



# Traffic Safety Matters

Spring 2007

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

The pickup is a deep-rooted part of rural culture, an icon of independence and defiance. Today, though, pickups have come to represent something else: they are among the deadliest vehicles on the nation's roads, according to federal traffic-safety data.

Occupants of these vehicles, which are twice as likely as passenger cars to roll over in a crash, are the least likely to regularly wear safety belts, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Reducing fatalities, injuries and economic costs associated with motor vehicle crashes is the focus of the Illinois Department of Transportation's Division of Traffic Safety's (IDOT/DTS) year-long plan to promote safety belt use in rural communities. 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, particularly in rural communities.

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. Increasing safety belt use is the simplest and least expensive way to reduce deaths and serious injuries on our roads.

"In Illinois, many of the crashes involving injuries and fatalities could have been prevented," said Michael Stout, Director of the Illinois Department of Transportation's Division of Traffic Safety. "With 90 percent safety belt compliance, we will save 37 lives in Illinois and prevent 1,103 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

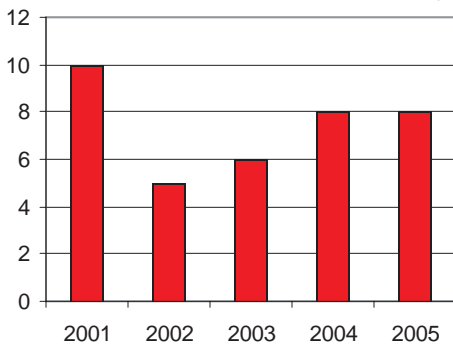
It or Ticket mobilization in our tireless efforts to prevent needless loss of lives in motor vehicle crashes.

We encourage you to join the campaign to save lives.



**A pickup that went out of control rests on the guard rails of a bridge on a rural gravel road. The male driver was wearing a safety belt and survived the wreck.**

**Fatal Crashes in Whiteside County**



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

NHTSA reports that about 48 million motorists, many of them young men living in rural areas and driving pickups, do not wear safety belts. Rural areas tend to have varying degrees of lower safety belt use compared to national, state and urban/suburban rates. Surprisingly, while the majority of the population lives in urban areas, the vast majority of fatal crashes happen in rural areas. We have to reverse this trend.

## 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 the 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).