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A weekly Q&A
with local
law enforcement

Submit your question to news@owatonna.com or 444-2379

Q: What are the facts surrounding Minnesota seat belt laws?

A: The current seat belt law in Minnesota is a secondary offense, meaning an officer can only enforce the law if they officer witnesses another moving violation first.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety has published the following statistics regarding Minnesota seat belt use from 2005-2007:

- 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.
- 1,212 vehicle occupants were killed in motor vehicle crashes; of those, 614 were not wearing their seat belts.
- 4,203 vehicle occupants were seriously injured; of those, 1,298 were not buckled up.
- 296 motorists were killed during nighttime hours (9 p.m. – 3 a.m.) and of those killed, 62 percent were not wearing seat belts.
- Nationwide, traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for people ages 2- to 33-years-old.
- Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers: 16- to 19-year-olds are more likely to die in a crash than the next two leading causes of death combined (homicide and suicide). Of the 149 vehicle occupant crash fatalities in that age group, 75 were not 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.

If you have any more questions regarding seat belt laws you can contact your local law enforcement agency, or review the state statutes governing the use of seat belts online.

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