

Beginning January 19, 1998, consumers can choose to have an on-off switch installed for the air bags in their vehicle if they are, or a user of their vehicle is, in a risk group listed below. The following information provides the facts you need about air bags so you can make the appropriate decision for you and anyone else who is in a risk group.

What is an on-off switch?

An on-off switch allows an air bag to be turned on and off. The on-off switch can be installed for the driver, passenger, or both. To limit misuse, a key must be used to operate the on-off switch. When the air bag is turned off, a light comes on. There is a message on or near the light saying "DRIVER AIR BAG OFF" or "PASSENGER AIR BAG OFF." The air bag will remain off until the key is used to turn it back on.

What steps can you take to reduce air bag risk without buying an on-off switch?

- **Always place an infant in a rear-facing infant seat in the back seat.**
- **Always transport children 1 to 12 years old in the back seat and use appropriate child restraints.**
- **Always buckle your seat belt.**
- **Keep 10 inches between the center of the air bag cover and your breastbone.**

The vast majority of people don't need an on-off switch. Almost everyone over age 12 is much safer with air bags than without them. This includes short people, tall people, older people, pregnant women -- in fact, all people, male or female, who buckle their seat belts and who can sit far enough back from their air bag. Ideally, you should sit with at least 10 inches between the center of your breastbone and the cover of your air bag. The nearer you can come to achieving the 10-inch distance, the lower your risk of being injured by the air bag and the higher your chance of being saved by the air bag. If you can get back almost 10 inches, the air bag will still help you in a crash.

Who should consider installing an on-off switch?

- People who must transport infants riding in rear-facing infant seats in the front passenger seat.
- People who must transport children ages 1 to 12 in the front passenger seat.
- Drivers who cannot change their customary driving position and keep 10 inches between the center of the steering wheel and the center of their breastbone.
- People whose doctors say that, due to their medical condition, the air bag poses a special risk that outweighs the risk of hitting their head, neck or chest in a crash if the air bag is turned off.

If you cannot certify that you are, or any user of your vehicle is, in one of these groups, you are not eligible for an on-off switch. Turning off your air bag will not benefit you or the other users of your vehicle. Instead, it will increase the risk that you and the other users will suffer a head, neck or chest injury by violently striking the steering wheel or dashboard in a moderate to severe