



NEWS RELEASE

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***CLICK IT OR TICKET* SEAT BELT ENFORCEMENT LAUNCHES FOLLOWING SURGE IN UNBELTED TRAFFIC DEATHS**

ST. PAUL — A statewide, and nationwide, “Click It or Ticket” seat belt enforcement sweep starts today, following a rash of deadly crashes over the last month that resulted in 22 vehicle occupant traffic deaths of which 15 of the motorists killed were not wearing seat belts.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) will coordinate the enhanced enforcement patrols among more than 400 agencies during May 19–June 1. A similar enforcement effort in May 2007 resulted in nearly 8,500 seat belt citations. A seat belt citation is \$25 but can cost as much as \$115 with administrative fees.

The enforcement effort covers the Memorial Day weekend, historically a high-traffic holiday and the lead-in to the summer driving season — the deadliest period on Minnesota roads.

“Recent fatal crashes demonstrated the harsh reality when motorists don’t buckle up,” says Cheri Marti, DPS director of the Office of Traffic Safety. Of the 15 unbelted motorist fatalities in the last month, seven were ejected. “The violence these motorists experienced is a grim reminder that a seat belt is your best defense in the event of a crash.”

During 2004–2006 in Minnesota, 1,274 vehicle occupants died in traffic crashes, and 658 (52 percent) of the victims were unbelted. DPS estimates half of those would have survived if they had been belted. Marti says the chances of surviving a crash are cut in half when a motorist is not buckled up.

The enforcement effort will include special nighttime patrols. DPS 2004–2006 data reports there were 306 vehicle occupant traffic deaths during nighttime hours (9 p.m. – 3 a.m.) and 202 victims — 66 percent — were not wearing seat belts.

“Enforcing seat belt use is a priority for law enforcement because we have witnessed the results of fatal crashes far too many times,” says Col. Mark Dunaski, chief of the State Patrol. “We would rather meet you on the shoulder of the road now so we don’t have to meet you at a violent crash scene later.”

Another focus of the campaign will be teens, the group with the lowest seat belt use rate. During 2004–2006 in Minnesota, 176 motorists ages 16–19 were killed and 98 (56 percent) were unbelted.

“Click It or Ticket” is supported by a paid TV, radio and outdoor advertising campaign.

Buckle Up. Click It or Ticket.

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