

Seat Belt Use In Nebraska

Seat belt use is the single most effective means of reducing injuries and deaths related to motor vehicle crashes. In 2017, the observed seat belt use rate in Nebraska was 86%.¹ The nationwide seat belt use rate was 90.1% in 2016 as measured by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) national seat belt use survey.²

Seat Belt Use Statistics

In Nebraska in 2016, there were 218 traffic fatalities and 17,962 individuals were injured in traffic crashes.³

- Of the 218 Nebraskans who died as a result of traffic crashes, 181 fatalities were occupants of passenger vehicles. Of the 181 fatalities, 118 or 65% were not wearing a seat belt. Nationally, 48% of those who died from a motor vehicle crash were not wearing their seat belt.⁴
- Of the 118 fatalities in Nebraska who were not wearing safety belts, 41 (35%) were thrown from the vehicle.⁵
- Rural areas of Nebraska have a lower seat belt usage rate than urban areas and 84% of motor vehicle fatalities occur in rural areas.⁶

How Does Non-Seat Belt Use Affect Nebraska?

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury death and second leading cause of injury-related hospitalizations among Nebraskans.⁷ From 2009-2013 in Nebraska, the average medical charge for injured drivers who failed to use a seat belt was \$17,689. For drivers who were belted, the average medical charge was \$6,960. On average, the medical charges for unbelted drivers were \$10,700 more than for belted drivers.⁸ Overall, fatal motor vehicle crashes alone cost Nebraska a total \$242,113,000 annually and account for approximately 82% of all medical and work loss costs associated with fatal injuries in the state.⁹

Strategies to Increase Seat Belt Use

Primary Enforcement of Seat Belt Laws

States with primary enforcement of seat belt laws have a median 9% higher seat belt usage rate.¹⁰ According to the Center for Disease Control's Motor Vehicle Prioritizing Interventions and Cost Calculator Tool, if Nebraska implemented a Primary Enforcement Seat Belt Law, the state is expected to save 11 lives and reduce injuries by 1,204 with a cost benefit per year of \$39,894,000.¹¹

Nebraska law states that the driver, each front-seat occupant in the vehicle and all children six to 18 years of age must wear a seat belt properly. All persons being transported by a motor vehicle operated by a holder of a provisional operator's permit or a school permit must use a seat belt and wear it properly. This is a secondary law, which means the driver is cited for this violation only if cited or charged with an additional violation or some other offense. A violation results in a \$25.00 fine. Nebraska is one of 15 states that enforces seat belt laws as a secondary action.¹²

Increased Fines

Increasing seat belt violation fines is associated with increased belt use.¹³ Increasing a state's fine from \$25 to \$60 is associated with an increase up to four percent in observed belt use. Similarly, increasing the fine from \$25 to \$100 is associated with an increase in seat belt use up to seven percent¹³

Short-term, High Visibility Enforcement

Law enforcement periodically practices enhanced enforcement. These are practices that are additional to every day patrol practices and includes effective, high-visibility communications and outreach. One such program is *Click It or Ticket*. These programs increase the number of officers on patrol, which increases the number of citations. Observed safety belt use has a median increase of 16 percentage points during enhanced enforcement programs. Fatal and nonfatal injuries combined see decreases of 7% and 15%.¹⁴

Worksite Seat Belt Policies

Worksite seat belt policies decrease costs to employers by requiring employees to use their seat belt while on the job. According to the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS), medical costs paid by employers per employee injured in a crash were nearly double in on-the-job crashes where the employee was not wearing a seat belt. Costs per employee injured in a crash on the job averaged \$48,000 unrestrained, far exceeding the \$25,000 cost if restrained.¹⁵ Employers bear the crash costs of their employees, not just their company drivers. More than 1.6 million work days were lost due to traffic crashes, with nearly 90 percent of those days attributed to crashes that occurred off the job, involving employees and/or their dependents.¹⁵

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Additional Resources

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