

# STRETCH

YOUR DOLLAR



## Seatbelts

According to research conducted by the National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration (NHTSA), seatbelts save approximately 13,000 lives in the United States each year. While seatbelts appear to be just a piece of fabric, they can be the difference between life or death in a serious car collision.

A typical seatbelt consists of a lap belt, which rests over your pelvis, and a shoulder belt, which extends across your chest. The two belt sections are firmly secured to the frame of the car in order to hold passengers in their seats. Since the belts extend across a wide section of your body, the force isn't concentrated in a small area, so it isn't able to do as much damage.

In a typical seatbelt system, the belt webbing is connected to a retractor mechanism. The central element in the retractor is a spool, which is attached to one end of the webbing. Inside the retractor, a spring applies a rotation force, or torque, to the spool. This works to rotate the spool so it winds up any loose webbing. When the webbing is pulled out, the spool rotates counter-clockwise, which turns the

attached spring in the same direction. Effectively, the rotating spool works to untwist the spring. The spring wants to return to its original shape, so it resists this twisting motion. If the webbing is released, the spring will tighten up, rotating the spool clockwise until there is no more slack in the belt.

There is no doubt that seatbelts, when worn properly, have helped save countless lives in car accidents. According to the NHTSA, seatbelts reduce the risk of death for a front seat car occupant by about 50 percent. Because of this, seatbelts are one of the most important features of motor vehicles and should be worn whenever driving.



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