

## 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 2016, the observed seat belt use rate in Nebraska was 83%.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

### Seat Belt Use Statistics

In Nebraska in 2015, 191 motor vehicle occupants died and 16,806 were injured in traffic crashes.<sup>3</sup>

- Of the 191 who died as a result of traffic crashes, only 49 (26%) were wearing safety belts; 142 (74%) were not wearing safety belts.<sup>3</sup> Nationally, 48% of those who died from a motor vehicle crash were not wearing their seat belts.<sup>4</sup>
- Of the 142 (74%) not wearing safety belts, 53 (37%) were thrown from the vehicle.<sup>3</sup>
- Rural areas of Nebraska have a lower seat belt usage rate than urban areas.<sup>5</sup>

### How Does Non-Seat Belt Use Affect Nebraska?

According to the Nebraska Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among Nebraskans ages five to thirty-four. 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.<sup>6</sup> Overall, motor vehicle crashes cost Nebraska over \$839,549,000 in 2015.<sup>3</sup>

### 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.<sup>7</sup> In Nebraska, according to the Center for Disease Control's Motor Vehicle Prioritizing Interventions and Cost Calculator Tool, if 12% more motor vehicle occupants were belted in Nebraska, an additional 11 lives could be saved per year.

Nebraska law states that the driver, each front-seat occupant in the vehicle and all children six years of age and younger than 18 years of age must wear a seat belt and wear it 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.<sup>8</sup>

#### Increased Fines

Nichols, Tippetts, et al. (2010) examined the relationship between seat belt violation fine and belt use and found that increasing fines was associated with increased belt use. Increasing a state's fine from \$25 to \$60 was associated with an increase of 3 to 4 percent in both observed belt use and belt use among front-seat occupants killed in crashes. Similarly, increasing the fine from \$25 to \$100 was associated with an increase in seat belt use of 6 to 7%.<sup>9</sup>

#### 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%.<sup>10</sup>

#### Worksite Seat Belt Policies

Worksite seat belt policies decrease costs to employers through requiring employees to use their seat belt while on the job. According to the report *Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes to Employers-2015* prepared for 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.<sup>11</sup> Employers bear the crash costs of all 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.<sup>11</sup>

## Cited Sources

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## Resources

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