



# Traffic Safety Matters

Spring 2007

## IDOT strives to increase safety belt compliance in suburban communities

Reducing fatalities, injuries and economic costs associated with motor vehicle crashes is the focus of the Illinois Department of Transportation - Division of Traffic Safety's (IDOT/DTS) year-long plan to promote safety belt use statewide. As part of its efforts, IDOT/DTS is reaching out to elected officials, law enforcement, community groups and religious organizations to help spread awareness about the importance of increasing safety belt usage. It is important to keep in mind the value of safety belts not only in preventing fatalities, but also in preventing expensive life-long injuries.

Although safety belt use increased to a record 88 percent in Illinois in 2006 (up from 36 percent since 1987), too many Illinois drivers still choose not to regularly wear their safety belts. IDOT/DTS is on a mission to increase the state's safety belt usage rate to 90 percent during this year's Click It or Ticket mobilization. This May, a record number of law enforcement agencies will join the Click It or Ticket mobilization in our tireless efforts to prevent needless loss of lives in motor vehicle crashes. We encourage you to join the campaign to save lives.

"With 90 percent safety belt compliance, we will save 37 lives in Illinois and prevent 1,103 injuries to our friends, neighbors and relatives this year," said Michael Stout, Director of the Illinois Department of Transportation's Division of Traffic Safety.

According to Illinois motor vehicle crash data, over 1200 passenger vehicle occupants died in traffic crashes in 2006, and 55 percent of those killed were not wearing their safety belt at the time of the crash. Even more alarming, nearly 66 percent of motor vehicle occupants killed during the night were unbelted.

Men, especially younger men, are less likely to buckle up. In 2005, 67 percent of male drivers and 74 percent of male passengers between the ages of 18 and 34 who were killed in crashes were not wearing their safety belts.

Regular safety belt use is the single most effective way to protect teens and adults, and to reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes. Unfortunately, in their effort to move children from child safety seats to safety belts, parents often forget a crucial

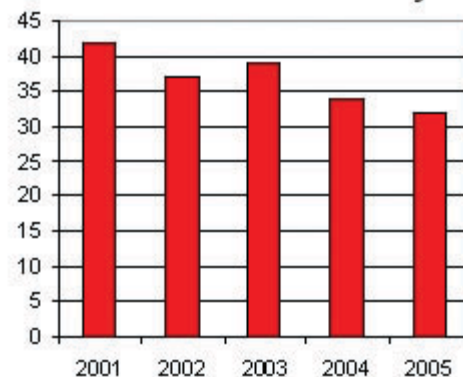


**Car crashes are the number one and two killer of young Latino and African American men, respectively. Yet half of this population do not wear safety belts.**

step. One study showed that children who are moved from child safety seats to regular vehicle safety belts too early are four times more likely to sustain a serious head injury in a crash than those restrained in child safety seats or booster seats. Illinois law is intended to protect children by requiring booster seat use until at least age eight, when children's bodies are larger and fit in safety belts.

Please join us in increasing safety belt usage and correct child safety seat usage to 90 percent statewide. Every year, in June, IDOT/DTS conducts a statewide survey to measure safety belt usage. In addition to providing the safety belt usage rate, the survey helps IDOT/DTS determine areas where it can improve outreach efforts.

Fatal Crashes in Kane County

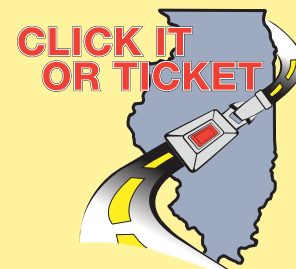


Education and enforcement campaigns such as Click It or Ticket in Kane County have helped reduce the number of fatal crashes over the past five years.

## Simple Ways You Can Save a Life

- Have mayor sign a proclamation to increase safety belt usage to 90 percent
- Send out an e-mail blast
- Post "Click It or Ticket" on a marquis
- Put up posters or order paycheck stuffers
- Be a Buckle Buddy-report unrestrained kids 888-800-2642
- Visit [www.buckleupillinois.org](http://www.buckleupillinois.org) to obtain free tool kits with simple ways to spread the message.

Together, we can save lives on Illinois roadways by increasing safety belt compliance.



# Saved by the belt

**Name:** Dan McGlathery  
**Age:** 22  
**Condition:** Automobile Crash

Dan McGlathery of Wheaton, Illinois was not a big believer in safety belts. He thought safety belts were uncomfortable and he felt safe in his big truck.

A chance encounter with police at a safety belt check point changed his mind.

Although he was irritated that the authorities cracked down on what he considered a "minor" violation, the resulting fine did convince him to change his behavior. Dan began buckling up every time he drove.

Dan soon learned the true value of his safety belt when he lost control his truck, which violently rolled 180 degrees onto its roof. Dan found himself hanging upside down in the passenger compartment. Despite the severity of the crash, he suffered no major injuries.

Weeks later, Dan walked into the Wheaton Police Department and asked to speak with the officer who issued the citation. When the officer appeared, Dan offered his hand and said, "Thank you for saving my life."

Without his safety belt, he could have been thrown from the vehicle and may not have survived.

Research shows that safety belt laws, which allow for checkpoints like the one Dan encountered, have increased safety belt usage to the highest rate ever. Safety belts save the U.S. \$50 billion annually in medical costs and productivity losses.

Dan is now a supporter of increased law enforcement to increase safety belt usage.

"There are steps you can take to prevent injury, and you need to take them every day, every time you drive, since you never know when something might happen."



## Teen driving laws improved

In 2006, the Illinois graduated driver's license (GDL) program was strengthened to require 50 hours of practice time, including 10 hours of night driving, before a young driver can obtain a driver's license. The law requires a parent, legal guardian or other responsible adult to provide written consent at the time of driver's license application verifying the teen is sufficiently prepared and able to safely operate a motor vehicle. In addition, all teens in the vehicle must be properly restrained by their safety belt regardless of if they are riding in the front seat or back seat.

In 2007, the Illinois General Assembly is considering changes to the GDL that increases both permit phase time and nighttime driving restrictions, as well as increases penalties for teens receiving traffic citations.

Although teenagers make up only six percent of Illinois drivers, they account for 16 percent of all crash fatalities. The new laws are aimed at enhancing the safety of young, novice drivers while reducing teen fatal crashes. Buckle Up Illinois.

## Illinois child safety laws

Illinois law requires all children to be properly restrained in a child safety seat or booster seat until age eight.

Car crashes are the leading cause of death for kids. In Illinois, 80 percent of child safety seats are not installed correctly.

Certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians can check your child safety seats and help you with proper installation and use. To find a technician near you, please visit [buckleupillinois.org](http://buckleupillinois.org).



## Safety belt laws

The goal of the Click It or Ticket Program is not to give out tickets, but rather to influence people to buckle up and prevent injuries and fatalities. Research proves that the certainty of a ticket and costly fines convinces people to "Click It."

Current law requires all drivers and front seat passengers to correctly wear safety belts.

The average cost for a critically injured survivor of a car crash is \$1.1 million over a lifetime. This figure does not reflect the physical and psychological suffering of the victims and their families.

A simple cost-effective means to prevent injury and fatalities to you and your family is to make sure everyone buckles up, every trip, every time.

For more information on the Illinois Department of Transportation's Click It or Ticket program, please visit our Web site at [www.buckleupillinois.org](http://www.buckleupillinois.org).