



NEWS RELEASE

Andy Skoogman, Director of Communications

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 24, 2010

CONTACT:

Nathan Bowie, 651-201-7571

FASTEN YOUR SEAT BELTS — STATEWIDE ENFORCEMENT CLICKS-OFF TODAY

ST. PAUL — Drivers, passengers and kids better be buckled up or in the correct child restraint as around 400 Minnesota law enforcement agencies begin heightened seat belt patrols during a *Click It or Ticket* campaign, May 24–June 6. The campaign marks one year since the state’s primary seat belt law became effective June 9, 2009, allowing law enforcement to stop and ticket motorists or passengers solely for belt violations. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) is coordinating the effort.

DPS announced the campaign at a news conference today emphasizing the consequences of belt non-use — especially among teens and young adults — with a graduation-style setting of 206 empty chairs and mortarboards, representing teen traffic deaths during the last five years (2005–2009) of which half were not belted.

The primary law requires passengers in all seating positions, including the back seat, to be buckled up or seated in the correct child restraint. A seat belt fine is \$25 but will cost more than \$100 with court and administrative fees. The campaign will also include enforcement of Minnesota’s strengthened child passenger safety law that requires children to be in the correct restraint until they are age 8 or 4 feet 9 inches tall — whichever comes first. This law requires booster seats for kids usually starting after turning age 4; boosters help adult seat belts fit children correctly.

“Despite progress in increasing belt use, many motorists still aren’t buckling up, and as a result, they are putting themselves and others at great risk,” says Lt. Eric Roeske of the Minnesota State Patrol.

Cheri Marti, DPS director of the Office of Traffic Safety, cites the need for the enforcement effort following a deadly stretch on the road in late April.

“Enforcement of the seat belt law starts with you. Insist your passengers are buckled up,” says Marti. “This is a time of year for teens to toss graduation caps in the air, not toss safe driving choices, such as seat belt use, out the window.”

Marti notes that in rollover crashes, unbelted motorists are usually ejected from the vehicle and then crushed by the vehicle. Unbelted motorists also can slam into and injure others in the vehicle. In less severe crashes, unbelted motorists will crack teeth out on a steering wheel or break their nose.

Each year, unbelted motorists account for more than one-half of all vehicle occupants killed. In Minnesota during 2006–2008, 1,097 motorists were killed in crashes and 539 were unbelted; 1,152 unbelted motorists were seriously injured.

Annually, nearly 80 percent of unbelted traffic deaths occur on Greater Minnesota roads. Belt use is especially low among teens and young adults. Statewide each year, motorists age 15–29 account for 45 percent of all unbelted deaths, yet this group represents only 25 percent of licensed drivers. This same age group accounts for 55 percent of all unbelted serious injuries.

—MORE—

Alcohol
and Gambling
Enforcement

Bureau of Criminal
Apprehension

Driver
and Vehicle
Services

Emergency
Communication
Networks

Homeland
Security and
Emergency
Management

Minnesota
State Patrol

Office of
Communications

Office of
Justice Programs

Office of
Traffic Safety

State Fire Marshal

Page 2
***Click It or Ticket* Belt Enforcement**
May 24, 2010

DPS reports the state's primary seat belt law has helped the state achieve a record-high 90 percent daytime seat belt compliance rate — up from 87 percent in 2008. As a result, officials credit the primary law in part for the state's continued decline in motorist deaths for 2009 — the safest year on the road since 1944. Final 2009 traffic death data will be announced soon.

Marti stresses that motorists not only wear belts, but wear them correctly. Belts should be low and snug across the hips; shoulder straps should never be tucked under an arm or behind the back.

The *Click It or Ticket* effort is supported by an advertising campaign targeting the most at-risk group — teens and young adults. The campaign includes ads on TV/cable, radio, alternative print weeklies, online, movie theaters, gas pump-toppers, bar restrooms and mobile outdoor.



Editor's Note: *DPS today conducted a news conference to announce the enhanced enforcement featuring a graduation commencement setting with a visual of 206 empty chairs, representing the teens killed during the last five years (2005-2009). Grab b-roll and soundclips from this event, as well as county-specific and teen-specific seat belt fact sheets, and TV/radio/print ads of the Click It or Ticket campaign at: <https://mndeptpublicsafety.sharefile.com/d-s76757ade27942619>*