

Stepped-Up Seat Belt Enforcement, May 22 - June 4

Why you should help your employees “click it”

Look for stepped up enforcement and public education about Minnesota seat belt law from May 22 - June 4, 2006. As law enforcement will tell you, it's not about writing tickets — it's about saving lives.

Why should you be involved? Traffic crashes kill your workers! They're the number one cause of worker deaths, a significant cause of work related disabilities and the most costly workers comp injury by cause. A Nationwide Insurance/AAA study estimates that up to 40% of lost work hours is due to motor vehicle crashes — most of them off the job. The average cost of just one motor vehicle crash with a disabling injury is \$39,000.

Consider these facts:

- Properly wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of fatal injury in a frontal crash by 45-60 percent. In a rollover, belts reduce the risk by 74-80 percent.
- Between 1998 and 2002, 34,000 unbelted vehicle occupants were injured or killed in Minnesota crashes. The estimated cost to society from those injuries was \$1.9 billion; 13 percent of total crash costs are for medical treatment.
- Crash victims who are not wearing seat belts have medical bills that are 50 percent higher than those victims who wore a belt. (And in Minnesota in 2002 those costs were 94 percent greater than for belted occupants). Society bears 74 percent of those costs through increased insurance premiums, taxes and health care and insurance costs (NHTSA).
- Each year, one-third of crash deaths are alcohol-related (and 64 percent of those deaths are impaired drivers). Removing impaired drivers from the road saves lives.
- Studies show that people who consistently don't wear safety belts or who drive impaired will only comply with the law if they believe there is a chance of being stopped and cited or arrested for it.

- Nationally, more children die in crashes than from all other childhood diseases combined. Studies show that in order to get kids properly restrained, adults must buckle up.
- Crashes are the leading cause of traumatic brain injury (TBI). Victims of TBI require some of the most costly, acute and long-term care in the state. Sixty-two percent of TBI/crash victims did not use seat belts or child restraints (Brain Injury Association).

What you can do to increase seat belt use among your employees:

- Implement and enforce strong policies requiring employees to wear seat belts while driving on company business.
- Post “Buckle Up” signs at exits from your company's parking areas.
- Use a variety of company communication channels to tell your employees that your organization is committed to getting them to buckle up.
- Sponsor education and incentive programs to encourage buckling up.
- Encourage employees to get their families to buckle up too.
- Conduct a seat belt survey at your organization.
- Actively support upgrading Minnesota's seat belt law to universal standard enforcement (everyone in the vehicle must buckle up and the driver could be pulled over for a violation, just like every other traffic law on the books).

Minnesota NETS offers many *FREE* resources (payroll stuffers, brochures, posters and fact sheets) that can help you develop company traffic safety policies and provides low-cost (or no cost!) employee education tools. Visit the Minnesota NETS website at: http://www.mnsafetycouncil.org/nets/fax_order.pdf) to print a fax order form for free resources.

Buckling Up — The Facts

Did You Know?

- Seat belts reduce the risk of serious injury and death by 40% - 60%.
- In the average lifetime of being either a driver or passenger, only 1 in 100 people will NEVER be involved in a traffic crash, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).
- When crash victims are unbuckled, their medical treatment costs are on average 50 percent higher than those who are securely buckled.
- A seat-belted driver has a better chance of maintaining control of the vehicle during and immediately following a collision, protecting passengers and others on the road.
- Seat belts aren't just for the front seat. If you are in the back seat and not belted, your body becomes a lethal weapon, moving forward with enough force to break the back of someone riding in the front or to cause serious brain injury.

Air Bags

In 2004, airbag deployment was reported 14,273 times when the occupant was also wearing a seat belt. Fifty-two percent of these incidents resulted in no apparent injury. Airbags deployed 1,501 times when occupants were not wearing seat belts. Only 28% of these cases resulted in no apparent injury.

- Infants should never be placed in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger-side air bag. An air bag is too powerful for an infant's fragile body.
- Put distance between you and the air bag. Drivers should move as far as possible from the steering wheel to give the air bag room to deploy and dissipate its energy. A space of 10-12 inches is recommended between the chest and the air bag module. Passengers in the front should double this distance due to the size of the passenger airbag.
- Use seat belts! Air bags offer supplemental protection in frontal, and in some newer vehicles, side collisions. Your primary protection in all kinds of crashes is the seat belt. It

is the single most effective item of safety equipment in a motor vehicle.

- Grip the steering wheel at nine o'clock and three o'clock, with thumbs on the face of the steering wheel.

Kids

- The back is where it's at for children 12 and under. Child safety seats are not always compatible with all rear seating positions in vehicles. Read the instructions for the child safety seat and your vehicle's owner's manual carefully.
- Children model adult behavior. If adults do not buckle up consistently, children will not either.
- Don't rely on the requirements of your state's laws to guide your family's buckling habits. NHTSA recommends the use of child safety seats, including booster seats for children through age eight, about 80 pounds and up to 4'9" tall. Currently, no state laws meet these guidelines.

Drivers' Reasons for Non-use of Seat Belts

(Survey conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, March 2000)

- I'm only driving a short distance (56%)
- I'm driving in light traffic (24%)
- I forgot to put it on (53%)
- I don't want my clothes wrinkled (9%)
- I'm in a rush (40%)
- The probability of a crash is too low (20%)
- The belt is uncomfortable (37%)
- Other (8%)

Acknowledgment:

Network of Employers for Traffic Safety