
Minnesota Seat Belts Overview, 2015

The Minnesota primary seat belt law requires drivers and all passengers to be buckled up or in the correct child restraint or booster seat. Law enforcement officers will stop and ticket motorists for seat belt violations — including unbelted passengers.

Properly wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of fatal injury to front seat passenger occupants by 45 percent in a car and 60 percent in a light truck. Seat belts are the most effective means of protecting oneself from injury while riding in a vehicle.

In a crash, odds are six-times greater for injury if a motorist is not buckled up. An unbelted motorist can crash into a windshield and slam into and injure other passengers. Often, an unbelted motorist is ejected from the vehicle and killed. Seat belts restrain motorists in the vehicle's designed protective space, giving them room to live in the event of a crash.

2013–2015 Minnesota Seat Belt Facts

- Of the 832 vehicle occupants killed, only 450 (54 percent) were known to be belted.
- Of the 2,361 vehicle occupants seriously injured, only 1,378 (58 percent) were known to be belted.
- During this period, 138 motorists were killed during nighttime hours (9 p.m. – 3 a.m.), and only 51 (37 percent) of these victims were known to be belted.
- Over four in five unbelted traffic deaths occur on Greater Minnesota roads.
- Minnesotans that are least likely to buckle up and more likely to die in crashes are young drivers. Each year, motor vehicle occupant drivers ages 15–29 account for about one in three unbelted deaths and two in five unbelted serious injuries — yet this group represents only 23 percent of all licensed drivers.
- Each year, over half of drinking drivers killed in crashes are not buckled up.
- Nationwide, traffic crashes are the leading cause of unintentional injury death for people ages 1 to 34 years old.
- Traffic crashes are the second leading cause of death for teenagers after suicide— 16 to 19-year-olds are more likely to die in a crash than from the next leading cause (homicide). Of the 65 vehicle occupant crash fatalities in that age group, only 29 (45 percent) were known to be belted.
- An American Academy of Pediatrics study shows a correlation between driver seat belt use and child restraint use. When a driver buckles up, child passengers are restrained nearly 90 percent of the time. When a driver does not buckle up, children are restrained only one-quarter of the time.