



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
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Police on the lookout for seat belt violations

'Click it. Or ticket.' Campaign begins May 22

More than 130 law enforcement agencies in Kansas will be paying special attention to enforcing the state's seat belt laws during a mobilization that begins May 22 and runs through June 4.

The enforcement/education program – “Click it. Or Ticket.” – was announced by Gov. Kathleen Sebelius and officials of the Kansas Department of Transportation during a May 15th event in Topeka.

Also on the program for the announcement event was Tonganoxie native Danni Boatwright, winner of the “Survivor: Guatemala” television program. Boatwright discussed her own personal brush with a seat belt-related near-tragedy.

Boatwright said she was returning to Kansas from a modeling assignment in Kentucky with a couple of friends, lying in the back seat getting some rest. Traveling at about 60 mph, the car struck a stationary vehicle. She was thrown forward into the front seat with such force that she suffered a broken collarbone and other injuries. The driver and front-seat passenger were buckled up and were not injured.

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“The car was totally destroyed, and police said if I had been sitting upright without a seat belt, I would have been ejected through the windshield,” she recalled. “I learned my lesson that day. I never get in a car without buckling up, even for short trips.”

Boatwright also climbed aboard a Seat Belt Convincer to demonstrate the value seat belts provide during even low-speed collisions. Convincers are mobile devices purchased by the Kansas Highway Patrol via a KDOT grant program. They are used to educate the public about the importance of seat belt use.

While seat belt use has been slowly increasing over the past few years in Kansas, the state still ranks poorly against other states in seat belt use. Last year, 69 percent of Kansas drivers and passengers were wearing seat belts during observational surveys in the summer. The national seat belt use rate is 82 percent. Drivers of pick up trucks were less likely than other Kansans to wear seat belts. Last year, the compliance rate was only 52 percent.

Of the 428 individuals killed in traffic crashes in the state last year, 70 percent were unrestrained. An even higher percentage of pickup truck drivers and passengers who were killed in traffic crashes were unrestrained, often because they were ejected from pick up trucks involved in roll-over crashes. While rollovers can occur in any kind of passenger vehicle, pickup trucks are twice as likely to rollover as cars because they have a higher center of gravity. Using a seat belt increases the odds of survival in light trucks by as much as 80 percent in the event of a rollover crash.

Gov. Sebelius, who as Kansas Insurance Commissioner prior to becoming Governor started a program called Click it Crickets, and Transportation Secretary Deb Miller gave their enthusiastic support to the “Click. It. Or Ticket” campaign, and thanked the law enforcement community for the aggressive effort officers will be mounting.

While Miller welcomed the reduction in crash-related fatalities that occurred in the last year, she said 428 deaths were still unacceptable.

“Even though there’s been a reduction, it’s still a number no one can be pleased about.”

Miller has made a reduction in crash-related injuries and fatalities a primary goal of KDOT.

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