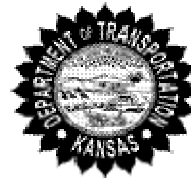


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Kansas seat belt usage improves, but still a long way to go

TOPEKA – More Kansans are buckling up, according to survey results announced today by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT). The 2006 survey shows that 73 percent of Kansans are using their seat belts, up 4 percent from 69 percent in 2005.

“While it’s encouraging to see this increase, as a state we still have a lot of room for improvement,” said KDOT Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller. “The statistics are clear: the number one way to reduce fatalities and injuries on our roadways is through proper seat belt use.”

In 2005, Kansas ranked 43rd in the nation in seat belt use.

“Kansas’ low seatbelt usage can be partially attributed to not having a primary seat belt law which means that drivers cannot be pulled over for not wearing a seat belt,” said Col. William Seck, Superintendent, Kansas Highway Patrol.

“If they are pulled over for another infraction and are not wearing a seat belt, they can be ticketed,” added Seck. “States with a primary seat belt law show higher seat belt usage rates and lower fatality rates. It’s clear, seat belts save lives.”

Seat belt usage among children also improved somewhat:

Age 0-4; 83%, up from 81%

Age 5-9; 53%, up from 49%

Age 10-14, 49%, up from 48%.

“We owe it to our children and ourselves to take that simple step of buckling up. It could mean the difference between life and death,” said Secretary Rod Bremby, Kansas Department of Health and

Environment. “Buckling up also means injuries are reduced, which ultimately results in lower health care costs for all Kansans, and helps Kansas become a healthier state overall.”

Each year KDOT conducts surveys throughout the state to estimate the percentage of motorists who are buckling up. Based on federal guidelines the surveys are conducted at 548 sites on six different road types in 20 randomly selected counties, which encompass 85 percent of the population of Kansas. The 2006 survey included more than 62,000 vehicle observations.

The Kansas Department of Transportation, the Kansas Highway Patrol, and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment each are extremely concerned about the number of deaths and injuries on Kansas roadways and continue to work hard to reduce the numbers. In response to this epidemic, the heads of these agencies have joined together in a unique cross-agency endeavor, the Kansas Safe Driving Campaign.

A component of the Kansas Safe Driving Campaign is *The Driving Force*, a task force formed to develop recommendations of ways to decrease the number of fatalities and injuries on Kansas roadways.

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