



SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN



DRIVING SAFETY: BUCKLE UP! IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE!

According to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](#), of the 23,824 passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2020, 51% were not wearing seat belts – a 4% increase from 2019. Seat belts saved an estimated 14,955 lives and could have saved an additional 2,549 people if they had been wearing seat belts, in 2017 alone.

The Consequences of Not Wearing, or Improperly Wearing, a Seat Belt Are Clear:

- Buckling up helps keep you safe and secure inside your vehicle, whereas not buckling up can result in being totally ejected from the vehicle in a crash, which is always deadly.
- Air bags are not enough to protect you; in fact, the force of an air bag can seriously injure or even kill you if you're not buckled up.
- Improperly wearing a seat belt, such as putting the strap below your arm, puts you and your children at risk in a crash.

The Benefits of Buckling Up Are Equally Clear:

- If you buckle up in the front seat of a passenger car, you can reduce your risk of:
 - Fatal injury by 45% (Kahane, 2015)ⁱ
 - Moderate to critical injury by 50%
- If you buckle up in a light truck, you can reduce your risk of:
 - Fatal injury by 60% (Kahane, 2015)ⁱ
 - Moderate to critical injury by 65% (NHTSA, 1984)

Seat Belt Initiatives and Information:

- [Click It or Ticket](#) – An annual nationwide campaign that incorporates zero-tolerance enforcement of safety belt laws with public awareness efforts and the support of government agencies, local coalitions, and school officials to increase seat belt usage.
- [Countermeasures That Work](#) – Developed and published by NHTSA, this document outlines the best practices that are used around the country to help increase seat belt usage rates which lead to fewer roadway fatalities. Additionally, countermeasures are provided for 8 other emphasis areas including impaired driving, speeding, and distracted driving.
- [Division of Highway Traffic Safety Annual Report](#) – Occupant Protection, including a description of funded projects and activities during the last federal fiscal year, is the focus of this link. This report also includes summaries of the other Division focus areas including pedestrian and bicycle safety, police traffic services, and traffic records.
- [New Jersey Highway Safety Plan](#) - Although the Highway Safety Plan covers many safety areas, the focus of this link is occupant protection. In this annual plan produced by the Division of Highway Traffic Safety, an overview and analysis of seat belt use in the State of New Jersey are discussed, followed by a breakdown of strategies and funding that will be used to increase belt usage rates.
- [Occupant Protection in Passenger Vehicles](#) – Part of NHTSA's Traffic Safety Facts safety data series, this document overviews occupant protection statistics in the United States for the last year that national crash stats are available.
- [NHTSA Seat Belt](#) - A wealth of seat belt statistics, information, and discussion can be found on this page including a seat belt IQ quiz and buckle-up strategies by age group.

ⁱⁱKahane, C. J. (2015, January). *Lives saved by vehicle safety technologies and associated Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, 1960 to 2012—Passenger cars and LTVs—With reviews of 26 FMVSS and the effectiveness of their associated safety technologies in reducing fatalities, injuries, and crashes* (Report No. DOT HS 812 069). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812069>.