



PRESS RELEASE

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Statewide Click It or Ticket Enforcement Campaign Begins Today

Seat Belts Best Defense Against Distracted Drivers – Day and Night

Sacramento, Calif. – More than 140 local law enforcement agencies and the California Highway Patrol will begin increased enforcement of the state's occupant protection laws today as part of the statewide *Click It or Ticket* seat belt enforcement campaign. Law enforcement across the state will mount extra patrols to enforce zero tolerance for those not properly buckled.

Between May 23 and June 5, drivers and passengers can expect to receive tickets, not a warning, if officers find them out on the roads unbuckled. Police officers, Sheriff's deputies and California Highway Patrol officers will all be out in force — both day and night. Nighttime passenger vehicle occupants are among those least likely to buckle up and most likely to die in crashes when unrestrained. In California in 2009, the number of those who died in crashes and were not wearing seat belts was nearly 60 percent higher at night.

"Those who are still not buckling up need to think twice about the risk they take every time they get into a car," said Office of Traffic Safety Director Christopher J. Murphy. "Those unbelted drivers are sharing the road with distracted and even impaired drivers who may cause crashes resulting in serious injury and death. Wearing a seat belt is simply the best defense to protect you in a car crash."

Although California boasts one of the highest seat belt use rates in the nation at 96.2 percent, that still leaves more than one million motorists who are at risk for serious injury and death. It is estimated that about half, or 320, of the 639 killed not wearing seat belts would be alive today had they simply buckled up.

"Seat belt usage is the most effective way to protect vehicle occupants and reduce the number of people killed in collisions," said California Highway Patrol Commissioner Joe Farrow. "Officers would rather have motorists buckle up than write a citation; seat belts save lives and save money."

(more)

The cost of a seat belt ticket is at least \$142 on a first offense. The cost of failing to properly buckle up any child under the age of 16 is at least \$445 per child for a first offense and \$1005 or more on a second offense. If the parent is not in the car, the driver gets the ticket. If a driver is found to be in violation of both the seat belt and hands-free or no texting law, they can be cited for both infractions and with a combined ticket cost of \$300 or more.

"Parents have a responsibility to make sure their children ride properly restrained," said Murphy. "They can help set a good example by always wearing a seat belt themselves and making sure their children know they are expected to do the same, without exception."

California's 2010 statewide traffic safety survey indicated that more than 57 percent of Californians believed that their chances of being stopped for not wearing a seat belt had changed as a result of the *Click It or Ticket* effort. The more than 600 permanent *Click It or Ticket* highway signs, which have been up since 2005, have now been updated to reflect the 'Minimum \$142' message as a reminder to motorists that failing to buckle up is costly.

Funding for the *Click It or Ticket* campaign was provided by grants from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. This effort supports the California Strategic Highway Safety Plan's strategies to increase use of safety belts and child safety seats.

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