



Oregon Department of Transportation

NEWS RELEASE

Transportation Safety Division

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For More Information: Carla Levinski (503) 986-4199

Or Jay Remy (503) 986-4180

Officers out in force for Click It or Ticket

Late May is a great time for motorists to learn about safety — and avoid a ticket at the same time. Oregon law enforcement officers will join police agencies nationwide May 24 through June 6 to encourage use of safety belts and child restraints as the simplest and most effective way of preventing crash-related injuries and fatalities. Half of Oregon's 346 traffic fatalities in 2002 were not using proper restraints; at least 120 could have been prevented with proper seat belt use.

This year's national Click It or Ticket promotion coincides with Oregon's regularly scheduled Three Flags Campaign blitz which involves law enforcement agencies in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia. The campaign seeks to reduce the number of motor vehicle-related deaths and injuries by educating the public regarding proper use of safety belts, child safety seats and booster seats. Officers will pay special attention to increasing booster seat use and awareness of a new law that prohibits minors under age 18 from riding in the open bed of a pickup truck.

"We strongly encourage everyone to buckle up on every trip," said Carla Levinski, ODOT's Occupant Protection Program manager. ODOT offers the following reminders to maximize the protection afforded by your vehicle's restraint systems.

Reminders:

- Oregon law requires all occupants of passenger vehicles to properly use safety belts. This means that both parts of a lap and shoulder belt system must be worn together, only one person per belt, and no placement of the shoulder belt behind the back or under the arm. Any of these situations places the vehicle occupant at severe risk of internal crash injury.
- Children younger than four years old OR weighing less than 40 pounds must be restrained in child seats. Children over four or weighing more than 40 pounds must use booster seats until they turn six years old AND weigh at least 60 pounds.

- If the shoulder belt portion of the adult safety belt rides up onto your neck or feels uncomfortable, you may increase your comfort by sliding the built-in adjuster up or down or by moving your seat position.
- Various after-market accessories are marketed as belt adjusters or positioners. While most of these products are not safety-tested, if the comfort they provide makes the difference in whether you wear your belt, they are worth the investment.
- In motor homes and pickup trucks, safety belt use is required where belts are provided. However, be careful when transporting more people than your vehicle has belts; an unbelted occupant is 25 times more likely to be ejected in a crash than one who is belted in.
- Know the location of your vehicle's airbags and seat passengers to allow room for safe deployment. For front-mounted airbags, safe deployment requires the driver or passenger to be restrained and to sit at least ten inches back from the airbag compartment. NEVER place a rear-facing infant seat in the front seat of an airbag-equipped vehicle.
- For help with child safety seats or boosters, call the ACTS Oregon Child Safety Seat Resource Center at (503) 772-1315 in the Portland metro area, or (800) 772-1315 outside the metro area.
- For help with installation or retrofitting of safety belts, call your vehicle dealer or vehicle manufacturer's customer service department.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and disability for all Americans age one through 34 years old.

Oregon's crash fatality and injury rates have dropped 53 percent and 43 percent respectively, since the adult belt law was enacted in 1989. The law, coupled with active enforcement, resulted in Oregon safety belt use rates of 90.4 percent for front seat and 91 percent for all passengers in 2003. Oregon ranks fourth highest in belt use in the United States after Washington (94.8 percent), Hawaii (91.8 percent) and California (91.2 percent). The nationwide average use rate is 79 percent.

"A 90 percent usage rate is good," Levinski said, "but we can do better. The life you may save is worth the effort."

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