

# Kansas Department of Transportation

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **KDOT Launches 'Click It. Or Ticket' to Help Save Lives**

*Enforcement blitz buckles down on those not buckled up – day and night*

TOPEKA, Kan. — Debbie Weeks knows, from the most painful experience a mother can have, the value of seat belts. Her three daughters were traveling together in a car that crashed near Oskaloosa. One of the three was wearing a seat belt and survived. The other two were ejected from the vehicle and killed.

Weeks, of Topeka, has become a safety activist and seat belt proponent since the tragedy. She will join Kansas Secretary of Transportation Deb Miller and officials from the Kansas Highway Patrol, Topeka Police Department and Shawnee County Sheriff's Office, May 14, for an informational event on the importance of using seat belts.

The event, sponsored by the Kansas Department of Transportation, is part of the national "Click it. Or ticket" safety campaign and enforcement blitz for seat belt laws. This year's "Click it. Or ticket" campaign is placing a special emphasis on nighttime seat belt use and enforcement.

Nationwide, more than 15,000 passenger vehicle occupants died in traffic crashes between the nighttime hours of 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. during 2005, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Additionally, 59 percent of those passenger vehicle occupants killed were not wearing their seat belts at the time of the fatal crash.

The proportion of unbuckled deaths at night is considerably higher than the nearly as alarming 44 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were not wearing their seats belts and were killed during daytime hours across the nation that same year.

KDOT is joining with state and local law enforcement and highway safety officials from May 21<sup>st</sup> through June 3<sup>rd</sup> to launch an aggressive national “Click it. Or ticket” seat belt enforcement mobilization to crack down on low seat belt use and to reduce highway fatalities – with a new emphasis this year on convincing more motorists to buckle up day *and* night.

“Clearly, more drivers at night than during the day are taking the attitude that ‘it will never happen to me,’ but the risk of a fatal crash actually goes up significantly at night,” said Topeka Police Chief Ron Miller. “That’s why, beginning mid-May, we’ll be buckling down to make sure that all passengers, in all vehicles, are buckled up – day *and* night.”

Shawnee County Sheriff Richard Barta said regular seat belt use is the single most effective way to protect people and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes. He said that statewide in 2005, 77 percent of passenger vehicle occupants in a serious crash who were buckled up survived the crash, and that when worn correctly, seat belts have been proven to reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passenger car occupants by 45 percent. Seat belts reduce the risk by an even greater 60 percent in pickup trucks, SUVs and mini-vans.

Yet, nearly one in five Americans (19 percent nationally) still fails to regularly wear a seat belt when driving or riding in a motor vehicle, according to NHTSA’s observational seat belt studies.

In Kansas, seat belt usage is increasing, in part because of tougher laws with stiffer penalties. The state’s seat belt usage rate increased from 69 percent in 2005 to 73 percent in 2006.

Stepped-up law enforcement activities will be conducted during the national “Click It. Or Ticket” enforcement mobilization. The mobilization is being supported by a projected \$10 million in paid national advertising and additional advertising in each state to encourage all motorists, especially night drivers and passengers, to always buckle up.

“Seat belts clearly save lives,” said Pete Bodyk, chief of the Bureau of Traffic Safety. “Wearing your seat belt costs you nothing, but not wearing it certainly will. So unless you want to risk a ticket, or worse, your life, please remember to buckle up day *and* night – ‘Click it. Or ticket.’”

For more information, please visit <http://www.ksdot.org/burTrafficSaf/default.asp> or [www.nhtsa.gov/link/ciot.htm](http://www.nhtsa.gov/link/ciot.htm).

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