



NEWS RELEASE

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PUBLIC SAFETY MAPS MINNESOTA'S "MOST UNBELTED" COUNTIES

Statewide Enforcement of Primary Seat Belt Law Continues through Oct. 22

ST. PAUL — In the midst of a statewide *Click It or Ticket* seat belt enforcement campaign running through Oct. 22, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) announced the Minnesota counties with the highest percentage of unbelted traffic deaths based on total number of vehicle occupant deaths. DPS identifies specific pockets of the state with an overrepresentation of unbelted deaths — all in Greater Minnesota, where a vast majority of unbelted traffic deaths occur each year.

Each year, more than half of Minnesota traffic deaths are unbelted. During 2006–2008, 1,097 vehicle occupants were killed in crashes and 539 were not buckled up. Research indicates this is a conservative number as belt use is “unknown” in about 10 percent of fatal crashes each year. DPS estimates a majority of the unknown fatalities are unbelted. DPS last week announced Minnesota motorists’ daytime belt use compliance is 90 percent based on an observation survey.

“Regardless of our record-high seat belt use rate, it’s clear far too many motorists are still traveling not buckled up and are paying the ultimate price,” says Cheri Marti, director of DPS Office of Traffic Safety. “The results from this county data reveal why education and enforcement of the primary seat belt law is so valuable to further increase belt compliance.”

Minnesota Counties with the Highest Percentage of Unbelted Fatalities, 2006–2008:

A pod of six south central counties including a block bordering Iowa combined for 59 vehicle occupant deaths of which 35 were not belted (59 percent): Faribault (8 vehicle occupant deaths–5 unbelted); Freeborn (15–8), Martin (8–5), Mower (8–5), Steele (13–7) and Waseca (7–5).

In central Minnesota four counties combined for 45 vehicle occupant deaths of which 34 were not buckled up (75 percent): Kanabec (4–4), Mille Lacs (16–13), Morrison (17–12) and Todd (8–5).

Among four north central Minnesota counties there were 52 vehicle occupant deaths and 33 were not belted (63 percent): Aitkin (8–5), Beltrami (12–8), Cass (15–8) and Itasca (17–12).

Other counties with an overrepresentation of unbelted traffic deaths include the counties of Clay (15–10), Carlton (10–6), Pennington (5–5), Red Lake (4–4), Renville (8–6) and Wright (34–22).

Minnesota Counties with Lowest Percentage of Unbelted Fatalities, 2006–2008 (counties with fewer than 8 deaths not listed):

Carver (22–8), Chisago (23–8), Douglas (21–6), Lyon (9–3), Otter Tail (10–3), Scott (26–8), Sherburne (16–5) and Wabasha (8–2).

Unbelted statistics for metro counties are: Anoka (43–23), Dakota (46–18), Hennepin (102–40), Ramsey (37–19) and Washington (30–10).

Around 400 Minnesota law enforcement agencies are participating in the Oct. 9–22 *Click It or Ticket* seat belt enforcement campaign — the first full-scale enforcement since the primary seat belt law became effective June 9. The primary law states drivers and all passengers — including in the back seat — must be buckled up or in the correct child restraint. Law enforcement can stop motorists solely for seat belt violations, including unbelted passengers.

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