

Myths and facts about wearing automobile safety belts

MYTH: In a crash it is almost always safer to be thrown out of the car.

FACT: The chances of being fatally injured are almost 25 times greater if you're thrown from the car than if you're safely buckled in your seat. If you aren't wearing your safety belt you could be:

- thrown through the windshield
- thrown into trees, rocks, or other cars
- scraped along the ground or pavement
- run over by your own or another car

MYTH: The chances of being in an accident are slim.

FACT: Everyone can expect to be in a crash once every 10 years. For one out of every 20 people it will be a serious crash. For one out of every 60 children born today it will be fatal.

MYTH: The use of a seat belt can cause more serious injuries during a crash than if the driver were not belted.

FACT: In a crash, a safety belt may produce injuries if it is not worn properly. But, if the occupant is tossed around or ejected from the vehicle they are likely to sustain much more serious injuries or death, and could injure others in the vehicle.

The problem of misuse typically takes on one of three forms: lap belts are worn across the abdomen rather than low on the thighs, with the potential for serious abdominal or spinal injuries; shoulder belts are worn under the arm resulting in excessive pressure on the chest and internal organs in the event of a crash; and seat belts are worn with too much slack, rather than snugly to prevent unnecessary movement.

MYTH: If an individual chooses not to wear a seat belt, that individual is only endangering their own safety.

FACT: If unbelted during a crash the vehicle occupant may be thrown into other people in the car. One out of four serious injuries occurring to passengers of motor vehicles is caused by people being thrown into each other. One of the more common causes of death and injury to children in automobile crashes is being crushed by adults who are not wearing safety belts.

Being belted also gives the driver an improved chance of controlling his or her vehicle during an accident, thereby reducing the risk of causing harm to others.

MYTH: Safety belts are not necessary when taking short trips at slow speeds.

FACT: Three out of four crashes occur within 40 km (25 miles) of home. Eighty per cent of deaths and serious injury occur in cars travelling under 65 km/h.

MYTH: It is not necessary for good drivers to use safety belts.

FACT: No matter how good a driver you may be, you can't control the other car. Mechanical failure, bad driving and poor judgment may cause another car to involve you in an accident.

MYTH: In a burning or submerged car, occupants can be trapped by their safety belts.

FACT: Less than one-half of one per cent of all injury-producing collisions involve fire or submersion. If such an accident does occur, a safety belt can save your life by keeping you unhurt, alert and

able to escape quickly.

MYTH: Pregnant women should not wear safety belts.

FACT: The greatest cause of fetal death in auto accidents is the death of the mother so her survival must be the first priority. A lap belt worn below the "bulge" and a snug shoulder belt above will give the mother and fetus a better

chance of survival.

MYTH: An adult's arms provide the best protection for a very small baby.

FACT: In tests, male and female volunteers were belted into vehicle seats. Each held an 8 kg (17 lb) dummy representing the size and weight of a six-month-old baby. They were then tested for their ability to clasp the infant dummy

against varying forces. Even simulating forces of a 24 km/h (15 m.p.h.) impact not one of the volunteers could hold onto the "baby." No matter how strong you are or how much warning you have, you cannot hold onto the baby in a crash.

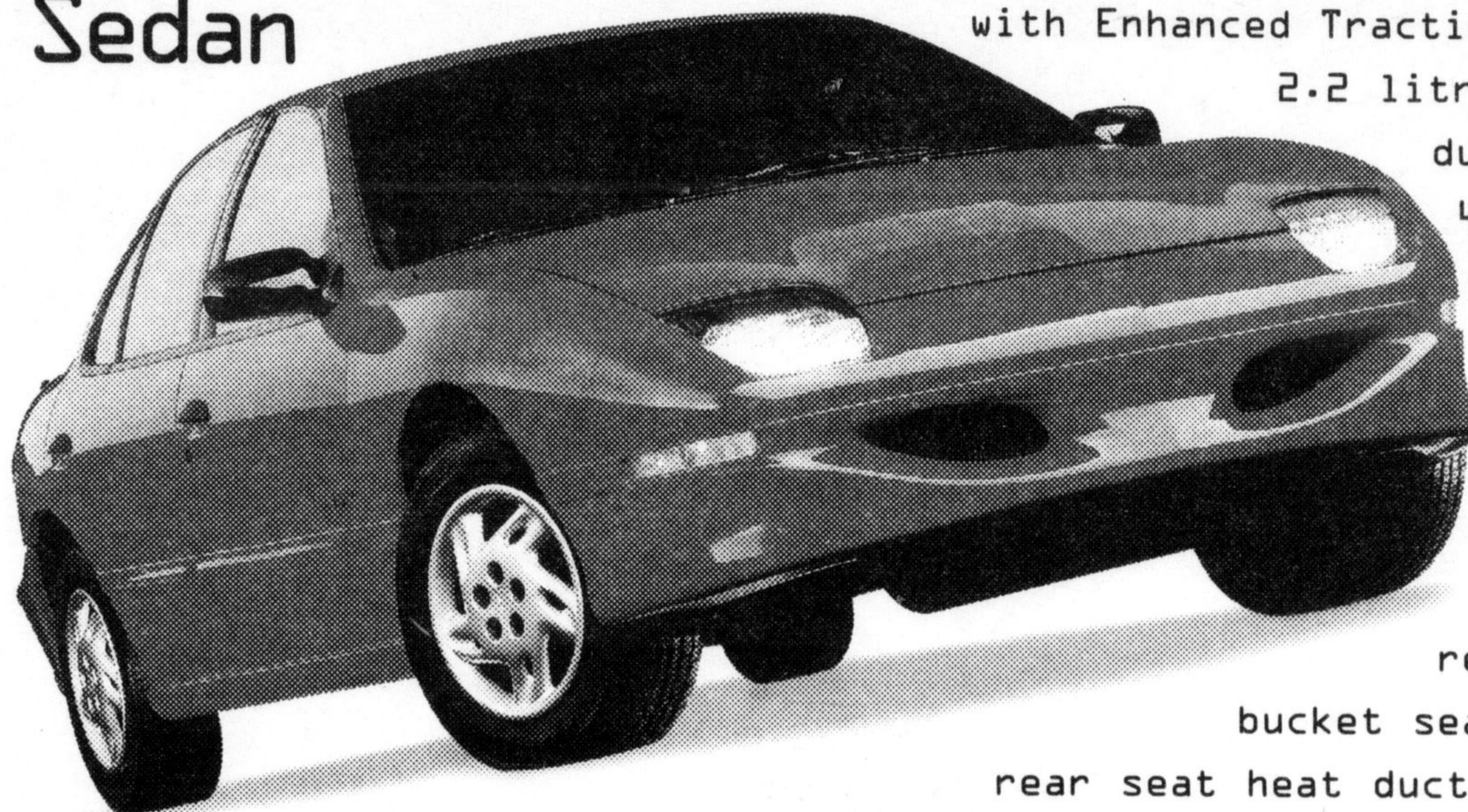
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