



NTSB

SAFETY ALERT

National Transportation Safety Board

★ Primary Seat Belt Laws

Tougher enforcement of seat belt laws saves lives

The grim facts:

- From 1994 through 2003, almost 59 percent of people who died in motor vehicle crashes nationwide were not wearing seat belts.
- 29 percent of unrestrained occupants are ejected.
- When totally ejected, 74 percent of occupants die as a result of the ejection.
- The lifetime cost to society for each death is almost \$1 million.
- In 2003, more than 6,000 lives, and almost \$6 billion, could have been saved if all drivers and passengers had used their seat belts.
- A 1996 federal government study found that the average in-patient cost for unbelted crash victims was 55 percent higher than for belted crash victims. Tax dollars pay for a substantial portion of crash costs.

Effective actions in primary seat belt laws:

- Mandate primary enforcement for seat belt laws.
 - o According to a June 2004 government survey, seat belt use in primary enforcement law States, such as Maryland, was 84 percent, while seat belt use in secondary enforcement law States, such as Virginia, was only 73 percent.
- Apply seat belt laws to all vehicle seating positions.
 - o When used properly, seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to front seat passenger vehicle occupants by 45 percent and rear seat passenger vehicle occupants by 44 percent. From 1975 to 2003, seat belts saved almost 180,000 lives nationwide.
- Repeal existing legal provisions that insulate people from the financial consequences of not wearing a seat belt.

What can you do to save lives and reduce injuries?

- Make sure seat belts or child restraints are worn by everyone in your vehicle.
- Talk or write to your State and local lawmakers and urge them to support National Transportation Safety Board recommendations for State belt use laws.

Need more information?

Visit the NTSB Web site at www.nts.gov.