

News Release
For Immediate Release

Nine out of Ten Texans Buckle up, but Nearly Half Killed in Crashes Are Unbuckled!
This Year's Click It or Ticket Campaign Is May 19 to June 1.

While 9 out of 10 Texans buckle up, too many drivers and passengers continue to risk injury or death by not using seat belts. According to TxDOT, in 2013, of all people killed in vehicles in Texas, nearly half were reported as not wearing a seat belt at the time of the crash. Pickup trucks are so popular in Texas, but almost half of our pickup truck drivers killed in crashes were not wearing a seat belt.

After so many years of having seat belts standard in vehicles, it would seem that buckling your seat belt before driving off would be second nature. Fortunately, most of us do buckle up, but some, especially pickup truck drivers and their passengers, depend on their bigger pickup truck to protect them in a crash. Yet, pickup trucks are twice as likely to rollover than passenger cars, and pickup truck crashes can be especially serious – even deadly – due to their tendency to roll over and for unbelted occupants to be thrown from the vehicle.

Unbuckled passengers can also be deadly to others in the vehicle. Most people are not aware of the dangers posed by unbuckled backseat passengers. In a crash, they can become projectiles that are tossed around inside the vehicle, injuring or killing those in the front seat. Riders in the back seat who use lap and shoulder belts are 44% more likely to survive in a crash than unrestrained occupants in passenger cars, and 73% more likely to survive in passenger vans and SUVs.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), young adults are dying at a disproportionate rate because they are not wearing their seat belts. Sixty-two percent of 18- to 34-year-old passenger vehicle occupants killed in crashes were not wearing their seat belts.

When the Click It or Ticket campaign began in 2002, just 76 percent of Texans used seat belts. Today, over 90 percent of Texans buckle up. Also, since the campaign began over a decade ago, NHTSA estimated in 2012 (the most recent data available) that the Click It or Ticket campaign in Texas has resulted in almost 3,700 fewer traffic deaths and prevented more than 50,000 serious injuries.

Here's another good reason to buckle up – it's the law! Unbelted drivers and adult passengers can face fines and court costs of up to \$200. Children younger than 8 years old must be in a child safety seat or booster seat unless they are taller than 4 feet 9 inches. Fines issued to drivers for unrestrained children in their vehicle can be as high as \$250 plus court costs.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service agent Lilian Mezquida from Cameron County reminds drivers that the campaign this year is scheduled for May 19-June 1, which includes Memorial Day weekend. During this time, extra law enforcement representatives will be on the roads enforcing the seat belt and child restraint laws in an effort to save lives. Those officers are not out to write tickets but instead want to help prevent the needless tragedy from motor vehicles accidents. Remember to buckle up and save your life – not just during Click It or Ticket, but every day of the year!