



## **Get the Facts: Buckle Up!**

### **In a Nutshell**

It's simple. If you're in a seated in a vehicle traveling in Minnesota you'd better buckle up. Rather not? Law enforcement officers will be happy to ticket you.

### **What do I need to know about seatbelt use?**

Minnesota law requires that everybody in every seating position in the vehicle buckle or ride in an approved child passenger safety restraint. Law enforcement officers can stop and cite drivers and passengers who are not buckled up.

It just makes safety sense. A seat-belted driver has a better chance of maintaining control of the vehicle during and immediately following a collision, protecting passengers and others on the road. Remember, seat belts aren't just for the front seat. If you're in the back seat and not belted, your body becomes a lethal weapon, moving forward with enough force to break the back of someone riding in the front or to cause serious brain injury.

*In 2021, 108 unbelted people died on Minnesota roads, up three from 2020 - that's 27% of all those killed in crashes.*

*Last year's deaths reflect a 48% increase from 2019 when there were just 73 unbelted deaths. Seat belts reduce the risk of serious injury and death by 40% - 60%*

### **How do I make sure I use seat belts correctly for all my passengers?**

Minnesota's seat belt use law requires everybody of all ages to use proper restraint. To be compatible with airbags, drivers should sit with at least a 10-inch clearance between the center of the steering wheel or dashboard and their chest. The steering wheel should be tilted upward, not straight across from the torso. Passengers in the front seat should double the distance due to the increased size of the passenger airbag.

And don't forget the kids. By Minnesota law, a child who is both under age 8 and shorter than 4 feet 9 inches must be fastened in a child safety seat that meets federal safety standards. That means children should be in approved car seats or





booster seats – not a seat belt alone. Best practice is to keep a child in a booster based on their height rather than their age. Check the instruction book or label of the child safety seat to be sure it is the right seat for your child’s weight and height.

**Play it safe!**

- Use seat belts! They’re your primary protection in all kinds of crashes and are the most effective safety equipment in your motor vehicle.
- Infants should never be placed in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger-side air bag. Even in a low-speed crash, the airbag can inflate, strike the car safety seat and cause serious brain and neck injury and death.
- All children up to age 13 are safest in the back seat. Child safety seats are not always compatible with all rear seating positions in vehicles. Read the instructions for the child safety seat and your vehicle’s owner’s manual carefully.
- Children model adult behavior. If adults don’t buckle up consistently, children will not either.

**Sources:**

Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety  
Network of Employers for Traffic Safety

