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## AGRICULTURE

# Seatbelts were not worn in recent rollover fatalities

Three deaths in recent years involving people being thrown from side-by-side vehicles are a timely reminder of how important seatbelts are when vehicles roll. Seatbelts are the last line of protection when everything else goes wrong and should be worn according to vehicle manufacturer instructions.

### Incident one

A side-by-side which was following the fence line on the crown of a hill lost control when it went over a slight drop. The driver, who was not wearing a fitted seatbelt, died when he was thrown out of and under vehicle.

The accident occurred on a relatively clear day with no adverse weather or driving conditions. The vehicle cannot exceed 15kmph if the driver's seatbelt is undone. However, this safety feature was bypassed by the seatbelt being fastening behind the seat out of the way.



**FIGURE 1:** The vehicle roll cage was intact and the vehicle was driveable after the incident

## Incident two

A side-by-side followed another vehicle down a reasonably well maintained farm track when it rolled. Neither driver nor passenger had a seatbelt on, despite a farm rule to wear one. They were both thrown from the vehicle which then hit and killed the driver.

The passenger has been unable to advise on the cause of the rollover. The coroner concluded it likely that the vehicle rolled after it hit a wheel rut or pothole while travelling at excessive speed for the conditions.



**FIGURE 2:** The vehicle roll cage remained intact

## Incident three

Two men were in a side-by-side driving up an access track. The vehicle rode up the bank and flipped backwards when the driver lost control after hitting an exposed rock. Both men were unrestrained. The driver managed to get out as the vehicle flipped. However, the passenger was thrown from the vehicle as it went down the hill and died at the scene from head injuries.

## Observation

Roll cages on side by sides are designed to provide a protective space during rollover. In each of the above incidents, the roll cages retained their shape and protected this space.

Wearing a seatbelt driving or as the passenger will stop you from falling or being thrown out of the vehicle if you were to crash.

For more information on correct use of seatbelts in farm vehicles and guidance on general safety in farm vehicle visit our website: [worksafe.govt.nz](https://worksafe.govt.nz)