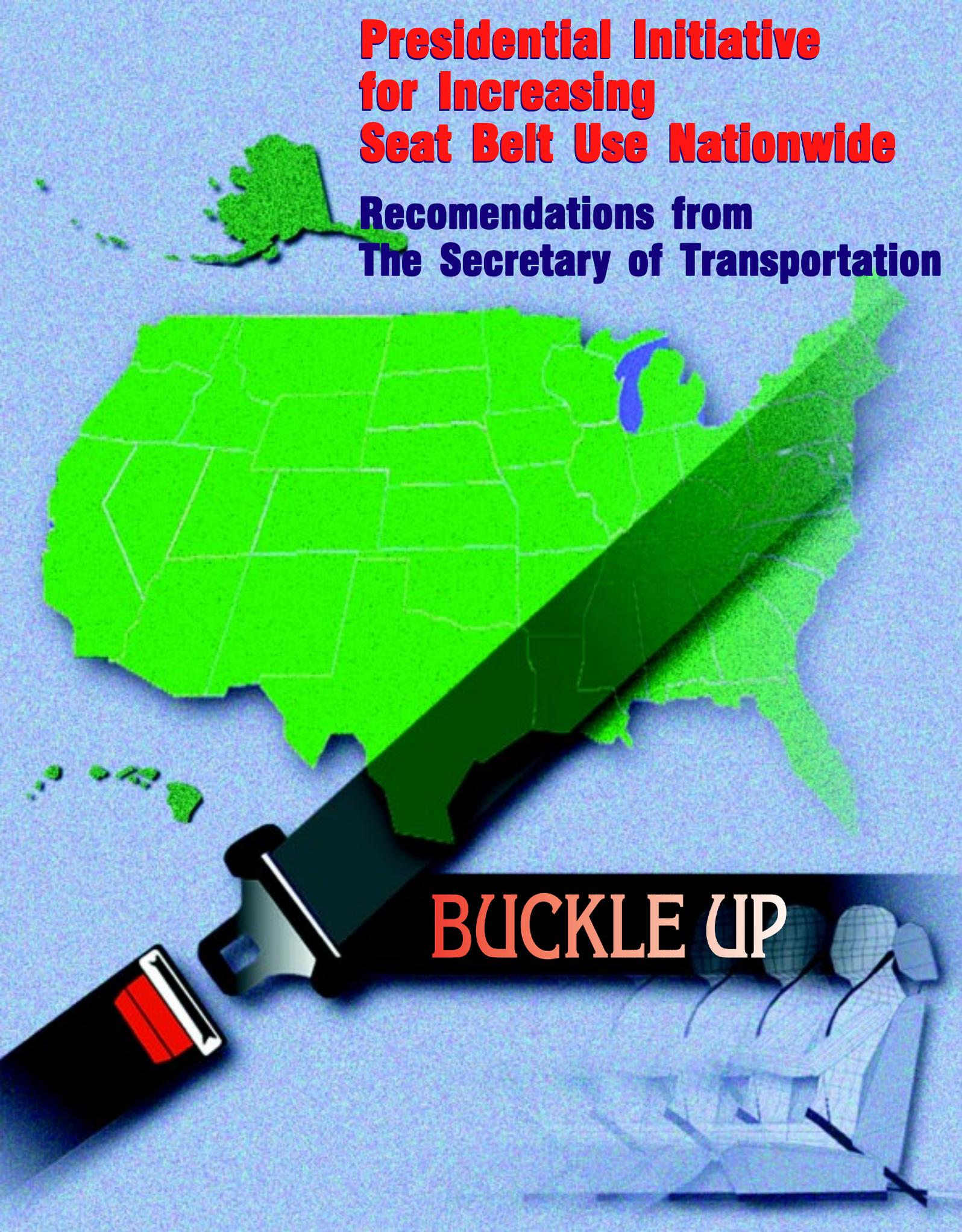


# Presidential Initiative for Increasing Seat Belt Use Nationwide

Recomendations from  
The Secretary of Transportation



**BUCKLE UP**



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## Recommendations from the Secretary of Transportation

### President Clinton's Directive

In his weekly radio address to the nation on December 28, 1996, President Clinton asked all Americans to always wear seat belts as a first line of defense against traffic injuries and fatalities and to always keep children, ages 12 and under, buckled in the back seat where they are safest. On January 23, 1997, the President directed the Secretary of Transportation to prepare a plan to increase the use of seat belts nationwide.

The President directed the Secretary to work with Congress, the states, and other concerned groups, including the automobile and insurance industries and safety and consumer groups, to develop the plan. He further directed that the plan address:

- 1) *state laws that require the use of seat belts;*
- 2) *assistance from the Department of Transportation to improve these state laws; and*
- 3) *a comprehensive education campaign by the public and private sectors to help the public understand the need to wear seat belts.*

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), as the lead agency in developing the plan, met with and solicited input from Members of Congress, other Federal agencies, the states, the private sector, including automobile manufacturers and insurers, and many other groups and organizations. The plan presented here is based on their advice and on a solid foundation of research and practical experience with strategies to increase seat belt use.

### Background

#### *Crashes Aren't Accidents*

The vast majority of all fatal and non-fatal injuries in America, including traffic injuries, are not acts of fate but are predictable and preventable. Injuries are a major health care problem and are the leading cause of death for people age 1 to 42. Fatalities, however, are only a small part of the total injury picture. For each injury-related death, there are 19 hospitalizations for injury and another 300 injuries that require medical attention. Every year, one in four Americans will have a potentially preventable injury serious enough to require medical care. These injuries account for almost 10 percent of all physician office visits and 38 percent of all hospital emergency department visits. Injury patterns vary by age group, gender, and cultural group. There are also seasonal and geographic patterns to injury. Injuries pose a significant drain on the health care system, incurring huge treatment, acute care, and rehabilitation costs.

#### *Fatalities are Just the Tip of the Iceberg...*



For each death, 19 persons are hospitalized and 300 have injuries requiring medical care

## Annual Injury Costs Are Enormous! Example: Motor Vehicle

- \$150.5 billion in societal costs
- \$17 billion in medical care
- \$55 billion to employers
- \$54.7 billion in lost productivity
- Insurance/legal costs
- Pain and suffering



Each year, traffic crashes in the United States claim about 41,000 lives and cost Americans \$150 billion in economic costs, including \$17 billion in

medical and emergency expenses, lost productivity, and property loss. Traffic injuries are the leading cause of injury deaths and the leading cause of all deaths for people ages 6 to 27. They also are the leading cause of on-the-job fatalities and the third leading cause of death for all Americans; only cancer and heart attacks claim more American lives. However, far more people are injured and survive motor vehicle crashes than die in these crashes. In 1995, for example, while almost 41,800 persons were killed in traffic crashes, over 3.4 million injuries were documented in police-reported crashes.

Traffic crashes aren't "accidents." They are both predictable and preventable. The quickest, easiest, and most effective way to prevent traffic injuries and fatalities is to make certain that every vehicle occupant is properly buckled up on every trip.

## It's Everyone's Problem

The motor vehicle injury problem affects all Americans. The cost of personal pain and suffering, the loss of a loved one, and serious injury to a family member cannot be measured. Every person in America also bears the economic costs of motor vehicle crashes — on average, \$580 a year. These include the costs of the emergency response providers, higher medical and insurance costs, and lost productivity. When individuals don't wear seat belts, these costs increase considerably because the injuries are more serious.

Because government at all levels pays some of the costs of traffic injuries, government at all levels shares the responsibility to reduce traffic injuries and costs. Publicly funded health programs and other public services, such as law enforcement and emergency medical services, are greatly impacted whenever someone is injured in a motor vehicle crash. According to a 1996 NHTSA study of 10 states, 24 percent of inpatient hospital costs are paid by Medicare, Medicaid, and other government sources. NHTSA estimates that if seat belt usage rates for front seat passengers in automobiles and light trucks were to increase from the present 68 percent to 85 percent, Medicare and Medicaid would save \$275 million a year. With a 90 percent use rate, the savings would total \$356 million a year!

## Medicare and Medicaid Savings\* by Increased Seat Belt Use

### Seat Belt Use Rate



\*Estimated in millions of 1996 dollars

Business also incurs enormous costs from traffic crashes through lost productivity and higher insurance and medical costs. On-the-job crashes cost employers almost \$22,000 per crash and \$110,000 per injury. Traffic crashes on- and off-the-job cost American business an estimated \$55 billion in 1994. It pays for business to participate in solving this problem.

The health care industry shares in the economic burden produced by traffic injuries. Many health care costs of traffic injuries are either not reimbursed or are paid with taxpayer dollars.

Moreover, on average, hospital charges for an unbelted driver admitted as an inpatient exceed the inpatient hospital charges of a belted driver by \$5,000.

Insurance premiums reflect part of the problem. When a person is injured in a motor vehicle crash, private insurance, Medicaid, Medicare, the injured person, or the victim's family pays. When the person is not properly restrained, everyone pays more. Insurance companies frequently assume the financial burden of injuries requiring long term treatment and care and pass the costs on to customers as higher premiums. If an insurance company is not involved, or if the coverage is insufficient, eventually some treatment costs are paid with taxpayer dollars.

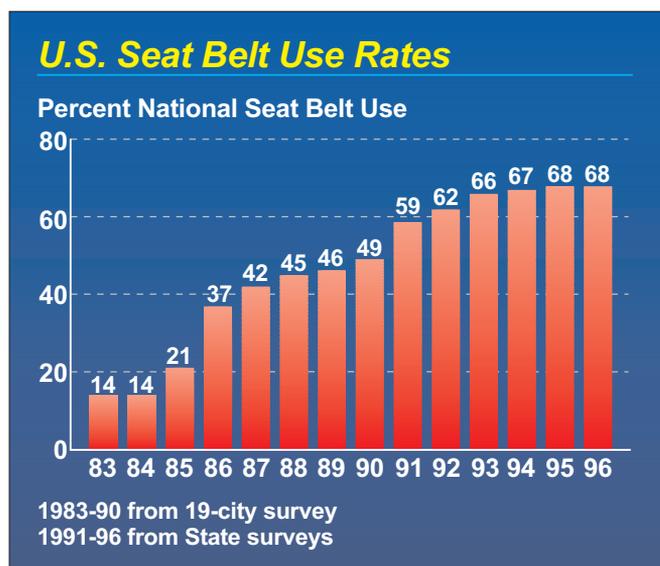
Preventing needless injuries and deaths requires a commitment to traffic safety at all levels of government — local, state<sup>1</sup>, and Federal. It also requires the support of partners in private industry, citizen groups, and nonprofit organizations. Most important, this problem requires individuals to take personal responsibility for their own and their family's safety by making certain that everyone is properly buckled up, every time, on every trip.

<sup>1</sup>References in this report to "states" apply to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Indian Nations, and the United States Territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

## America's Experience with Seat Belt and Child Seat Use

Seat belts and child safety seats work. Yet, fewer than 40 percent of both adults and children who died in traffic crashes were properly restrained.

**Seat belts work.** They are the most effective means of reducing fatalities and serious injuries when traffic crashes occur and are estimated to save 9,500 lives in America each year. Research has found that lap/shoulder belts, when used properly, reduce the risk of fatal injury to front seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent. For light truck occupants, seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 60 percent and moderate-to-critical injury by 65 percent.



Every 14 seconds someone in America is injured in a traffic crash and every 12 minutes someone is killed. When a traffic crash occurs, occupants are still traveling at the vehicle's original speed at the moment of impact. Just after the vehicle rapidly comes to a complete stop, unbelted occupants slam into the steering wheel, windshield, or other parts of the vehicle's interior. Seat belts are effective in reducing fatalities and injuries caused by this second collision, or "human collision," when the vehicle's occupants hit some part of the vehicle interior or other occupants. Seat belts provide the greatest protection against occupant ejection. In fatal crashes in 1995, only two percent of restrained passenger car occupants were ejected, compared to 25 percent of unrestrained occupants. Ejection from

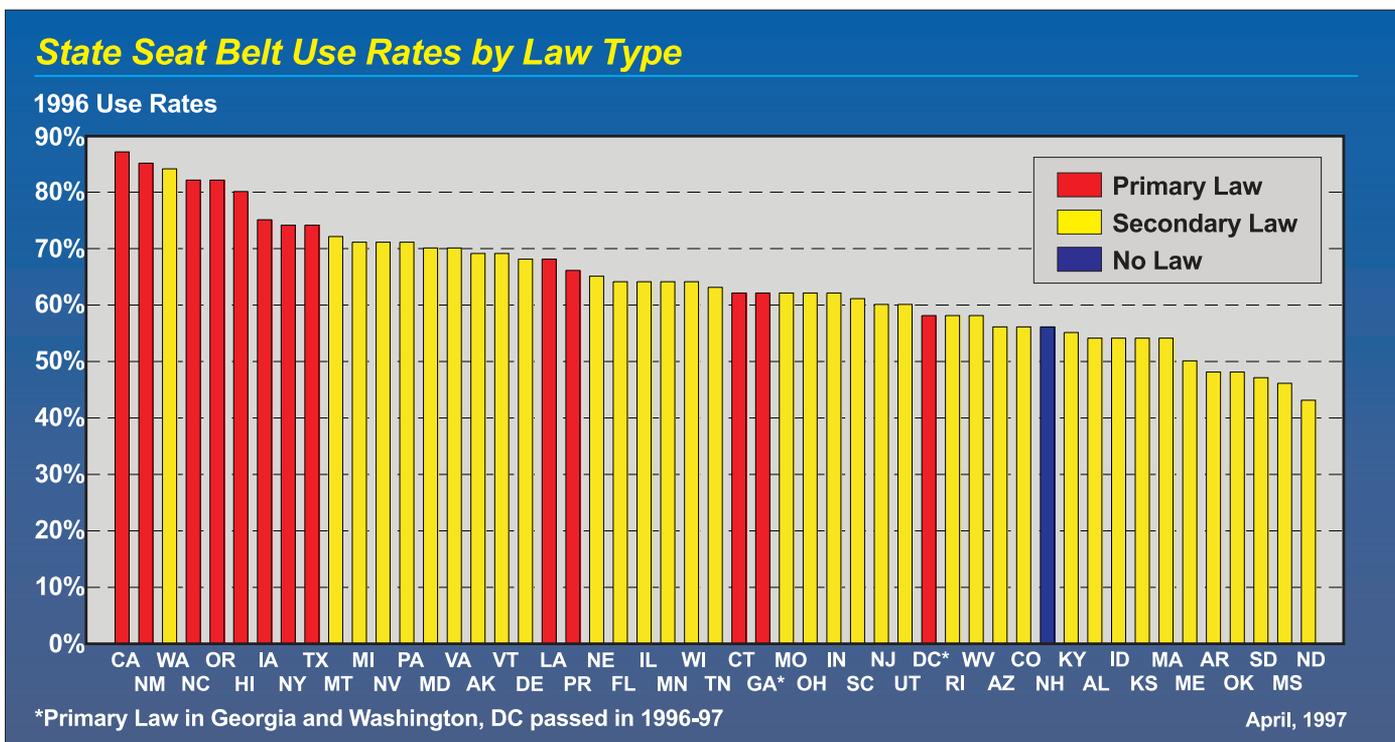
a vehicle is one of the most injurious events that can happen to a person in a crash. Three-quarters of the occupants who are ejected from passenger cars are killed.

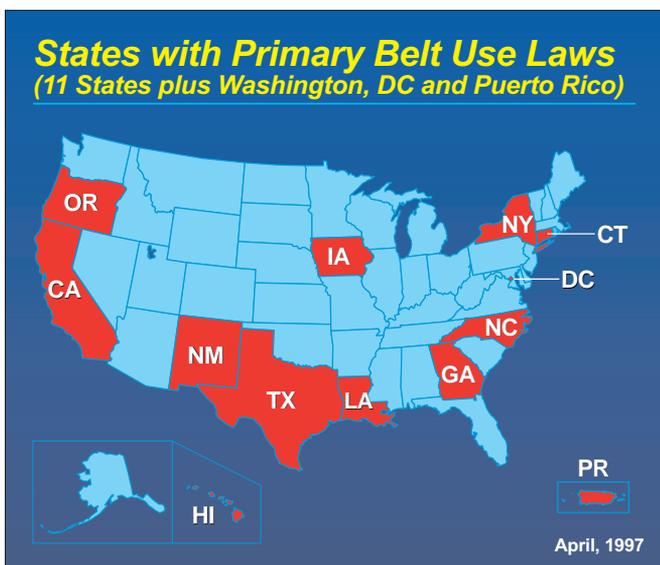
While the first seat belts were installed by automobile manufacturers in the 1950s, seat belt use was very low — only 10-15 percent nationwide — until the early 1980s. From 1984 through 1987, belt use increased from 14 percent to 42 percent as a result of the passage of seat belt use laws in 31 states. Then, from 1990 through 1992, belt use increased from 49 percent to 62 percent as a result of a national effort of highly visible enforcement and public education.

Since then, belt use has risen slowly and some states have struggled to maintain seat belt use at current levels. In 1996, belt use nationwide was 68 percent, and ranged across the states from a high of 87 percent in California, to a low of 43 percent in North Dakota. Currently, 49 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and all the U.S. Territories have seat belt laws. New Hampshire is the only exception. (New Hampshire requires seat belt use up to age 12.) In 38 states, the law provides only for “secondary” enforcement of seat belt violations, requiring an officer to stop a violator for another infraction before issuing a citation for failure to buckle up. Under primary enforcement, a citation

can be written whenever a law enforcement officer observes an unbelted driver or passenger. Currently, 11 states, the U.S. Territories, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, all have primary (or “standard”) enforcement laws. Maryland recently passed a primary seat belt enforcement law that goes into effect October 1, 1997. California, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, the Virgin Islands, and the District of Columbia had secondary enforcement laws, but upgraded their laws to primary enforcement. No state, except the District of Columbia, has a seat belt use law that assesses driver license penalty points. The District of Columbia’s new law, after a six-month grace period to educate the public, authorizes the assessment of two penalty points and a \$50 fine for a seat belt use violation. The District’s new law covers all seating positions.

Seat belt use in the 11 states with primary (standard) seat belt use laws currently averages about 15 percentage points higher than in states with secondary laws. California and Louisiana increased their seat belt use rate by 13 and 18 percentage points, respectively, by upgrading their secondary laws to primary laws. Early reports from Georgia suggest that similar gains will be achieved. Georgia had a use rate of 53 percent near the end of 1995, which fell to 51 percent shortly before the change to primary enforcement on July 1, 1996. After four





months of primary enforcement (and despite the media's and law enforcement's attention on the Olympics during that period), statewide use was observed at 62 percent.

To understand why seat belt use is not higher, it is important to understand who does not use seat belts. Americans can be classified as *non-users*, *part-time users*, and *full-time users*.

*Non-users* represent only 5 to 10 percent of the population, but are the most difficult to convert to seat belt use. High risk drivers are most typically *non-users* of seat belts. They are more likely than others to drive after drinking, to be involved in a serious crash, and are also the least likely to be responsible for the social and economic consequences of their behavior. These are the drivers who would benefit most from using their seat belts. They often appear to believe that seat belts can cause more harm than good or that government should not mandate behaviors that affect only them. Non-users come from all segments of society but are frequently male, less than 30 years of age, unmarried, and have little or no post-secondary education. They often drive pickup trucks or sport utility vehicles and live in rural areas.

*Part-time users* are often people who believe that seat belts reduce the severity of injury in motor vehicle crashes but who believe that they are not at risk when driving on short, familiar, low speed trips. Many part-time users think of themselves as full-time users because they wear their belts when they

believe they are at risk of crash involvement. The greatest gains in seat belt use have been achieved by increasing the number of situations in which part-time users wear their seat belts. Since members of this group already believe that seat belts are beneficial, they may be converted to full-time users through education, but messages must be presented in new ways so part-time users will pay attention.

Almost three-quarters of Americans say they are *full-time users*. However, of these, almost 10 percent acknowledge that they did not use their seat belts on at least one occasion during the past week and studies have shown that self-reported seat belt use is 12 to 25 percentage points higher than observed use. In NHTSA surveys, full-time users say their primary reason for wearing seat belts is to avoid injury. In NHTSA observational surveys, the female use rate is 10 percentage points higher than the male use rate. Overall seat belt use rates are highest in the suburbs, followed by cities, then rural areas.

A barrier to increasing seat belt use is that many state and local leaders do not understand the linkage of seat belt use to social burdens. The combined costs to government, health care systems, business, and individuals make this a community issue that cannot be ignored or underestimated. Sometimes the failure to recognize that seat belt use reduces deaths, injuries, and costs resulted in the adoption of secondary belt laws in many states. Secondary laws often are not enforced vigorously.

***Child safety seats work.*** Children, especially those under the age of 5, are vulnerable in collisions because of the size and shape of their bodies. The child safety seat is designed to spread the forces of a crash over more of the body for front-facing toddlers, and cradle the fragile neck and back of the rear-facing infant.

Child safety seats are the most effective occupant protection devices used in motor vehicles today. If used correctly, they are 71 percent effective in reducing fatalities in children under the age of 5 and 69 percent effective in reducing the need for hospitalization. Unfortunately, parents and other care givers too often consider child seats inconvenient, out of their financial reach, or too difficult to install. Others are uninformed or misinformed about correct child safety seat use. About 50 percent of children under age 5 who died

in crashes were unrestrained. Of the remaining 50 percent, 26 percent were in an adult seat belt which does not provide effective protection for most children under age 5. Others were in a child restraint system, but had not been restrained properly. In studies conducted by NHTSA to observe child safety seat misuse, nearly 80 percent of the child seats observed were misused in one or more ways. In some cases, the seat was not properly attached to the vehicle; in others, the child was not appropriately buckled into the seat.

### *Seat Belt and Child Safety Seat Use Outside the United States*

Many other countries have seat belt use rates significantly higher than the United States. For example, use rates in Canada, Australia, and several Western European countries exceed 90 percent, while use rates in Great Britain exceed 80 percent. Seat belt use laws in these countries typically allow primary (standard) enforcement and also cover occupants of light trucks and vans in addition to automobiles. Fines for noncompliance are generally higher than in the United States, and some jurisdictions assess demerit points against driver's licenses for seat belt use law violations. In contrast, except for the District of Columbia, states in the U.S. do not assess penalty points for adult seat belt use violations.

In Europe, some countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) have laws that permit child passengers in the front seat provided they are in a child safety seat or seat belt. This approach is typical of state laws in the U.S. Other European countries (Belgium, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Spain) have child passenger safety laws that require children up to a specified age and weight to ride in the rear seat. However, some of these countries have exemptions to these laws that permit children to ride in front passenger seating positions provided they are in a child safety seat or seat belt. Foreign child passenger safety laws are often "nationwide" as opposed to state-by-state as they are in the U.S.

Belt use rates in Canada and the U.S. did not differ markedly until the mid-1980s, when Canadian provinces began implementing comprehensive

special traffic enforcement programs (STEPS). These highly publicized enforcement efforts achieved belt use rates in the 80 percent range. When Canada decided to establish a national 95 percent seat belt use goal, provinces amended their laws to add driver license penalty points. With these penalty point provisions, seat belt use in Canada has risen to 92 percent for drivers and 90 percent for front seat passengers.

## Taking Responsibility

### *It's Easy to Increase Seat Belt Use — All It Takes Is Everyone*

**Click!** Buckle up. It's easy and it takes three seconds. Once a person establishes the habit of wearing seat belts on every trip, it's usually a habit for life. Examples from businesses, local communities, states, and many other countries show that seat belt use can be increased in America.

Just as the problem of low seat belt use rates belongs to everyone in America, so does the solution. Everyone must buckle up properly, on every trip. Only through the cooperation of all levels of government (Federal, state, and local), the private sector, interest groups, citizen activists, other interested parties, and individuals, can the nation increase its use rate. Through collective partnerships, individuals *can* be educated and encouraged to change behavior and assume personal responsibility for themselves and their families.

In this partnership, the Federal Government has a role to play. It can develop the "tools" for this collective effort, help establish new partnerships, provide formula and incentive grants, give hands-on assistance when requested, and furnish examples of model programs that work and that can be replicated nationwide.

Many states, communities, and organizations have helped raise seat belt and child safety seat use substantially. Their successful methods can be shared and duplicated. Below are some examples of "best practices":

- North Carolina's multi-partnered "Click It or Ticket" provides an excellent example. North Carolina began this highly visible enforcement

program in 1993, modeled on the successful Canadian STEPs. Seat belt use rose from 65 percent to 83 percent, one of the nation's highest use rates. In the first two years of "Click It or Ticket," fatal and serious injuries were reduced by 15 percent, and taxpayers saved more than \$100 million in health care related costs. Nearly every law enforcement agency in the state participates in the program.

- The Navajo Nation Tribal Council passed a seat belt use law in 1988. Tribal enforcement and awareness activities began that year and expanded in 1992 with a Federal grant from the Bureau of Indian Affairs to establish a Community Traffic Safety Program to emphasize raising the tribe's seat belt use. The program combined community-wide education, school-based injury prevention, Safe Kids coalition programs, and a child safety seat loaner program. The program also provided for improved traffic records, defensive driver training, and an impaired driving task force. Navajo Police undertook aggressive enforcement of the tribe's primary (standard) occupant protection laws through routine patrols and highly publicized checkpoints. By the end of 1995, surveys showed that low belt use on the reservation (initially measured at 8 percent) soared to 78 percent for the Navajo people, and there was a 50 percent drop in hospital admissions. Tribal employees operating government vehicles are now buckling up 100 percent of the time.
- The United Parcel Service (UPS) boasts a solid traffic safety record. With more than 84,000 drivers nationwide, UPS has a zero tolerance policy for unsafe driver behavior behind the wheel. As part of its defensive driving program, based on establishing good driver habits, UPS instructs its drivers that *if the wheels are in motion, the driver must be secured with a seat belt* — even if the vehicle is moving just a few feet. Three decades ago, UPS made a conscious decision to install seat belts in its vehicles to protect its drivers. As a result of UPS' comprehensive driver training program, wearing seat belts has become a habit among UPS employees. Since the inception of UPS' commitment to seat belt usage and other safe driving habits, fatal injury and crash rates have declined steadily.

## ***Everyone Can Participate***

Everyone in America can participate in this national effort to save lives and prevent injuries by buckling up properly on every trip. While it is ultimately the responsibility of the individual to buckle up and to ensure that all children in a motor vehicle are properly restrained, there is also a role for many groups and organizations, both public and private, to provide the tools that will help get non-users and part-time users into the healthy habit. The following lists examples of participants and the kinds of roles they can adopt:

**President:** As the nation's Chief Executive, the President can provide overall leadership for seat belt use and bring together leaders of the public and private sectors, media, national organizations, and others to concentrate their energy and resources toward a single goal and mission. The President can urge Congress to support and fund policies to advance seat belt use, energize new partners, and re-energize existing partners by setting the tone and supporting a national effort.

**Congress:** The Senate and House of Representatives can provide funding and establish programs that encourage states to adopt legislation and to educate the public on the importance of proper seat belt and child safety seat use.

**DOT Secretary:** The Secretary of Transportation can provide vision and administer overall seat belt and child safety seat programs; dedicate staff for program development, implementation, and evaluation; provide funding to states (under the Highway Safety Act of 1966, as amended, 23 U.S.C. §§ 402 and 403); promote public/private partnerships; and provide leadership to other Federal agencies.

**Federal Agencies:** Federal agencies can promote seat belt use with their employees and constituents.

**States:** States can build partnerships and develop strategies to pass and visibly enforce primary (standard) seat belt enforcement laws and comprehensive child passenger safety laws. States can support and coordinate effective seat belt and child safety seat public education.

**National Organizations and Coalitions:** Groups such as Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, Air Bag Safety Campaign, American College of

Emergency Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Coalition for Traffic Safety, International Association of Chiefs of Police, National Association of Governors' Highway Safety Representatives, National Governors' Association, Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, Parent Teacher Association, and others can provide valuable technical assistance and resources. They can build constituent efforts and partnerships, advocate strengthened laws and increased enforcement, and provide education at the state and local level.

**Law Enforcement:** The strong support of law enforcement agencies nationwide is essential for success. Law enforcement leadership must encourage and be supportive of officers enforcing occupant protection laws. The public must be supportive of law enforcement officers.

**Business:** Many businesses already have made major contributions toward increasing seat belt use — from local businesses to major international corporations. As a group, business is respected by Congress, state legislatures, community governments, and private citizens, and wields influence in determining legislative, economic, and commercial priorities. Business can promote the “healthy habit” through a wide variety of strategies and is an essential partner in collective efforts.

**Media:** The media and other public and private communication outlets have made the public aware of the dangers of not being properly restrained and can assist in changing behaviors. Recently, the media have reported heavily upon the several dozen persons killed by air bags to educate the public about the potential dangers of these devices. The media can do the same in other areas to highlight

the thousands of persons killed each year through failure to use seat belts and child safety seats, or to use them properly. The media can also help publicize state and local law enforcement efforts.

**Sports Organizations and Athletes:** Athletes from professional, college, school, and neighborhood sports teams can serve as role models and set examples by being seat belt wearers. Sports teams can promote seat belt use through a variety of venues, such as special activities, media events, arena programs, signs, and announcements.

**Health Care Professionals:** Doctors, nurses, and other medical, emergency, and health care professionals add their unique perspective to the problem. They can use their experience, knowledge, and professional reputations to educate Congress, state legislators, the media, patients, and the general public about the dangers of not buckling up and not using child restraints properly.

**Prosecutors and Judges:** The judicial system is an integral part of increasing seat belt and child safety seat use. The court system must support law enforcement officers who cite individuals for noncompliance of belt laws or who put their children at risk by not properly restraining them. As officers of the court, prosecutors and judges can send a firm message to the public that seat belt and child restraint laws are important.

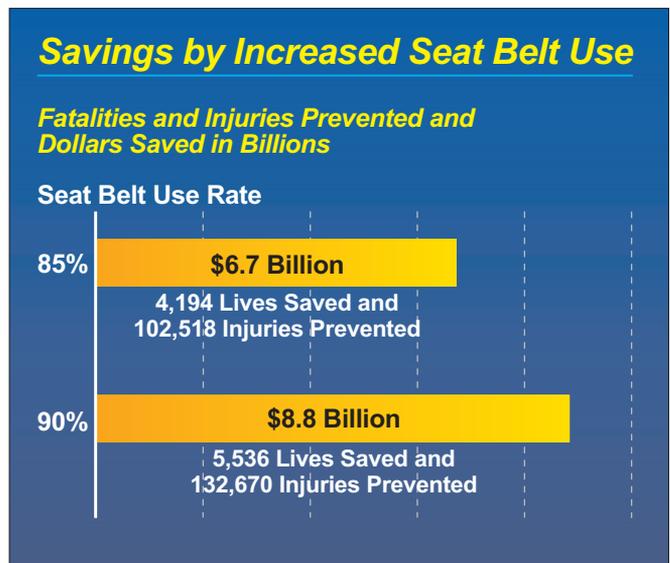
**Educators:** Youth are both the problem, with very low seat belt use rates, and the solution. Proper seat belt use habits, if established when individuals are young, will likely last a lifetime. Educators can be effective in teaching and reinforcing seat belt use habits.

## New National Goals

America must set ambitious seat belt and child safety seat use goals. We have an unprecedented opportunity to save lives, prevent injuries, reduce health care and other costs, and improve the lives of all Americans — simply by increasing proper seat belt and child safety seat use. But to do this, we must be bold and reach beyond “business as usual.” Bold goals will require commitment and cooperation from everyone living in the United States. America *can* do it.

- **Increase national seat belt use to 85% by 2000 and 90% by 2005** (from 68% in 1996)
- **Reduce child occupant fatalities (0-4 years) by 15% in 2000 and by 25% in 2005** (from a total of 685 in 1995)

Reaching these goals would result in significant reductions in deaths, injuries, and their economic costs to society. Increasing the seat belt use rate from the current 68 percent (1996) to 85 percent would prevent an estimated 4,194 fatalities and 102,518 injuries annually. This reduction in injuries and deaths would result in an economic savings of approximately \$6.7 billion annually (1996 dollars). Increasing the seat belt use rate from the current 68 percent to 90 percent would prevent an estimated 5,536 fatalities and 132,670 injuries annually, and would save \$8.8 billion annually.



## The National Strategy

The National Strategy presents a collaborative, cooperative four point plan to achieve the ambitious national goals of increasing seat belt and child safety seat use. Individuals must take responsibility for themselves and for their child passengers by making certain everyone in the vehicle is properly buckled up — every time and on every trip. It will, however, take the collective efforts of many people and many organizations to ensure that every person in America has the knowledge and tools to make the right choice and to take personal responsibility. The National Strategy has a role for everyone and builds on the considerable activities, funding, and resources already committed by many different organizations to this common cause.

## The Four Point Plan

The plan to increase seat belt use in America has four elements that, when implemented together, have proven to be effective in increasing seat belt use. The first element is the most important: We must join together to **build the public-private partnerships** necessary to help America reach its potential to save lives and prevent injuries through the use of seat belts and child safety seats. In addition, each state must **enact strong legislation** and embrace **active, high visibility law enforcement**. Finally, all public and private partners must conduct well-coordinated, **effective public education**. These strategies work.

**Point 1.** To reach our goals, we will need to **build public-private partnerships** at the local, state, and federal levels. The problem is too big for any one group or coalition to tackle alone; no one of us is as effective as all of us are together. While it is the individual who must ultimately take responsibility to buckle up and safely secure all children riding in the vehicle, it is the responsibility of a great many to encourage, enact, enforce, and inform.

Driving is a privilege that comes with responsibilities. Through public-private partnerships, we can collectively address the seat belt non-use problem and establish a national attitude that wearing seat belts and using child safety seats is the expected behavior in America. Partnerships can coordinate and execute efforts that will weave the seat belt message into America's consciousness — in the home, throughout hometowns, at school, in the workplace, on the road, at recreational sites, and in the media. Public and private sector organizations can join together to set the tone and serve as models who demonstrate that we are a nation that cares about children, families, good health, and well-being. By framing passenger protection as a health issue, public-private partnerships can reach millions of individuals with correct and helpful information, and can encourage seat belt part-time and non-users to make the right decision and buckle up.

There are, and have been, many strong partnerships over the past 10 years that have worked to increase seat belt and child safety seat use in America. Many public and private organizations have contributed funding and in-kind resources and have worked together to achieve our Nation's current 68 percent seat belt use rate. In communities across the country, businesses have joined with service groups, law enforcement agencies, citizen activists, county engineers, schools, and others to increase local use rates. States have formed statewide seat belt coalitions, distributed information, passed and enforced laws, and developed strategies for increasing usage. Large businesses have taken on the issue because it is cost effective and it makes sense. Now it is time to energize existing partners and bring on new ones to assist in meeting the national goals. New ideas, new resources, additional energy, and additional partners are needed.

It will, however, take more than marketing a healthier lifestyle to get hard core seat belt non-wearers, and those who fail to secure their children properly in motor vehicles, to take responsibility. Additional strategies are needed.

**Point 2.** The second component of the National Strategy is for states to **enact strong legislation** by adopting primary (standard) seat belt laws and closing the gaps in child passenger safety laws. Under primary enforcement laws, a citation can be written whenever a law enforcement officer observes an unbelted driver or passenger. In states with secondary laws, an officer can issue a citation only after the driver is stopped or cited for some other infraction. Child passenger safety laws should cover every child (up to age 16), in every seating position, in every passenger vehicle. Currently, although every state has a child passenger safety law, some laws include only very young children, some cover only the front seat, and some exempt pickup trucks and vans.

**Point 3.** The National Strategy's third component is to **conduct active, high-visibility enforcement** of seat belt laws to achieve higher seat belt use rates. Experience has shown that, after seat belt laws pass, use rates rise because of the public's perception that they must buckle up. However, if the laws are not actively enforced, use rates drop. Seat belt use laws need to be enforced in the same way that other traffic infractions are, like speeding or running a red light.

Another benefit of increased traffic enforcement, in addition to saving lives and dollars, is a measurable reduction in crime. Active, highly visible traffic enforcement provides a major opportunity to catch criminals. Because most criminals drive to and from crime scenes, it is not surprising that as many as one-third of criminal apprehensions occur as part of traffic stops. Nor is it surprising that high intensity law enforcement programs, such as those conducted in North Carolina and Tennessee, result in a large number of criminal apprehensions and recoveries of stolen property.

A variety of seat belt enforcement approaches are encouraged to fit a community's needs. Examples include ticketing, conducting checkpoints, safety checks, child safety seat clinics, and officers serving as role models by wearing their own seat belts. Active enforcement is a must. In addition, law

enforcement must take every opportunity to educate the public about the importance of seat belts, child safety seats, and always seating children in the back seat of motor vehicles.

No child should be allowed to ride unrestrained in a vehicle. To ensure that children ride safely, law enforcement should take action on every child passenger safety law violation they see. Enforcing child passenger safety laws does not require extensive training on correct use. An officer needs only to observe a child who is at risk and do

something about it. Sometimes officers believe that if a family cannot afford to purchase a child seat, they should not add to the family's burden by giving them a ticket with a fine. But other options are available. An officer can use a stop as an educational opportunity. The officer can refer the adult to a low-cost or "loaner" child safety seat program, or refer the adult to a local child passenger safety assistance program for technical advice if there is a misuse problem.

**Point 4.** The fourth component of the National Strategy is to expand **effective public education** on the benefits of seat belt and child safety seat use and the requirements of seat belt and child safety seat use laws. Public education may include a broad range of activities such as high visibility enforcement campaigns, promotional events, and community-based initiatives, but these activities must be well planned and well coordinated.

To educate the public about the dangers of not using or misusing seat belts and child safety seats, efforts can range from national campaigns, such as "Vince and Larry" (designed by the Ad Council), to inclusion of passenger safety information in state driver licensing booklets, instructional programs in schools and the workplace, and one-on-one opportunities delivered by health care professionals or child care workers. The crucial element is that the public receives a single, simple message, but receives it often and in many different ways.



# Specific Activities to Implement the National Strategy To Increase Seat Belt Use Nationwide

## The President

### The President is taking immediate action to support the National Strategy and new goals by:

- Establishing the National Strategy for increasing motor vehicle seat belt and child safety seat use as an Administration priority
- Issuing a new Executive Order directing all agencies to: require on-the-job seat belt use for all Federal employees; directing the Department of Defense (DOD) and the National Park Service to institute programs and policies to increase seat belt use on DOD installations and in national park areas; encouraging Tribal Governments to adopt programs and policies for highways on Tribal lands; and encouraging government contractors, subcontractors, and grantees to institute on-the-job seat belt use programs and policies for their employees
- Asking all Americans to take responsibility for their own safety and their family's safety by making certain that everyone is properly buckled up, on every trip

## Congress

To assist citizens, communities, and states to increase their seat belt and child safety seat use rates, and to provide them the tools they need, Members of Congress should:

- Enact and fully fund Section 2002 (m) of the Administration's National Economic Crossroads Transportation Efficiency Act of 1997 (NEXTEA) which provides incentive grants to states for improving their occupant protection programs or their seat belt use rates; and Section 11006 of the Surface Transportation Safety Act of 1997 which

provides for a transfer of a certain percentage of a state's highway construction funds to safety programs, beginning in FY 2003, if the state fails to enact primary seat belt laws or fails to reach specified seat belt use levels

- Fully fund the occupant protection portions of the Department of Transportation's fiscal year 1998 budget request
- Advocate seat belt and child safety seat use publicly and with constituents
- Actively support and become involved in coalitions of businesses and national organizations to advance seat belt and child safety seat education, legislation, and enforcement

## Federal Agencies

### All Federal agencies will:

- Implement the President's Executive Order which directs all agencies to require on-the-job seat belt use for all Federal employees; directs the Department of Defense (DOD) and the National Park Service to institute programs and policies to increase seat belt use on DOD installations and in national park areas; encourages Tribal Governments to adopt programs and policies for highways on Tribal lands; and encourages government contractors, subcontractors, and grantees to institute on-the-job seat belt use programs and policies for their employees
- Provide information annually to the Department of Transportation on seat belt use rates and statistics of crashes, injuries, and related costs involving Federal employees
- Promote proper seat belt and child safety seat use in regular activities with constituents

## Some Departments will do more:

### Department of Transportation

#### Secretary of Transportation

- Establish seat belt and child safety seat use as a top DOT priority
- Direct all DOT modes to promote seat belt and child safety seat use with constituents
- Promote seat belt and child safety seat use in speeches and through media events
- Conduct a public/private round table to enlist corporate America's support
- Praise states, such as the District of Columbia, when they enact new primary seat belt laws
- Develop a model employee program of education, awareness, and data collection and transfer the model program to other agencies
- Conduct national and regional Moving Kids Safely conferences to develop and strengthen intermodal and public/private partnerships

#### National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in Cooperation with Other Modal Administrations

- Promote seat belt and child safety seat use with constituents and partner organizations
- Provide assistance to states seeking to enact or strengthen seat belt and child passenger safety legislation
- Provide financial support and technical assistance to states to support their efforts to actively and visibly enforce their seat belt and child passenger safety laws through expanded special traffic enforcement programs (STEP)
- Encourage increased participation by private and nonprofit partners to work with the agency, or as part of a coalition, to increase seat belt and child safety seat use
- Assist states to link crash, cost, and injury data
- Work with the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) program and other

employer groups to encourage additional employers to adopt seat belt use policies and programs

- Participate in building 200 additional Safe Communities (local programs that reduce fatalities, injuries, and associated costs) annually

### Department of Defense

- Adopt and actively enforce seat belt use policies on DOD installations
- Provide information annually to the Department of Transportation on seat belt use rates and statistics of crashes, injuries, and related costs involving occupants of motor vehicles driven on DOD installations
- Expand base safety officer training to include child safety seat education and use programs

### Department of Education

- Encourage health and safety officials in school districts to include the proper use of seat belts and child restraint systems in their health and wellness programs
- Work with NHTSA to encourage the development and adoption of a traffic safety curriculum for grades K-12 which stresses proper seat belt and child safety seat use
- Encourage school districts to adopt policies concerning seat belt and child safety seat use when transporting children

### Department of Health and Human Services

- Continue child safety seat training through public health offices, emphasizing proper restraint use and appropriate restraint systems (including seat belts and infant, toddler and booster seats)
- Continue to include child passenger safety education as part of the Healthy Child Care America Campaign for child care providers

- Promote seat belt and child safety seat use through all Maternal and Child Health programs
- Encourage adults, especially older persons, to wear seat belts properly at all times
- Promote passenger protection initiatives through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Safe America program
- Promote child safety seat use and educate parents through the Head Start program

## Department of Interior

- Adopt and actively enforce seat belt use policies in national park areas
- Provide information annually to the Department of Transportation on seat belt use rates and statistics of crashes, injuries, and related costs involving occupants of motor vehicles driven in national park areas

- Encourage Tribal Governments to adopt and actively enforce mandatory seat belt and child safety seat use laws
- Implement and expand seat belt and child safety seat education programs and training on Tribal lands

## Department of Justice

- Encourage active and highly visible enforcement of seat belt and child safety seat laws as part of community policing efforts
- Include seat belt and child safety seat enforcement projects in DOJ-funded programs

## Department of Labor

- Include seat belt use in performance-based workplace safety and health programs

## States

**States can take direct action to protect their citizens and reduce the costs of injuries to unrestrained occupants. States should:**

- Meet or exceed the National Goals of 85% seat belt use by the year 2000 and 90% by 2005
- Ensure strong support and participation from state leadership
- Build public-private partnerships to develop and execute statewide strategies
- Adopt primary (standard) seat belt enforcement laws and comprehensive child passenger safety laws to ensure coverage of all children up to age 16
- Support active, highly visible occupant protection law enforcement efforts
- Assess meaningful penalties for seat belt and child safety seat violations
- Provide resources for enforcement of seat belt and child passenger safety laws
- Support and coordinate public information and education programs
- Establish motor vehicle crash, injury, and cost data bases to quantify problems and measure success
- Ensure the availability of child safety seats for every child and provide technical support to ensure that children are properly positioned in correctly installed safety seats

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### Selected Activities:

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- Participate in the Air Bag Safety Campaign's Spring Mobilization and other national efforts (e.g., *Buckle Up, America!* and *Child Passenger Safety Week*)
- Provide law enforcement training and technical assistance (e.g., peer-to-peer, Chief Challenges, recognitions)
- Conduct annual seat belt use surveys to measure program success

- Work with law enforcement organizations to include seat belt and child safety seat use and enforcement training as part of standardized law enforcement curricula
- Sponsor prosecutor and judicial training to educate prosecutors and judges on the enforcement and adjudication issues regarding seat belt and child safety seat laws
- Conduct educational activities with state and local elected officials and their state organizations
- Encourage and assist in the development of Safe Community coalitions

## National Organizations and Coalitions

**Many national organizations and coalitions already support seat belt and child safety seat legislation, enforcement, and education. All organizations should:**

- Adopt seat belt and child safety seat use policies for their employees and encourage their members to do the same
- Support primary (standard) seat belt use laws and comprehensive child passenger safety laws to ensure coverage of all children up to age 16
- Support strong enforcement of occupant protection laws
- Assist in educating their constituencies on the importance of correct, full time seat belt and child safety seat use

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### Selected Activities:

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- Join in coalitions with other national organizations to advance seat belt and child safety seat education, legislation, and enforcement
- Contact private sector businesses and other local, state, and national organizations to provide information and recruit their involvement, and speak to executive board annual meetings about the importance of passenger protection

- Identify needs among members and partners for child safety seat training; provide training materials as needed; establish delivery mechanisms
- Identify target groups, determine outreach methods, and produce appropriate resource materials (NHTSA can provide technical assistance)

## Business

**Businesses have a crucial role to play in increasing proper seat belt and child safety seat use. They also will realize substantial benefits through decreased crash injury costs to their employees and their families. Businesses should:**

- Support primary (standard) enforcement seat belt use laws and comprehensive child passenger safety laws to ensure coverage of all children up to age 16
- Support strong enforcement of seat belt and child passenger safety laws
- Implement seat belt use policies and programs for their employees and their families
- Communicate seat belt and child safety seat use messages to their customers
- Join in coalitions with other businesses and national organizations (or affiliates) to advance seat belt and child safety seat education, legislation, and enforcement
- Contribute resources (both direct funding and in-kind services) to support outreach activities and public information and education efforts

### Selected Activities:

- Join Safe Community coalitions
- Join with government and national organizations in a broad-based occupant protection campaign and recruit additional participants

- Determine similar companies that have effective seat belt use policies and programs; set goals for company policies and programs; provide awards and recognition for outstanding employees, work teams, or divisions

## Media

**Media organizations have a responsibility and a special role to play. The media should:**

- Implement seat belt use policies and programs for their employees and their employees' families
- Help educate the public on the benefits of proper, full time seat belt and child safety seat use and the consequences of non-use
- Publicize state and community seat belt and child passenger safety enforcement efforts
- Indicate in stories about crashes whether seat belts and child safety seats were properly used

### Selected Activities:

- Request that all major television and radio networks develop and implement effective policies for reporting and illustrating seat belt and child safety seat use in news and entertainment programming
- Establish periodic monitoring and reporting of media practices with recognition for exemplary performance
- Serve on local task forces to assist in community efforts
- Request that on-air traffic reporters include seat belt and child safety seat messages during their on-going reporting

## Sports Participants and Organizations

**Sports organizations and teams at all levels (professional, college, school, and neighborhood) can promote the use of seat belts. Athletes can serve as role models and spokespersons. Sports organizations, teams, and individual athletes should:**

- Implement seat belt use policies and programs for their employees, their families, and their fans to promote a healthy lifestyle
- Participate in national, state, and local seat belt and child safety seat campaigns.

### Selected Activities:

- Promote seat belt and child safety seat use through special events and media participation
- Champion safety through announcements, electronic scoreboards, signs, buttons, and promotional items
- Sponsor “Buckle Up” promotions at games
- Establish ongoing arena seat belt programs including parking lot promotions and signs
- Join Safe Community coalitions

## Communities

**Most education and law enforcement takes place in our cities, counties, towns, and villages. Communities should:**

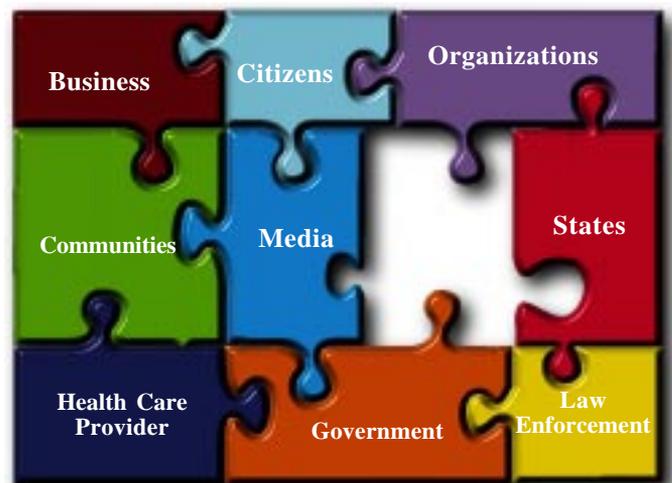
- Meet or exceed the National Goals of 85% seat belt use by the year 2000 and 90% by 2005
- Seek leadership and participation from mayors, councils, boards, and other local officials
- Implement seat belt use policies for all public employees
- Support traffic enforcement as one of their best investments in public safety

- Publicize state passenger protection laws and local ordinances
- Establish a Safe Community coalition

### Selected Activities:

- Encourage health care providers to assist in delivering passenger safety messages during health care visits
- Educate child care providers on how to transport children safely and provide information on proper seat belt and child safety seat use for distribution
- Participate in International Association of Chiefs of Police or other Chief Challenges

*Everyone can participate*



- Execute coordinated public information and education efforts relating to seat belts and child safety seats
- Provide seat belt and child safety seat training for school health/safety officials and educators
- Encourage prosecutors and judges to send a firm message to the public that seat belt and child restraint laws are important
- Encourage schools to teach children of all ages proper traffic safety practices, including seat belt and child safety seat use
- Organize child safety seat loaner programs and provide technical assistance to ensure that children are properly positioned in correctly installed safety seats

- Require students who park on school property to use seat belts and monitor results
- Conduct child safety seat clinics at preschools, restaurants, shopping area parking lots, and other locations where young children in safety seats are likely to visit

## Private Citizens

**Ultimately, it is the individual who must take responsibility for his or her own behavior. Since young children are unable to protect themselves, parents and care givers are responsible for transporting children safely. Every person living in America should:**

- Buckle up — every time, every trip
- Properly secure every child in a vehicle in a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt appropriate for the child’s age and weight
- Place children in the safest place in a vehicle — the back seat
- Never put a rear facing child seat (the kind used for infants) in the front seat of a car with an air bag
- Seek assistance if unsure about the correct way to secure a child in a safety seat or about the proper installation of a safety seat into a vehicle

## Reporting and Recognition

The Department of Transportation will coordinate and monitor progress of the National Strategy and will issue an Annual Report to the President each year by March 1. This report will include seat belt use rates and crash statistics. It will also report on seat belt use rates, crashes, injuries, and related costs involving Federal employees on official business and occupants of motor vehicles driven on Federal lands. Specific programs that have made significant progress, or are notable and deserving of recognition, will be identified.

## Funding

As is appropriate for a National Strategy in which everyone has a role, funding comes from many sources. States and communities make substantial expenditures to enforce their passenger protection laws and to educate the public about seat belt and child safety seat use. The private sector has also contributed substantially toward education, legislation, and enforcement activities to increase seat belt use. In particular, members of the Air Bag Safety Campaign will contribute over \$14 million toward the Campaign during its first two years, and many individual companies are conducting additional activities at their own expense. Virtually every highway safety organization in America is participating actively in this effort. The benefits that these organizations receive, in reduced traffic injuries, fatalities, and economic costs, will far exceed their expenditures. The level of voluntary commitment and funding that currently exists must continue.

The Federal Government has done, and will continue to do, its part. Specific funds to increase seat belt and child safety seat use are included in the Department of Transportation’s FY 1998 budget request and the Department’s reauthorization proposal. In FY 1998, the Department has requested \$10.184 million for occupant protection activities and an additional \$9 million for occupant protection incentive grants to states. The Department of Transportation’s reauthorization proposal includes \$20 million in each of the years FY 1998-2001 and \$22 million for each of the years FY 2002-2003 for state occupant protection incentive grants. It is expected that states, annually, will allocate more than \$20 million of the funds they receive from the Department of Transportation’s Section 402 traffic safety grants for occupant protection activities.

# Presidential Documents

Title 3—

Executive Order 13043 of April 16, 1997

The President

## Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including the Highway Safety Act of 1966, 23 U.S.C. 402 and 403, as amended, section 7902(c) of title 5, United States Code, and section 19 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, 29 U.S.C. 668, as amended, and in order to require that Federal employees use seat belts while on official business; to require that motor vehicle occupants use seat belts in national park areas and on Department of Defense ("Defense") installations; to encourage Tribal Governments to adopt and enforce seat belt policies and programs for occupants of motor vehicles traveling on highways in Indian Country; and to encourage Federal contractors, subcontractors, and grantees to adopt and enforce on-the-job seat belt use policies and programs, it is hereby ordered as follows:

**Section 1. Policies.** (a) *Seat Belt Use by Federal Employees.* Each Federal employee occupying any seating position of a motor vehicle on official business, whose seat is equipped with a seat belt, shall have the seat belt properly fastened at all times when the vehicle is in motion.

(b) *Seat Belt Use in National Parks and on Defense Installations.* Each operator and passenger occupying any seating position of a motor vehicle in a national park area or on a Defense installation, whose seat is equipped with a seat belt or child restraint system, shall have the seat belt or child restraint system properly fastened, as required by law, at all times when the vehicle is in motion.

(c) *Seat Belt Use by Government Contractors, Subcontractors and Grantees.* Each Federal agency, in contracts, subcontracts, and grants entered into after the date of this order, shall seek to encourage contractors, subcontractors, and grantees to adopt and enforce on-the-job seat belt policies and programs for their employees when operating company-owned, rented, or personally owned vehicles.

(d) *Tribal Governments.* Tribal Governments are encouraged to adopt and enforce seat belt policies and programs for occupants of motor vehicles traveling on highways in Indian Country that are subject to their jurisdiction.

**Sec. 2. Scope of Order.** All agencies of the executive branch are directed to promulgate rules and take other appropriate measures within their existing programs to further the policies of this order. This includes, but is not limited to, conducting education, awareness, and other appropriate programs for Federal employees about the importance of wearing seat belts and the consequences of not wearing them. It also includes encouraging Federal contractors, subcontractors, and grantees to conduct such programs. In addition, the National Park Service and the Department of Defense are directed to initiate rulemaking to consider regulatory changes with respect to enhanced seat belt use requirements and standard (primary) enforcement of such requirements in national park areas and on Defense installations, consistent with the policies outlined in this order, and to widely publicize and actively enforce such regulations. The term "agency" as used in this order means an Executive department, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 101, or any employing unit or authority of the Federal Government, other than those of the legislative and judicial branches.

**Sec. 3. Coordination.** The Secretary of Transportation shall provide leadership and guidance to the heads of executive branch agencies to assist them

with the employee seat belt programs established pursuant to this order. The Secretary of Transportation shall also cooperate and consult with the legislative and judicial branches of the Government to encourage and help them to adopt seat belt use programs.

**Sec. 4. Reporting Requirements.** The Secretary of Transportation, in cooperation with the heads of executive branch agencies, and after consultation with the judicial and legislative branches of Government, shall submit an annual report to the President. The report shall include seat belt use rates and statistics of crashes, injuries, and related costs involving Federal employees on official business and occupants of motor vehicles driven in national park areas, on Defense installations, and on highways in Indian Country. The report also shall identify specific agency programs that have made significant progress towards achieving the goals of this order or are notable and deserving of recognition. All agencies of the executive branch shall provide information to, and otherwise cooperate with, the Secretary of Transportation to assist with the preparation of the annual report.

**Sec. 5. Other Powers and Duties.** Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or alter the powers and duties of the heads of the various Federal agencies pursuant to the Highway Safety Act of 1966, 23 U.S.C. 402 and 403, as amended, section 19 of the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, 29 U.S.C. 668, as amended, or sections 7901, 7902, and 7903 of title 5, United States Code, nor shall it be construed to affect any right, duty, or procedure under the National Labor Relations Act, 29 U.S.C. 151 *et seq.*

**Sec. 6. General Provisions.** (a) Executive Order 12566 of September 26, 1986, is revoked. To the extent that this order is inconsistent with any provisions of any prior Executive order, this order shall control.

(b) If any provision of this order or application of any such provision is held to be invalid, the remainder of this order and other applications of such provision shall not be affected.

(c) Nothing in this order shall be construed to create a new cause of action against the United States, or to alter in any way the United States liability under the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. 2671-2680.

(d) The Secretary of Defense shall implement the provisions of this order insofar as practicable for vehicles of the Department of Defense.

(e) The Secretary of the Treasury and the Attorney General, consistent with their protective and law enforcement responsibilities, shall determine the extent to which the requirements of this order apply to the protective and law enforcement activities of their respective agencies.



THE WHITE HOUSE,  
April 16, 1997.