehicle as well as other vehicles on the road/general public?*

*Could a secondary harness help contain this person in their seat?*

*Does the passenger have “inquisitive fingers” and unfastens the safety belt buckle, but remains seated.*

*If so, what measures can be taken to prevent the removal of the safety belt?*

#### ***Possible Solutions:-***

If the passenger presses the safety buckle to open it, a “Buckle Guard” (protective plastic cover) clipped onto the belt buckle could resolve the problem.

However in many cases of challenging behavior it is highly possible that if a buckle guard was fitted the passenger would just loosen the inertia belt instead of tackling the buckle.

A disabled person’s restraint may help to retain the passenger or potential escapologist in their seat when used in conjunction with the safety belt over it and Buckle Guard.

Crelling Harnesses make a range of harnesses in various different designs to meet the needs of passengers with special needs.

All our harnesses are static belts and do not extend like an inertia belt does on a reel.

The straps are designed to be fully adjustable to fit the passenger securely to meet their individual needs.

Sizes are available for both children and adults.

All of the range offer extra postural support, but some are also suitable for those with learning difficulties and/or challenging behaviour.

These harnesses can have an alternative fastening to the conventional instant quick release buckle where necessary. Being of a static nature, they can hold the occupant in a more secure position to maintain them in a good upright sitting position whilst seated when travelling.

NB: When a Crelling harness is worn with a steel safety buckle fitted we strongly recommend that a **safety belt cutter** is held in the vehicle so that in the event of an accident, the person attending the passenger who may not be familiar with this buckle, can access the safety cutter to release them.

We do supply these cutters if required.

**Please note that Crelling Harnesses are not classed as safety harnesses and are intended for meeting the requirements of special needs passengers only.**

**It is important that the existing safety belt provided in the vehicle should be worn over the top of the Crelling Harness.**

However, there are exceptions where the safety belt cannot be worn for medical reasons whereas a disabled person's restraint may be suitable for the patient's requirements. Although a disabled person's restraint may not withstand the same impact as a safety harness would, it may play a strong part in reducing the outcome of an accident by offering some protection rather than the passenger travelling without any restraint at all.

A certificate of exemption would need to be issued from the patient's G.P. or Consultant and it would be advisable for them to contact their insurance company regarding this matter to ensure that would be covered in the event of an accident.

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