

Michigan's problem: nighttime safety belt use

Background

While Michigan boasts one of the highest safety belt use rates in the country, this figure is derived from daytime observations only. Crash report forms consistently indicate that safety belt use falls dramatically in the evening and late-night hours. Comparatively speaking, belt use in daytime fatal crashes is 85 percent but falls more than 20 percent to 62 percent at night (10 p.m. to 5 a.m.). As safety belt use increases, the number of "belted" fatalities should also increase. The vast majority of these instances were "unsurvivable crashes" because of the severe nature of the events.

Nighttime unbelted fatalities

- In 2006, Michigan had 107 vehicle occupants die unbelted in nighttime crashes.
- The vast majority of these unbelted fatalities are male (84 male, 23 female).
- The problem is more pronounced among alcohol and/or drug involved fatal crashes during the nighttime where safety belt use is even lower – about 50 percent - for this group of vehicle occupants.
- Nighttime belt use in fatal crashes is also lowest among drivers age 21-24, about 60 percent.
- Safety belt use in nighttime fatal crashes rises during the week and drops on weekends.

In a first step to address and boost nighttime belt use, Michigan law enforcement agencies will conduct pilot nighttime safety belt enforcement efforts overnight Thursday, May 24, as part of the two-week statewide *Buckle Up or Pay Up, Click it or Ticket* safety belt mobilization.

Law enforcement agencies in eleven counties will put additional officers on nighttime roving safety belt patrols.

Participating counties and agencies:

Genesee: Burton Police Department, Clio Police Department, Flint Police Department, Flint Township Police Department, Genesee County Sheriff's Office, Genesee Township Police Department, Grand Blanc Township Police Department, Montrose Township Police Department, and Michigan State Police Flint Post.

Kalamazoo: Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office, Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety, Kalamazoo Township Police Department, Michigan State Police Paw Paw Post, and Portage Police Department.

Kent: Cedar Springs Police Department, Grand Rapids Police Department, Grandville Police Department, Kent County Sheriff's Office, Kentwood Police Department, Lowell Police Department, Michigan State Police Rockford Post, Rockford Police Department, Sparta Police Department, Walker Police Department and the Wyoming Police Department.

Lapeer: Almont Police Department, Dryden Township Police Department, Imlay City Police Department, Lapeer City Police Department, Lapeer County Sheriff's Office, Metamora Township Police Department, Michigan State Police Lapeer Post, and North Branch Police Department.

Livingston: Livingston County Sheriff's Office and Michigan State Police Brighton Post.

Macomb County: Centerline Police Department, Chesterfield Police Department, Clinton Township Police Department, Fraser Police Department, Macomb County Sheriff's Office, Michigan State Police Richmond Post, Richmond Police Department, Roseville Police Department, Shelby Township Police Department, St. Clair Shores Police Department, Sterling Heights Police Department, Utica Police Department, and Warren Police Department.

Monroe: Michigan State Police Monroe Post, Monroe County Sheriff's Office and Monroe Police Department.

Oakland: Michigan State Police Metro North Post.

Saginaw: Michigan State Police Bridgeport Post and Saginaw County Sheriff's Office.

Washtenaw: Michigan State Police Ypsilanti Post, Milan Police Department, Saline Police Department, University of Michigan Department of Public Safety, and Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office.

Wayne County: Brownstown Police Department, Detroit Police Department, Grosse Ile Police Department, and Michigan State Police Metro South Post.

During these nighttime traffic patrols, officers will place a special emphasis on looking for and ticketing unbelted motorists. Safety belt enforcement zones will only be utilized during daytime hours and will not be employed during late night hour enforcement patrols.

Purpose

Improve nighttime safety belt use and reduce traffic deaths and injuries. Research shows that aggressive enforcement of the safety belt law, combined with publicity, create the greatest driver behavior change; in short, this formula gets people to buckle up. The threat of getting a ticket is a powerful motivator, far more believable than the threat of being in a crash.