

# Ride Safe

Information to help you travel more safely  
in motor vehicles while seated in your wheelchair



[wc-transportation-safety.umtri.umich.edu](http://wc-transportation-safety.umtri.umich.edu)

**W**hen traveling in a motor vehicle, it is generally safest for wheelchair users to transfer to a vehicle seat and use the vehicle seatbelt system or a child safety seat that complies with federal safety standards. The wheelchair should then be stored and secured in the vehicle.

If transferring is not feasible or practical, it is very important to secure the wheelchair to the vehicle facing forward and to use crash-tested seatbelts for the wheelchair-seated rider.



## START WITH THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

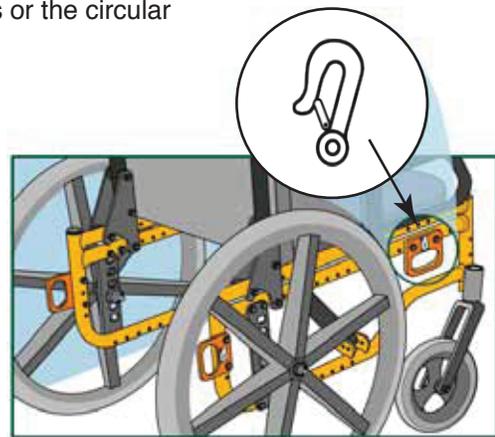
### The Wheelchair

▼ It is best if you have a wheelchair that has been designed and tested for use as a seat in motor vehicles, often referred to as a **WC19 wheelchair**.

These wheelchairs comply with ANSI/RESNA WC19, a voluntary standard developed by safety and rehabilitation experts. Wheelchairs that meet the requirements of the WC19 standard will be labeled with words or the circular logo shown.

▼ Most importantly, a WC19 wheelchair has four, crash-tested securement points where tiedown straps and hooks can be easily attached. These points are clearly marked with a hook symbol.

▼ If a WC19 wheelchair is not available, the next best choice is a wheelchair with an accessible metal frame where tiedown straps and hooks can be attached at frame junctions.



### The Wheelchair Tiedown and Occupant Restraint System (WTORS)



▼ It is important to use a complete WTORS to secure the wheelchair and provide the wheelchair occupant with a properly fitting lap and shoulder belt system.

▼ **Always use a WTORS that has been crash tested and labeled as complying with ANSI/RESNA WC18**, a voluntary standard developed by safety and rehabilitation experts. The most common type of wheelchair tiedown uses four straps to secure the wheelchair to the vehicle. Although it requires someone other than the wheelchair rider to secure and release the wheelchair, this tiedown can secure a wide range of WC19 and non-WC19 wheelchairs.

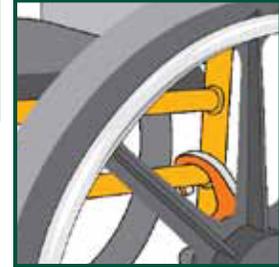
▼ To protect the rider during a crash or sudden braking, a seatbelt system with **both** lap and shoulder belts must be used. This will decrease the likelihood of injury caused by contact with the vehicle interior.

# 2

## SECURE THE WHEELCHAIR

### Four-Point Tiedowns

- ▼ Always position the wheelchair and rider facing forward in the vehicle.
- ▼ When securing a WC19 wheelchair, attach the four tiedown straps or hooks to the securement points provided on the wheelchair. Tighten the straps to remove all slack.
- ▼ If you do not have a WC19 wheelchair, it is best to attach the tiedown hooks or straps to welded junctions of the frame or to other structural areas where the frame is fastened together with hardened steel bolts -- often indicated by six raised lines or bumps on the bolt head.



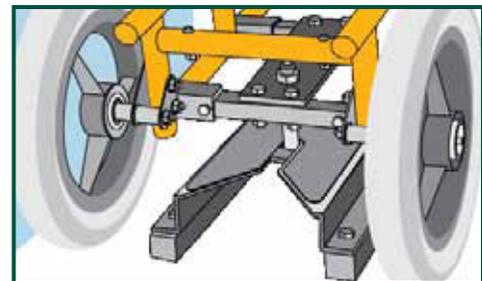
▼ **Do not attach tiedowns to adjustable, moving, or removable parts of the wheelchair such as arm supports, foot supports, and wheels.**



- ▼ When securing non-WC19 wheelchairs, choose structural securement points as close to the seat surface as possible to provide greater wheelchair stability during travel. It is best if the rear securement points are high enough to result in angles of the rear tiedown straps between 30 and 45 degrees to the horizontal.
- ▼ If you have a non-WC19 wheelchair with a tilt seat, make sure to attach both the front and rear straps to either the seat frame or to the base frame. Mixing wheelchair securement points between the seat and base can result in the tiedown straps becoming slack if the angle of the seat changes during a crash.
- ▼ It is best if floor anchor points for rear tiedown straps are located directly behind the rear securement points on the wheelchair. If possible, the front tiedown straps should anchor to the floor at points that are spaced wider than the wheelchair to increase stability during travel.

### Other Methods of Wheelchair Securement

▼ In some cases, wheelchairs can also be secured using a docking tiedown device. This method is mostly used in private vehicles since it requires added adaptor hardware on the wheelchair frame that will engage with the docking tiedown device in the vehicle. Docking securement devices allow the wheelchair rider to secure and release the wheelchair without assistance.



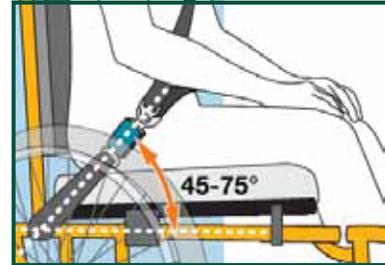
- ▼ If you plan to secure your wheelchair with a docking tiedown device, you should check with the WTORS or wheelchair manufacturer to ensure that your wheelchair model has been successfully crash tested with their system.
- ▼ Clamp-type securement devices are not recommended since they do not provide effective wheelchair securement in frontal crash testing.

# 3

## PROTECT THE WHEELCHAIR RIDER

▼ In addition to securing the wheelchair, **it is very important to provide effective restraint for the wheelchair user with a crash-tested lap and shoulder belt or with a child restraint harness.** Postural support belts attached to the wheelchair are **not** strong enough to withstand crash forces and are usually not positioned correctly to protect the person safely in a crash.

▼ The lap belt should be placed low across the front of the pelvis on the upper thighs, not on the abdomen. When possible, the lap belt should be angled between 45 and 75 degrees to the horizontal when viewed from the side. Some wheelchair features, like armrests, can interfere with good belt fit. To avoid placing the lap belt over the armrest and to keep the lap belt low on the pelvis, it may be necessary to insert the belt between the armrest and the seatback, or through openings between the backrest and seat.



▼ A diagonal shoulder belt should cross the middle of the shoulder and the center of the chest, and should connect to the lap belt near the hip of the wheelchair rider. The upper shoulder-belt anchor point or guide should be anchored above and behind the top of the occupant's shoulder, so that the belt is in good contact with the shoulder and chest while traveling.

▼ Newer WC19 wheelchairs offer the option of a crash-tested lap belt that is anchored to the wheelchair frame. If the wheelchair has an onboard crash-tested lap belt, complete the belt system by attaching the lower end of a shoulder belt to the lap belt. Crash-tested wheelchair-anchored lap belts will be labeled to indicate that they comply with WC19.

### Other Important Points

- Read and follow all manufacturers' instructions.
- It is best to ride with the wheelchair backrest positioned at an angle of 30 degrees or less to the vertical. If a greater recline angle is needed, the shoulder belt anchor point should be moved rearward along the vehicle sidewall so the belt maintains contact with the rider's shoulder and chest.
- Maximize the clear space around the rider to reduce the possibility of contact with vehicle components and other passengers in a crash. Cover rigid vehicle components that are close to the rider with dense padding.
- Check wheelchair and WTORS equipment regularly and replace worn components. If involved in a vehicle crash, check with the manufacturer to determine if the equipment needs to be replaced. Keep WTORS anchorage track free of debris.
- If possible, remove hard trays and secure them in the vehicle to reduce the chance of rider injury from contact with the tray. Consider the use of foam trays instead of rigid trays during transit. If it is not possible to remove a hard tray, place dense padding between the rider and the edge of the tray and make sure that the tray is securely attached to the wheelchair so it will not break loose and cause injury to other occupants in a crash.
- A properly positioned headrest may help protect the neck in a rear impact.
- If it is necessary to use a head and neck support during travel, choose a soft, light, neck collar because stiff collars and head straps are more likely to cause neck injury in a crash. The soft collar should not be attached to the seating system.
- Secure medical and other equipment to the wheelchair or vehicle to prevent it from breaking loose and causing injuries in a crash.
- Seating systems can be crashed tested to ANSI/RESNA WC20 and then used with a WC19-compliant frame to create a crashworthy wheelchair.

# RESOURCES

## Organizations

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University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute  
[www.umtri.umich.edu](http://www.umtri.umich.edu)  
[wc-transportation-safety.umtri.umich.edu](http://wc-transportation-safety.umtri.umich.edu)

RESNA Rehabilitation Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America  
[www.resna.org](http://www.resna.org)

### Wheelchair and Seating Manufacturers (Ask for Products that have been Successfully Tested to WC19 and/or WC20)

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ADI - Accessible Designs, Inc.  
[adirides.com](http://adirides.com); 888-684-2234

Amylior Inc.  
[www.amysystems.com](http://www.amysystems.com); 888-453-0311

Bergeron Health Care  
[www.specialtomato.com](http://www.specialtomato.com); 866-529-8407

Broda Seating  
[www.brodaseating.com](http://www.brodaseating.com); 844-552-7632

The Comfort Company  
[www.comfortcompany.com](http://www.comfortcompany.com); 800-564-9248

Convaid / R82  
[www.convaid.com](http://www.convaid.com); 844-876-6245

Drive Medical / Inspired by Drive  
[www.drivemedical.com](http://www.drivemedical.com); 877-224-0946  
[www.inspiredbydrive.com](http://www.inspiredbydrive.com); 800-454-6612

Dynamic Health Care Solutions  
[www.dynamichcs.com](http://www.dynamichcs.com); 866-875-2877

Eurovema AB  
[www.eurovema.se](http://www.eurovema.se); +46-371-390-100

Freedom Designs  
[www.freedomdesigns.com](http://www.freedomdesigns.com); 800-331-8551

Gunnell  
[www.gunnell-inc.com](http://www.gunnell-inc.com); 800-551-0055

Harris Medical LLC  
[Eztransportchair.com](http://Eztransportchair.com); 954-609-4214

Hoggi  
[www.hoggi.de](http://www.hoggi.de); +49 2623 92499-0  
or 877-767-9462

Icon Wheelchairs, Inc.  
[www.iconwheelchairs.com](http://www.iconwheelchairs.com); 888-461-5759

Innovative Products  
[www.mobility4kids.com](http://www.mobility4kids.com); 800-950-5185

Invacare  
[www.invacare.com](http://www.invacare.com); 800-333-6900

Ki Mobility  
[www.kimobility.com](http://www.kimobility.com); 800-981-1540

Leggero, LLC  
[leggero.us](http://leggero.us); 844-503-KIDS (5437)

Maple Leaf Wheelchair  
[www.mapleleafwheelchair.ca](http://www.mapleleafwheelchair.ca); 905-564-2250

Medifab / Spex  
[www.spexseating.com](http://www.spexseating.com); +64 3 307 9790

Merits Health Products, Inc.  
[meritshealth.com](http://meritshealth.com); 800-963-7487

Metalcraft Industries  
[www.metalcraft-industries.com](http://www.metalcraft-industries.com); 888-399-3232

Motion Composites  
[www.motioncomposites.com](http://www.motioncomposites.com); 866-650-6555

Motion Concepts  
[www.motionconcepts.com](http://www.motionconcepts.com); 888-433-6818

NuTec Rehab  
[www.nutecrehab.com](http://www.nutecrehab.com); 888-448-0093

Permobil / TiLite / ROHO  
[www.permobil.com](http://www.permobil.com); 800-736-0925

Pride Mobility Products Corp.  
[www.pridemobility.com](http://www.pridemobility.com); 800-800-8586

Product Design Group  
[www.pdgmobility.com](http://www.pdgmobility.com); 888-858-4422

Rolapal Ltd  
[www.rolapal.co.nz](http://www.rolapal.co.nz); +64 9 634 2300

Stealth Products  
[www.stealthproducts.com](http://www.stealthproducts.com); 800-965-9229

Sunrise Medical  
[www.sunrisemedical.com](http://www.sunrisemedical.com); 800-333-4000

Therafin Corporation  
[www.therafin.com](http://www.therafin.com); 800-843-7234

V-Trak  
[www.v-trak.com](http://www.v-trak.com); 866-632-1755

Varilite  
[www.varilite.com](http://www.varilite.com); 800-827-4548

WHILL, Inc.  
[whill.us](http://whill.us); 844-699-4455

XPIore Mobility  
[www.xploremobility.com](http://www.xploremobility.com); 888-575-9225



## Wheelchair Tiedown and Occupant Restraint Manufacturers (Ask for Products that Comply with WC18)

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### B&D Independence

bdindependence.com; 618-262-7117

### EZ-Lock

www.ezlock.net; 225-214-4620

### New Haven

www.safehaven-usa.com; 800-421-8700

### Orthosafe

www.orthosafe.com; 609-587-9444

### Q'Straint

www.qstraint.com; 800-987-9987

### SureLok

www.sure-lok.com; 866-787-3565

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Anchor point:** The location on a vehicle, wheelchair, or wheelchair tiedown where a belt-restraint or wheelchair-tiedown anchorage is attached.

**ANSI/RESNA WC18 (SECTION 18 RESNA WC-4:2017):** A voluntary standard for WTORS.

NOTE: ISO 10542 is an international standard that is comparable with WC18.

**ANSI/RESNA WC19 (SECTION 19 RESNA WC-4:2017):** A voluntary standard for wheelchairs designed for use as a seat when traveling in a motor vehicle.

NOTE: ISO 7176-19 is an international wheelchair standard that is comparable with WC19.

**ANSI/RESNA WC20 (SECTION 20 RESNA WC-4:2017):** A voluntary standard for wheelchair seating systems designed or used as part of a wheelchair when traveling in a motor vehicle.

NOTE: ISO 16840-4 is an international wheelchair standard that is comparable with WC20.

**SAE Recommended Practice J2249:** A Society of Automotive Engineers Recommended Practice for WTORS that has been replaced by ANSI/RESNA WC18.

NOTE: WC18 is an enhanced version of this standard and ISO 10542 is a similar international standard.

**Belt:** A length of energy-absorbing webbing material used in occupant restraint systems.

**Docking tiedown:** A method for securing wheelchairs where portions of the wheelchair frame, or add-on brackets fastened to the wheelchair frame, engage with a securement device anchored to the vehicle.

**Four-point strap-type tiedown:** A method for securing a wheelchair where four straps are attached to the wheelchair at four separate securement points and attached to the vehicle at four separate anchor points.

**Occupant restraint:** A system or device designed to protect a motor vehicle occupant in a crash by keeping them in the seat and minimizing contact with objects inside or outside the vehicle.

**Postural support:** A padded component and/or belt used to help maintain a person in a desired position during normal wheelchair use. In general postural supports are **not** designed to provide effective occupant restraint in a motor vehicle crash.

**Securement points:** Specific structural points on the wheelchair base or seat frame that are designed for attachment of wheelchair tiedown straps.

**Strap:** A length of webbing material used in wheelchair tiedown systems.

**WC19 wheelchair:** A crash-tested wheelchair with four clearly identified securement points that meets ANSI/RESNA WC19.

**WC20 seating system:** A crash-tested seating system and its attachment hardware that meets ANSI/RESNA WC20 and is used with a WC19 compliant frame to create a crashworthy wheelchair.

**Wheelchair tiedown and occupant-restraint system (WTORS):** A complete system for securing the occupied wheelchair and a belt-type restraint system for limiting occupant movement in a motor vehicle crash.

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