

MILES PER HOUR

Newsletter of the Office of Traffic Safety



Summer 2012

Primary Seat Belt Law Saves Lives, Money



Dramatic digital billboards in downtown Minneapolis present the physics of a vehicle crash — a 60 mph crash with no seat belt is equal to a 12-story fall. [Watch the billboards in action here.](#)

Minnesota's primary seat belt law resulted in 68 fewer deaths and 320 fewer severe injuries from 2009 to 2011, according to a study conducted by the University of Minnesota's Center for Excellence in Rural Safety (CERS) for the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

The study found the reduction in deaths and injuries resulted in \$45 million dollars in avoided hospital charges, including nearly \$10 million in taxpayer dollars that would have paid for Medicare and Medicaid charges.

"Primary has advanced traffic safety in Minnesota by saving lives and preventing serious injuries," Department of Public Safety Commissioner Mona Dohman said. "This study

reminds us how vital it is

for Minnesotans to buckle up — every seat, every ride."

Minnesota's primary seat belt law went into effect in June 2009. Currently, 32 states have primary seat belt laws.

CERS Findings

CERS examined seat belt data and survey results that measured support for the law and found:

- Observed seatbelt use in the state increased from 87 percent in 2008 to 93 percent in 2011
- A survey of Minnesotans shows support of the law increased from 62 percent just before it was passed to over 70 percent since it was passed.

"The stronger seat belt law is keeping many Minnesotans out of hospitals and morgues, and will continue to do so for years," said CERS Director Lee Munnich.

Seat Belt Facts, 2009 – 2011

- Of 878 motorists killed, 377 were not buckled up.
- 80 percent of the 377 unbelted deaths were on Greater Minnesota roads.
- Of the 377 unbelted deaths, nearly 50 percent of the victims were ages 30 and younger

30 Years of Minnesota's Child Safety Laws

This year marks 30 years since Minnesota first passed its child passenger safety laws in 1982. That year, less than 20 percent of the crash-involved infants (ages 0-3) were known to be properly restrained in a child safety seat.

The success of the law and increased use of car seats has made a dramatic impact on child safety. In 2011, 82 percent of crash-involved infants were known to be restrained. The result of this increased use of car seats has resulted in at least 1,000 infants per year who were not injured.

"There is no debate when it comes to the benefits of child seats," says Heather Darby, child passenger safety programs coordinator at the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS). "Parents and caregivers have a huge responsibility to ensure their children are safe when they ride and step one is using the right seat that's correctly installed."

There were 88 child deaths (0-7) in the last decade in the state.

Despite the increase in child seats use, OTS reports three in four seats are not used properly. Common mistakes parents make are:

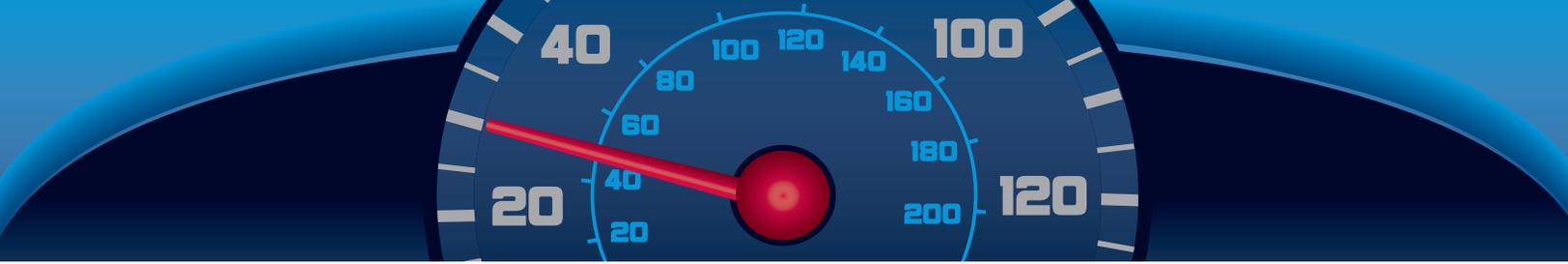
- Turning a child from a rear-facing restraint to a forward-facing restraint too soon. American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends keeping children rear-facing until 2 years old if possible.
- Restraint is not secured tight enough — it should not shift more than one inch side-to-side or out from the seat.
- Harness on the child is not tight enough — if you can pinch harness material, it's too loose.
- Retainer clip is up too high or too low — should be at the child's armpit level.
- The child is in the wrong restraint — don't rush your child into a seat belt.

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13 Agencies Awarded for Efforts to Promote Traffic Safety through Enforcement and Education

Successful traffic safety activities conducted by 13 law enforcement agencies warranted federal grants totaling \$34,000 from the Office of Traffic Safety. The agencies were recognized at the *Toward Zero Deaths* Challenge luncheon on March 20, in Oakdale.

The awards are based on the merits of the activities that law enforcement agencies conducted in 2011, including traffic safety

community programs, enforcement, officer training, public and media relations, and presentations.

“We are enthused and encouraged that these agencies demonstrated such dedication to traffic safety to help us drive Minnesota toward zero traffic deaths,” says Donna Berger, OTS director.

2011 Challenge Winners

- Breckenridge Police Department
- Goodhue County Sheriff’s Office
- Lake City Police Department
- Le Sueur County Sheriff’s Office
- Lyon County Sheriff’s Office
- Marshall Police Department
- Morris Police Department
- North St. Paul Police Department
- Ortonville Police Department
- Redwood County Sheriff’s Office
- Redwood Falls Police Department
- St. Peter Police Department
- Zumbrota Police Department

DWI eCharging Continues Rollout

The DWI eCharging system provides a method for criminal justice stakeholders to accurately and efficiently process information needed to both administratively revoke a person’s driver license and criminal charge a DWI.

To-date, more than 90 law enforcement agencies have been trained on the system, and 24 law enforcement agencies are scheduled in the coming months. In the past few years, nearly 4,000 DWI arrests have been charged through the system, with more than 900 of those processed in 2012. Approximately 22 percent of all DWI arrests in March were processed through DWI eCharging.

“The eCharging system makes processing Moorhead’s DWIs so efficient and accurate,” says Joel Scharf of the Moorhead Police Department. “Our officers love the paperless process, which saves them so much time that they can quickly get back to other enforcement issues.”

Statewide deployment of eCharging is planned by the end of 2014. Law enforcement agency staff interested in learning more about eCharging or deployment should contact: Tom Miller at Thomas.c.miller@state.mn.us or 651-793-2707.

In-Squad Report System Synching Law Enforcement with OTS

A new in-squad enforcement activity reporting system is streamlining the process for Office of Traffic Safety partners to report their overtime grant activity.

ROAR, the Real Time Officer Activity Reporting system, allows officers to submit citation information electronically from their squad and eliminates paper work. The system is currently being piloted in 12 counties with plans for a statewide rollout later this year.

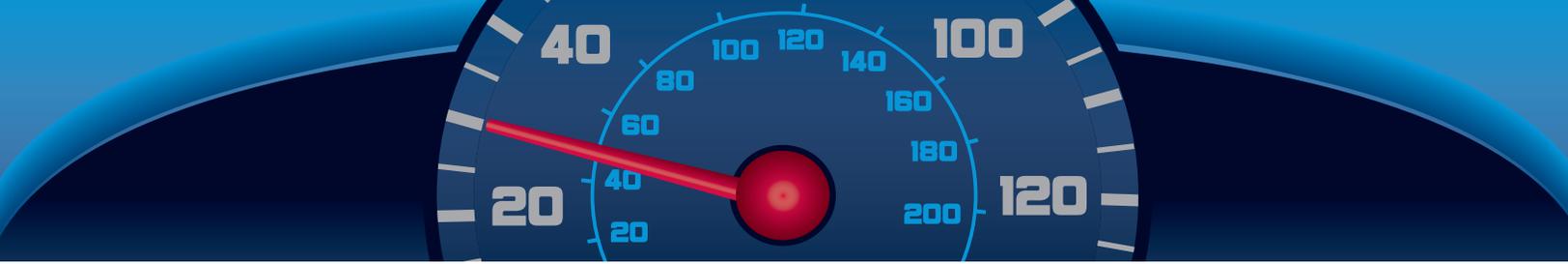
“This system represents an exciting collaboration between our division and its grantees,” says Donna Berger, director of the Office of Traffic Safety. “It’s a great tool to ease our partners’ paper workload and make their jobs more efficient.”

ROAR development began in 2011 after a software developer conducted a ride-along with St. Paul Police Department and noticed the challenges of paper work and reports. The developer and St. Paul officers worked together to enhance the process of providing activity details to OTS and for agencies to evaluate their activity.

Office of Traffic Safety Enforcement and Activity Calendar

Gear up for these upcoming traffic safety initiatives:

July	— Statewide speed enforcement.
August 17 thru September 3	— Statewide and nationwide DWI crackdown.
August 31	— Statewide Ted Foss Move Over Law enforcement.
September 16–22	— Child Passenger Safety Week.
October 12–26	— Statewide <i>Click It or Ticket</i> seat belt enforcement.
October 22–23	— <i>Toward Zero Deaths</i> conference, Bloomington.



Distracted Driving Enforcement Tallies 97 Texting Tickets



A Target Field worker installs the "don't text and drive" backstop message in April.

A statewide enhanced distracted driving enforcement effort on April 19 resulted in 97 texting while driving tickets and 2,419 total stops. The preliminary results are from 142 reporting agencies.

Demonstrating the heightened enforcement, there were only 3.5 texting citations issued a day on average in 2011.

"The tremendous work of our law enforcement partners paired with educational outreach was of great value to promote the importance that motorists pay attention and drive focused," says Jody Oscarson, Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) distracted driving coordinator.

In addition to enforcement, public education was a key component and goal of the campaign. By promoting and publicizing the enforcement action — including the "Body Bag" TV spot — OTS aimed to create greater motorist awareness that texting while driving is illegal, and the inherent danger of distraction to the task of driving.

New Safety Class Involves Parents with Teen Drivers

According to a recent study by The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, increasing parental involvement with teen drivers and their driving is one key to reducing teen-involved traffic crashes, injuries and fatalities.

To further that involvement, the Minnesota Safety Council-Teen Safe Driving Coalition is now making resources available to pilot a new class for parents and soon-to-be teen drivers. The customizable materials are designed as a component of driver education classroom programs with presentations from law enforcement officers, emergency medical staff and other community members.

Some benefits of the course include:

- Increasing parent and youth awareness of teen driver laws — and the most common risks for teen drivers.
- Increasing parents' understanding of their influence on their teen's driving behavior.
- Information and tools parents can use to support their teen in driving safely.

To-date, pilot programs have been implemented in Mankato, Shakopee, Winona and Worthington. United Driving School of Winona has held six parent/teen classes and expanded

the program to Lewiston, Plainview and Wabasha. Shakopee will offer the class again in June.

Additional pilots are planned this spring and summer in Marshall and New Prague, and other communities are currently in the pre-implementation/discussion stage.

Very positive results have surfaced in program evaluation:

- All (100 percent) of parents who attended class with their teen said they will use the information to help their teen become a safer driver.
- 99 percent said they would recommend the class to other parents.
- 63 percent rated the class as "excellent," while 35 percent described the class as "good."
- 74 percent of parents showed an increased confidence of understanding teen driving laws after the class.

For information on implementing a parent-teen driver safety class, contact: Gordy Pehrson, Office of Traffic Safety, gordy.pehrson@state.mn.us or (651) 201-7072.

Motorcycle Rider Training

Motorcycle enthusiasts are back on Minnesota roads, and in record numbers. Safety experts say rider training is the key for riders to enjoy the ride safely.

"Trained riders are less likely to be involved in a crash," says Bill Shaffer, Office of Traffic Safety motorcycle programs coordinator. "Without proper training, new riders are more likely to be involved in a crash. Experienced riders also can benefit from additional training to hone their crash avoidance skills."

The Minnesota Motorcycle Safety Center offers a wide variety of affordable courses across the state for all skill levels — from new to experienced riders. Check out training courses and schedules online at www.motorcyclesafety.org.

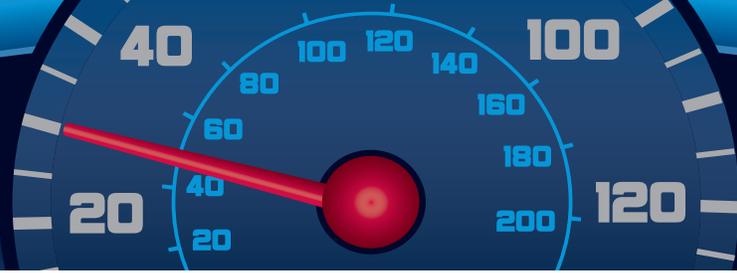
"Look Twice" for New Motorcycle TV Spot

A stylized [motorcycle rider awareness TV spot](#) hits Minnesota TVs this summer to alert motorists of the importance to pay attention and "look twice" for motorcyclists.

The spot features perspectives from both a rider and a distracted motorist to dramatically showcase the importance to check for motorcyclists.

"It's all about start seeing motorcycles," says Bill Shaffer, OTS motorcycle programs coordinator. "When summer rolls around, it's vital for drivers to be ready to react and share the roads with riders."





DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS



Deadly Days Ahead, Time for Action

Donna Berger, Director, Office of Traffic Safety

Minnesotans love summer. We enjoy our yards and decks, cabins and parks, and explore the state on its roads. The kids are home

(maybe) and life seems simpler.

But for traffic safety advocates, especially law enforcement, the season is troubling. It's the most deadly season on our roads, especially for teens and young adults.

The upcoming season should generate

concern — and action. After all, summer is statistically the most violent time for motorists.

To reverse this course, we must continue to grow voluntary seat belt compliance. Our progress in recent years should not make us complacent. Summertime, with its outdoor activities and nice weather, already contributes complacency to drivers' attitudes and behavior.

While it wasn't popular with most of us when we were young, consider doing some "summer school" work. Make a short list of how you might promote seat belt use, perhaps just one item for each summer month. Speak about

traffic safety to a community group; recruit a retailer to promote seat belt material in their store; or write a letter for your newspaper recounting the increase in traffic deaths.

I'm sure opportunities exist in your unique community and you know best what they are. And I know it can be tough to keep promoting traffic safety when we're focused on vacation plans, kids' activities, golf and garden. But a little extra effort during our "deadliest 100 days" might change the driving behavior of some — and ensure their enjoyment of summer for many years.

New Ad on the Physics of Not Wearing a Seatbelt in a Crash

