

Eisenhower State Office Building
700 SW Harrison
Topeka, KS 66603



phone: 785-296-3585
fax: 785-368-7415
www.ksdot.org

Julie Lorenz, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

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For more information:

Gary Herman

785.296.0294

Gary.Herman@ks.gov

Click It or Ticket campaign: Buckle up or pay the costs

TOPEKA – Don't move if that chime continues after you start the vehicle. Wait for all those seat belts to be fastened. If you and your passengers aren't buckled, you aren't safe – and you're breaking the law.

From May 18-30, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) will partner with law enforcement statewide to crack down on seat belt use in conjunction with the national campaign, "Click It or Ticket." The campaign raises awareness of the importance of everyone buckling up in a vehicle. According to KDOT Traffic Safety Manager Gary Herman, the consequences of not wearing a seat belt are serious and expensive.

"Studies show a significant increase in crash survivability if a person is buckled up. Do it for your loved ones," Herman said. "Not wearing your seat belt could cost you a monetary fine, or much, much more."

There is some good news for Kansans. A recent study conducted on behalf of KDOT revealed observed belt use rate for drivers and outboard passengers was at 85.92% in 2021, which is an increase over 2020 study results. It also compares to a national belt rate of 90% based on the most recent National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) National Occupant Protection Use Survey results released in 2020.

Still, there's room for improvement, Herman said. Nationally in 2020, about 60% of passengers ages 18 to 34 who were killed in vehicles were completely unrestrained - one of the highest percentages for all age groups. Men make up 67% of those killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2020 and wear their seat belts at a lower rate - 55% of men killed in crashes were unrestrained, compared to 43% of women.

And don't believe the myths, Herman said. Riding in a truck or large vehicles without seat belts puts people at the same risk of injury or death in a crash.

“Many people we interview think the larger a vehicle is, the greater chance they will not be hurt in a crash,” he said. “However, statistics do not bear that belief out.”

KDOT reminds drivers that everyone in the vehicle should buckle up before the vehicle moves. While law enforcement will be on high alert to watch for unrestrained drivers and passengers during the “Click It or Ticket” campaign, they are already regularly on the lookout for seat belt use.

Kansas’ “Click It or Ticket” campaign is funded by federal traffic safety funds administered by KDOT. For more information about drugged driving, visit www.KTSRO.org.

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