



## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **MINNESOTA BELT USE RATE CONTINUES TO HIT RECORD LEVELS**

*Statewide Click It or Ticket Seat Belt Enforcement Continues through Oct. 28*

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ST. PAUL — Daytime seat belt compliance in Minnesota is at an all-time high of 92 percent, according to a new survey announced today by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) Office of Traffic Safety. The DPS annual seat belt observational survey reports belt use during daytime hours increased from a previous record of 90 percent in 2009.

The announcement of the survey comes as nearly 400 Minnesota law enforcement agencies continue a *Click It or Ticket* increased seat belt enforcement campaign, Oct. 8–28.

Daytime belt use was at 73 percent a decade ago and has steadily climbed. DPS officials say awareness, education and enforcement of the primary seat belt law, effective since June 9, 2009, helped push compliance above the 90 percent-mark for two consecutive years. DPS reports the law has also factored in fewer motor vehicle occupant deaths — deaths were down 7 percent in 2009 compared to 2008 (pre-primary belt law).

Minnesota's primary belt law requires drivers and all passengers, including in the back seat, to be buckled up or in the correct child restraint. Law enforcement will stop and ticket unbelted motorists and passengers. Seat belt violations can cost more than \$100.

“This survey points to the continuing success of the primary seat belt law and more importantly, tells us more Minnesota motorists have a greater chance of surviving a crash,” says Cheri Marti, director of the DPS Office of Traffic Safety. “The challenge remains to change the behavior of that last portion of motorists who neglect to buckle up and remain at risk.”

Officials say an important goal is to increase belt use during night and overnight hours — each year more than 60 percent of the motorists killed during 9 p.m.–5 a.m. are unbelted. Half of the current enforcement effort will occur during this time frame to encourage belt use.

The survey was conducted August 6–19. Surveyors observed 11,313 motorists in 37 counties to determine the belt use rate. Spotters were stationed in various locations to record belt use among drivers, passengers, gender and vehicle type.

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### **Highlights from the Motorist Observational Survey**

- Occupants in SUVs and vans/minivans had the highest belt compliance at 94 percent.
- Belt use was lowest for pick-up truck occupants at 83 percent — but pickup drivers' belt use has increased at a faster rate than all other vehicle types (their rate was 76 percent five years ago in 2006). The national pickup truck occupant belt use rate is 74 percent.
- Overall, females have a higher belt compliance (96 percent v. 89 percent for males) — but this gap has been shrinking since the primary belt law became effective, demonstrating the law is increasing belt use among males.
- Vehicle occupants ages 0–15 have the highest belt use rate at an average of 97 percent, but motorists ages 16–29 have the lowest belt use among all age groups at 90 percent — yet up from 88 percent in 2009 and 74 percent five years ago. DPS officials say the belt use drop starting around age 16 points to the peer pressure factor among teens — once teens begin riding with other teens, their belt use drops.

Marti says the *Click It or Ticket* enforcement effort is intended to help maintain the momentum of increased belt use and to reinforce to motorists that the primary law is important and saves lives. She stresses that motorists wear belts correctly — belts should be low and snug across the hips; shoulder straps should never be tucked under an arm or behind the back.

In Minnesota during the last three years, 2007–2009, there were 1,026 vehicle occupants killed and only 441 (43 percent) were buckled up. Annually, 80 percent of unbelted traffic deaths occur on Greater Minnesota roads.



**Editor's note:** Find the entire 2010 DPS Office of Traffic Safety motorist observational survey online at: [http://www.dps.state.mn.us/OTS/crashdata/2010Belt\\_Summary/August\\_2010\\_Belt\\_Survey\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.dps.state.mn.us/OTS/crashdata/2010Belt_Summary/August_2010_Belt_Survey_Summary.pdf)