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2017 Click It or Ticket

Click It or Ticket: Make Seat Belt Use a Daily Habit **By Sergeant Kirstein**

Flipping on a light switch, closing a door, brushing your teeth—these are automatic actions taken by millions of Americans every day with little to no thought. Buckling your seat belt should also be an automatic action. It should be the first thing you do after getting into a vehicle.

Whether you ride in the front seat or the back, and no matter which car seat or booster seat your child may use, everyone's seat belt should be buckled every trip. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) research found that 9,874 people were killed in 2015 by neglecting this one simple life-saving task.

From May 15 to June 4, the Glendale Heights Police Department is joining the Illinois Department of Transportation, NHTSA and hundreds of law enforcement agencies for the 2017 *Click It or Ticket* enforcement mobilization. IDOT is working with law enforcement to spread the message that seat belts save lives. In fact, from 2011 to 2015, seat belts saved nearly 64,000 lives.

Why the month of May? Memorial Day weekend kicks off the busy summer season, with many more motorists on the roads. NHTSA and IDOT have found this to be the most effective time to remind drivers why seat-belt laws, and all traffic safety laws, matter—they help save lives.

This is not a campaign to write tickets or train law enforcement. This is a campaign to help keep people safe and alive. We see the casualties of not wearing a seat belt or driving impaired, and we do not wish that devastation on anyone.

In addition to increased patrols and zero-tolerance enforcement, we want to ensure the right information is being shared with motorists. There are too many false notions out there about seat belts:

- **YOUTH** — Young adults in particular seem to think they are invincible in vehicles. Unfortunately, they are dying at a disproportionate rate because they are not wearing their seat belts.
- **MALES** — Almost twice as many men are dying in vehicle crashes compared to women and wearing their seat belts less often than women.
- **PICKUP TRUCK DRIVERS AND PASSENGERS** — Many pickup truck occupants think that they don't need to wear their seat belts because they believe their large vehicles will protect them in a crash. However, the numbers from NHTSA tell a different story: 60 percent of pickup truck occupants who were killed in crashes were not buckled up. That's compared to 42 percent of passenger car occupants who were unbuckled when they were killed in crashes.

The evening hours also pose a particularly dangerous threat to vehicle occupants, which is why an important part of the *Click It or Ticket* message to motorists includes the words "day and night." In 2015 in the United

States, about 57 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were killed during the nighttime hours of 6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m. were not wearing their seat belts. More people are being killed in nighttime crashes than ever before.

Remember: The habit of buckling up is as simple as clapping your hands. It should be an automatic action for you and for everyone in your vehicle. Do not just buckle up to avoid a ticket—buckle up, day or night, because it could save your life. Together, we can make zero fatalities a reality on Illinois roads.

You can find out more about the *Click It or Ticket* mobilization at buckleupillinois.org.