



Minnesota Seat Belt Fact Sheet

Seat belts are the simplest and most effective way to prevent death or injury in a crash — especially on Minnesota roads plagued with speeding, distracted, and impaired drivers.

In a crash, odds are six-times greater for injury if a motorist is not buckled up. An unbelted motorist can crash into a windshield and slam into and injure other passengers. Often, an unbelted motorist is ejected from the vehicle and killed. Seat belts restrain motorists in the vehicle's designed protective space, giving them room to live in the event of a crash.

- § Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for Minnesotans ages 1 to 34.
- § Around 700,000 Minnesotans don't buckle up. This group accounts for the 200 unbelted traffic deaths that occur on Minnesota roads each year — representing 55 percent of all traffic deaths. Another 430 unbelted crash victims suffer serious, life-altering injuries annually.
- § Annually, nearly 80 percent of unbelted traffic deaths occur on Greater Minnesota roads.
- § Minnesotans that are least likely to buckle up and more likely to die in crashes are young drivers, particularly males and residents in Greater Minnesota. Each year, motorists ages 15–29 account for 45 percent of all unbelted deaths and 55 percent of all unbelted serious injuries — yet this group represents only 25 percent of all licensed drivers.
- § Many unbelted traffic deaths occur at night — more than 60 percent of nighttime crash victims are not buckled up.
- § Each year, 80 percent of drinking drivers killed in crashes are not buckled up.
- § During 2005–2007, the economic impact of unbelted traffic deaths and injuries to Minnesota was \$1.1 billion. This translates to over \$500 per household. Of all Minnesota traffic crashes, 74 percent of all associated costs are paid by citizens not involved in the crashes.
- § There are far-greater, longer-term medical charges commonly associated with unbelted motorist injuries compared to belted motorists. These include follow-up doctor and specialist care, injury rehabilitation, and extended nursing or assisted-living care.
- § During 2004–2005, unbelted injured motorists had hospital charges 60 percent greater than belted motorists.
- § During 2004–2005, state-supported Medicaid paid almost \$1.6 million for unbelted motorists' hospital charges. Unbelted motorist injury charges were 78 percent greater for Medicaid than belted motorists. All government payer sources, including Medicaid, were charged \$42 million each year for unbelted motorist injuries.
- § An estimated 1,900 people each year could have avoided hospital treatment if a seat belt had been used.