



Five Minutes for Safety Seat Belt Savvy

Objective: To reinforce awareness of Minnesota seat belt laws and company/organization policy.

Opening:

Let's start by reviewing the Minnesota laws covering seat belts and other restraints. It's simple. No matter your spot in the car or truck or your age, 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.

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

Here's the real-life impact. 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%.

Questions for leading the conversation

Let's discuss some common questions and myths about seat belt use.



Question: Is it true if you are a good driver you really have no need for a seat belt? (What do you think?)

Answer: Your chance of being involved in a serious crash in your lifetime is 70%. No matter how good a driver you are, you can't predict the other guy, the road conditions, how your vehicle may respond, even your own reactions.

Question: Should people have the freedom to choose whether or not to use seat belts? (What do you think?)

Answer: Seat belts do more than reduce the severity of injuries. They assist the driver in maintaining control of the car in emergency situations. The use of belts is a responsibility to other drivers! (And it's the law.)

It's also the driver's responsibility to ensure other passengers use their belts. Many injuries in crashes are caused by unbelted passengers colliding with other people in the car.

Think as well of the others who will suffer if you are killed or hurt in a crash. Friends, family, loved ones - all will have their lives dramatically changed for the worse because you failed to do one simple thing to protect yourself! One last point! Our insurance rates are based in large part on the medical cost to repair those injured in crashes! It's a fact!

Question: Sure, you buckle up on long trips, but is it really necessary around town? (What do you think?)

Answer: Well, where do you do most of your driving? Where are you most likely to be involved in a crash? Close to home. Close to work. Right around the corner! Think about it!



Question: What if I'm in a crash and my car catches on fire? If I'm not buckled, I can get out faster. (What do you think?)

Answer: If you're not buckled and are in a crash, you're likely to be thrown from the vehicle and seriously injured or killed. Front seat passengers are two-to-four times more likely to be killed if ejected; and less than one-half of one percent of injury-producing crashes involve fire or submersion in water. You're far safer being buckled in during and after a crash than to be thrown out.

Question: If you have air bags, you don't need seat belts, right? (What do you think?)

Answer: Air bags only work in frontal crashes! They are not designed to inflate if the crash is from the side or rear. Besides, you must be in the proper position inside the car for the air bag to work properly.

Review company/organization policy, if applicable

Closing reinforcement

It takes just seconds to buckle your seat belt or to ask passengers to buckle theirs. That's far less time than the days, weeks or months you could spend in a hospital from a serious injury if you weren't properly buckled. And it's far shorter than the years your loved ones will spend mourning you if you join the list of Minnesotans who did not wear their seatbelts and died in crashes last year.

For these, and many other reasons, use your head, and your belt, to protect your body!



Sources: Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety

Network of Employers for Traffic Safety