



News Release

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May 9, 2007

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For Immediate Release

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SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA OFFICERS MOBILIZE FOR SEAT BELT ENFORCEMENT EFFORT *Teens, Young Adults Targeted with Lowest Belt Use*

ROCHESTER, MINN. — Southeast Minnesota officers held a media kickoff event on Wednesday, May 9, 2007, for the area's *Safe & Sober* "Click It or Ticket" seat belt enforcement sweep.

The event is part of the statewide *Safe & Sober* "Click It or Ticket" seat belt enforcement sweep, where local law enforcement have added patrols during May 21–June 3.

About 400 agencies statewide will participate in the nationwide campaign that leads into the summer driving season, the deadliest time on the roads. A seat belt citation is \$25, but can cost as much as \$115 with court and administrative fees.

"Step one to preventing injury or death in a traffic crash is to buckle up, every seat, every ride," says Mower County Sheriff Terese Amazie. "Unbelted motorists put their life and the lives of their passengers on a collision course with tragedy."

A majority of Minnesotans buckle up — around 83 percent. Still, of the 2,429 vehicle occupants killed in crashes in 2001–2005, about 60 percent (1,259) were not wearing seat belts. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) estimates around half of those killed would have survived if they were buckled up. In the last five years (2002-2006) in southeast Minnesota, 308 people died and of those fatalities, 157 were unbelted. In 2006, the estimated economic impact of seat belt non-use resulting in deaths in southeast Minnesota was \$25.3 million.

Young adults most often neglect to buckle up. A 2006 DPS observational survey indicated belt use among 16–29 year-olds decreased significantly from 79 to 74 percent. Teen drivers specifically are over-represented in traffic crashes and deaths — and the lack of belt use is a major factor.

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“When teens are riding together, someone needs to speak up to tell their friends to belt up,” says Lt. K. C. Reed, Rochester Police Department. “That simple command is all it takes to potentially save someone’s life.”

Medical costs for unbelted crash victims are typically double those of belted crash victims. Nationally, every household pays \$200 annually for costs related to traffic crashes.

The state and national seat belt enforcement effort is supported by an advertising campaign including TV, radio and indoor/outdoor messages.

The *Safe & Sober* effort is coordinated by the Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) as a component of the state’s Toward Zero Death initiative (TZD). TZD is a multi-agency approach to address traffic issues regionally through enforcement, education, engineering and emergency trauma care and response.

Click It or Ticket.

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