CLICK IT OR TICKET JUNE SEAT BELT MOBILIZATION: POST-ENFORCEMENT NEWS RELEASE

**NEWS RELEASE**

EMBARGOED FOR ALL MEDIA PUBLICATION UNTIL Tuesday, June 15

CONTACT:

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# DRIVE SMART AND BUCKLE UP: You’ll never get over ejection

# *Law Enforcement in* *[Your City/Region] Cited XX Unbelted Motorists during Extra Patrols and Awareness Campaign*

[YOUR CITY/COUNTY] –A 40 percent increase would be welcome news in some areas of life, but not when it comes to traffic fatalities involving unbelted motorists. Too many people are choosing to drive unbelted, and it’s leading to disaster.

To educate motorists on the dangers of driving or riding in a vehicle unbelted, [Your Police Dept./Sheriff’s Office] participated in a statewide extra seat belt patrols campaign May 24-June 6. During the two-week period, [Your Police Dept./Sheriff’s Office] ticketed XXX unbelted motorists.

During that same period, XX of crashes in [Your Police Dept./Sheriff’s Office city or county] involved an unbelted motorist.

Sheriff’s deputies, police officers and state troopers across Minnesota participated in the statewide campaign. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (DPS-OTS) coordinates the statewide campaign with funding provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Law enforcement officers were also looking for children who were not properly secured in child safety seats and issued XXX citations statewide for child seat violations.

[SHARE ANY UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE LOCAL ENFORCEMENT, FOR E.G., AVERAGE AGE/AGE RANGE OF OFFENDERS, EXCUSES HEARD, LOCATION OF MOST CITATIONS]

**Unbuckled is a Dangerous Gamble**

Preliminary reports show 42 unbelted motorists died on Minnesota roads between Jan. 1 and June 1, a 40 percent increase during the same time period last year (30).

“It’s my choice. It’s too tight, I just don’t like it! Those are the excuses we hear every day from unbelted motorists who choose to risk their lives,” said [SPOKESPERSON]. “You might not think you are hurting anyone else by being unbuckled, but you could leave a lifetime of pain and heartache behind if you are in a fatal crash where a seat belt could have saved you. Think about others when you get in the vehicle and do the one thing that can protect you from other poor drivers. Buckle up!”

**You Never Get Over Ejection**

Most Minnesotans are making the life-saving decision to buckle up. According to the 2019 Minnesota Seat Belt Survey, 93.4 percent of front seat occupants are wearing their seat belts. The rest are gambling with their lives and the lives of others in the vehicle by riding unbelted.

**Bad Decisions Contribute to Life-Changing Outcomes**

* In 2020, 112 unbelted motorists lost their lives on Minnesota roads.
* Adults must take the time to correctly use child restraints, teach children the value of buckling up and model seat belt use. From 2016-2020:
  + 20 children (ages 0-7) were killed in motor vehicles.
  + Eight of the victims were properly secured, eight were not properly restrained, and restraint use was unknown in four fatalities.
  + Of the 87 children (ages 0-7) seriously injured in motor vehicles, 49 percent were known to be properly secured.

**Good decisions are a lifesaver**

* In 1987, 4,176 vehicle occupants suffered severe injuries in traffic crashes. That number dropped to 1,056 in 2020.
* 2020 saw the highest number of unbelted fatalities (13) of 15-19-year-olds since 2011 (20).
* 2020 saw the highest number of unbelted fatalities (31) of 25-39-year-olds since 2012 (36).
* In 2020, 79 percent of the unbelted deaths occurred in Greater Minnesota (outside the seven-county metro area).

**The Law is for Safety**

Minnesota law states that drivers and passengers in all seating positions must wear seat belts or be in the correct child restraint. Occupants must correctly wear seat belts low and snug across the hips, and they should never tuck straps under an arm or behind the back. If you are unbuckled, expect to be stopped.

**Minnesota Child Car Seat Law Protects Young Lives**

* In crashes from 2016-2020, of the 15,670 children ages 0-7 that were properly restrained, 88 percent were not injured while another 9 percent sustained only possible injuries.
* In Minnesota, all children must be in a child restraint until they are 4 feet 9 inches tall, or at least age 8, whichever comes first.
* Rear-facing seats - All infants and toddlers should ride in a rear-facing car seat until they have reached the height and weight limits allowed by the car seat manufacturer.
* Forward-facing seats with harness - Toddlers and preschoolers who have reached the height and weight limits of the rear-facing car seat should use a forward-facing seat with harness until they reach the weight limit of the harness allowed by the car seat manufacturer.
* Booster seats - School-age children who have reached the height and weight limits of the forward-facing seat can sit on a booster seat. It must be used with a lap and shoulder belt.
* Seat belts - Children 8 years old or have reached 4 feet 9 inches tall can buckle up with seat belts. Your child is ready for an adult seat belt when they can sit with their back against the vehicle seat, knees bent comfortably and completely over the vehicle seat edge without slouching, and feet touching the floor.