

News Release
For Immediate Release

Still Think Seat Belts Aren't Important, Read This Story
Click It or Ticket Mobilization is May 20 – June 2, 2019

Taking those few seconds to buckle your seat belt is the most crucial step you can take to protect yourself in a crash. Those few seconds can save your life and save your friends and family from having to go through a needless tragedy. In fact, wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of dying in a crash by 45 percent in a car and up to 60 percent in a pickup truck. Seat belts do save lives with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reporting that in 2017 alone, seat belts saved an estimated 14,955 lives. Unfortunately, there are still some Texans who choose not to wear their seat belt.

This year the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is sharing the story of Kailee Mills, a 16-year-old girl from Spring, TX who was killed in a crash after unbuckling to take a selfie with her friend. Kailee was just 400 yards from her home when the crash occurred in October 2017. Deputies believe the driver was speeding and lost control of the vehicle when the car flipped, causing Kailee to be ejected. The other three passengers in the car who were wearing their seat belts survived. The story underscores the importance of always wearing your seat belt.

According to NHTSA, 10,076 people who were killed in passenger vehicle crashes in 2017 weren't buckled. Fifty-five percent of those fatalities happened at night (6 p.m.–5:59 a.m.). According to crash statistics from TxDOT, among Texans who died and weren't wearing their seat belt, 57 percent of those crashes happened at night. It is important to wear your seat belt, day and night, to be protected in the event of a crash.

This year's Click It or Ticket Campaign will run from May 20 – June 2 and as always will include the busy Memorial Day Weekend when there are more people traveling on the roads for vacations. Law enforcement will be taking a no-excuses approach to seat belt law enforcement during the Click It or Ticket campaign, writing citations day and night. A sculpture featuring an overturned car with mannequins is touring the state to get the word out about this year's Click It or Ticket Campaign and Kailee's story which is featured in video kiosks set up where the sculpture is displayed.

While most Texans now buckle up, some groups of motorists continue not taking the message to heart by not consistently using their seat belts. The demographic of motorist most likely to be unrestrained are men and young adults, especially pickup truck drivers and their passengers. Motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for teens. During 2018 in Texas, one in five vehicle crashes involved a teen driver. Approximately 42% of teens killed in Texas traffic crashes in 2018 were unrestrained in vehicles.

Unbuckled passengers are also dangerous to others in the vehicle. In the event of a crash, the unbuckled passenger become a large projectile flying around the vehicle who can injure or kill other occupants in the vehicle — including those who are buckled up!

Here are some of the myths about seat belts:

- If your car has air bags you still need to wear a seat belt. Myth or Real Deal?

- The Real Deal. The safest way to ride is buckled up in a vehicle equipped with air bags. Even without an air bag, you are safer buckled up than you are with an air bag and not buckled up.

- Seat belts can trap you in a fire or under water. Myth or Real Deal?
 - Myth. Incidents involving fire or water account for ½ of 1% of all crashes. But more importantly, you can't escape such dangers unless you're conscious. Wearing a seat belt gives you a much greater chance of being conscious and able-bodied.
- If you're not going far or not traveling fast, seat belts are unnecessary. Myth or Real Deal?
 - Myth. Seemingly routine trips can be deceptively dangerous. Most fatal crashes happen within 25 miles from home and at speeds of less than 40 mph.
- You're safer in a pickup truck, so wearing a seat belt is unnecessary. Myth or Real Deal?
 - Myth. For occupants in SUVs, pickups, and vans, seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury to the driver and front seat passenger by 60%.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Family and Community Health Agent, Joanne Ureste from Hidalgo County, reminds drivers that this year's "Click It or Ticket" Campaign is scheduled for May 20 – June 2. During this time, extra law enforcement will be on the road day and night enforcing the seat belt and child restraint laws in an effort to save lives. Those officers are not out to write tickets, but instead want to help prevent the needless tragedy of motor vehicle accidents.

Remember: Buckle up day and night and save your life — not just during "Click It or Ticket," but every day of the year!