

**LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES NATIONWIDE CRACK DOWN ON SAFETY BELT VIOLATORS AS NEW REPORT DETAILS THE 18 PERCENT WHO STILL FAIL TO OBEY THE LAW**

***Report Profiles One Out of Five Who “Still Don’t Get It” -- Young Males, People Who Drive In Rural Areas, And Pick-up Truck Drivers***

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Despite the highest safety belt-use rate ever recorded in the U.S., 48 million Americans still fail to buckle up, according to a recently released report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), titled “[Research Note: Restraint Use Patterns Among Fatally Injured Passenger Vehicle Occupants](#)”. The report found the last of the unbuckled to be largely young and male, likely to live in rural areas and/or drive pickup trucks.

The release of the report coincides with the national “Click It or Ticket” crackdown on belt law violators, which runs from May 22<sup>nd</sup> through June 4<sup>th</sup>. The law enforcement effort is supported by more than \$31 million in national and state ads that begin airing today. The national ads, produced by NHTSA in English and Spanish, feature vehicles including pickup trucks driven in several regions of the country, with unbelted vehicle occupants receiving tickets, and then buckling up. They will be aired in media most frequently watched or listened to by males ages 18 to 34 and others in the target audience.

The new NHTSA report provides a detailed state-by-state profile of the people who still don’t buckle up. Nationally the number is 18 percent, but it varies by state. “It’s an undisputable fact that safety belts help save lives. Still, millions of Americans aren’t buckling up every time they are in a motor vehicle,” said NHTSA Acting Administrator Jacqueline Glassman. “The crackdown is about preventing tragedies through awareness, strong laws and highly visible enforcement of those laws. Today’s message is simple, for your own sake, click that safety belt or plan on getting a ticket.”

The report was issued today as the annual “Click It or Ticket” crackdown was launched at a news conference in Chicago, Illinois. Following the 2003 enactment of a primary safety belt law, paid advertising and vigilant enforcement efforts, Illinois’ traffic deaths fell to 60 year lows in 2004. A total of 1,355 people died in traffic crashes last year in Illinois, a 7 percent drop from 1,454 traffic deaths in 2003. According to NHTSA, 31,693 passenger vehicle occupants nationally died in traffic crashes during 2004, 55 percent of those killed were not wearing their safety belts at the time of the crash.

“Illinois proves once again that the combination of primary safety belt laws and high visibility enforcement saves lives,” said Alan C. McMillan, President and CEO of the National Safety Council. “While the reduction in traffic fatalities here in Illinois is truly remarkable, even more can be achieved if the state reaches the high belt use levels of several other states. Eight states and Puerto Rico have safety belt rates above 90 percent.”

Phil Haseltine, Executive Director of the National Safety Council’s *Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign*, is encouraged that the vast majority of Americans are now routinely buckling up, but warned, “Those who still don’t buckle up need to know that police officers

will be aggressively enforcing safety belt laws throughout the country and that violators will be ticketed.”

“We’re extremely proud of our efforts to save lives on Illinois roads. It proves that “*Click It or Ticket*” is not just another catchy slogan. The credit for the many lives that have been saved goes to the law enforcement officers who work tirelessly to enforce state laws,” said Larry Trent, Director of the Illinois State Police.

Lt. Colonel Jim Champagne, Chairman of the Governors Highway Safety Association, pointed out that in addition to stepping up enforcement of seat belt laws, law enforcement nationwide will also be on the lookout for impaired drivers and speeders given that the Memorial Day period is one of the most dangerous times to travel. Champagne says, “Highway safety officials across this country are sick and tired of losing our citizens in these completely preventable crashes. Slow Down, Drive Sober and Buckle Up.”

“Click It or Ticket” is conducted by NHTSA with support from the National Safety Council’s *Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign* and in conjunction with law enforcement agencies, state highway safety offices, and the National Transportation Safety Board.

###

*The Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign, a program of the National Safety Council, is a public/private partnership of automotive manufacturers, insurance companies, child safety seat manufacturers, government agencies, health professionals and child health and safety organizations. The goal of the Campaign is to increase the proper use of safety belts and child safety seats and to inform the public about how to maximize the lifesaving capabilities of air bags while minimizing the risks.*