

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Southwest Minnesota Motorists buckle up 82.5 percent, survey says

Seat belt use rate up slightly; survey provides snap-shot of area motorist buckle-up rate

WILLMAR, Minn. — Seat belt use in southwest Minnesota is up 1.4 percent, according to a recent survey completed by a multi-agency effort of Toward Zero Deaths on our roadways.

The September 2012 survey shows a regional rate of 82.5 percent. In 2011 that same survey reported 81.1 percent.

The Southwest Minnesota TZD was established in 2007. The number one goal is to reduce fatal and serious injuries on roadways using education, enforcement, engineering and emergency services. Seat belt use is the single most important pre-crash factor in reducing injury severity.

“Most of us are aware that rural highways have a higher fatality rate than metro areas, explains TZD Coordinator Amy Roggenbuck, “and if you are involved in a crash you have a 45 percent greater chance of survival with a seat belt on.”

“So even if you don’t have far to go, which is a common excuse-buckle up,” comments Roggenbuck.

The counties include: Big Stone, Chippewa, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Swift and Yellow Medicine. The observational surveys were conducted the week of Sept. 17-23 at 36 randomly selected sites. County Highway Departments and the State Patrol were instrumental in conducting the surveys.

The regional seat belt surveys are unrelated to the Department of Public Safety annual statewide survey results announced recently and cannot be compared to the statewide



- more -

Southwest Minnesota belt use
Page 2

Statewide belt use is a record high 93.6 percent, according to DPS. The statewide survey provides a comprehensive gauge of belt use by measuring counties where 85 percent of the state's road deaths occurred on average during the past three years, while the regional surveys have a smaller sample size and aim to provide an additional snapshot of belt use to measure local progress.

Regional Seat Belt Use Rates

East Central Minnesota:

- § 85.1 percent (first time regional belt use survey)
- § Counties observed — Benton, Cass, Crow Wing, Isanti, Kanabec, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Sherburne, Stearns, Todd, Wadena, Wright.

Northeast Minnesota:

- § 80.5 percent, slightly up from 80.3 percent in 2011.
- § Counties observed (April 2012) — Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, Pine, St. Louis.

Northwest Minnesota:

- § 73.9 percent, up from 65.8 percent in 2011.
- § Counties observed (June 2012) — Beltrami, Clearwater, Hubbard, Kittson, Lake of the Woods, Marshall, Norman, Pennington, Polk, Red Lake, and Roseau.

Southeast Minnesota:

- § 86.7 percent, up from 84.7 percent in 2011.
- § Counties observed — Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Rice, Steele, Wabasha, Winona.

South Central Minnesota

- § 84.7 percent, up from 73.2 percent in 2011.
- § Blue Earth, Brown, Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Le Sueur, Martin, Nicollet, Nobles, Rock, Sibley, Waseca and Watonwan.

- more -



Southwest Minnesota belt use
Page 3

Southwest Minnesota

- § 82.5 percent, up from 81.1 percent in 2011.
- § Big Stone, Chippewa, Kandiyohi, Lac qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, McLeod, Meeker, Murray, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Swift and Yellow Medicine.

West Central Minnesota:

- § 77.3 percent (first-time regional belt use survey)
- § Counties observed — Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Mahnomon, Otter Tail, Pope, Stevens, Traverse, Wilkin.

Charting Minnesota Seat Belt Use Rates and Unbelted Deaths

As statewide seat belt use has increased, unbelted deaths have dropped, according to DPS:

- § 1986 (the year Minnesota first passed a seat belt law): Belt compliance was 20 percent; 280 unbelted deaths.
- § 2003 (10 years ago): Belt compliance was 79.4 percent; 257 unbelted deaths.
- § 2008 (five years ago): Belt use was 86.7 percent; 150 unbelted deaths.
- § 2011: Belt use was 92.6 percent; 120 unbelted deaths.

The regional seat belt surveys are a component of the state's *Toward Zero Deaths* cornerstone traffic safety program. A primary vision of the *TZD* program is to create a safe driving culture in Minnesota in which motorists support a goal of zero road fatalities by practicing and promoting safe and smart driving behavior. *TZD* focuses on the application of four strategic areas to reduce crashes — education, enforcement, engineering and emergency trauma response.

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