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## **Some Groups Still Not Wearing Safety Belts**

Majority killed in crashes were unrestrained

School's almost over for the year and Texans are focusing on their summer travels, but for many it will end in tragedy. However, by buckling up you can greatly increase your chance of surviving a crash. Texas AgriLife Extension Service supports the National Highway Safety Administration and Texas Department of Transportation's upcoming Memorial Day *Click It or Ticket* program. Bev Kellner, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Manager for Passenger Safety recently released the following Press Release with life-saving information.

Safety belts have been proven effective in saving lives, yet there are still some groups that are resistant to wearing them. Young adults, teens, pickup truck drivers and their passengers, as well as nighttime motorists are at greater risk because they are less likely to wear safety belts. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), more than half of the motor vehicle crash fatalities in these groups are found to be unrestrained.

Young drivers and their passengers in the 16-24 year old age group, especially males, have the lowest usage rate among all age groups. Crash data from 2006 show that among those killed in crashes, 64 percent of teenagers were not buckled up at the time of the crashes.

Drivers and passengers in pickups, especially young males, consistently have the lowest safety belt usage rates of all motorists. Pickup trucks are twice as likely as passenger vehicles to roll, and considering Texans' love affair with pickup trucks, this is a serious concern. In fact, half of all fatalities in pickup trucks are due to rollover crashes. In a pickup, safety belts can reduce the risk of dying in a rollover crash by up to 80 percent.

Nighttime hours (6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m.) bring out more unbuckled drivers and passengers. Crash records show nearly two-thirds of those killed during nighttime hours were not wearing seat belts compared with less than half of daytime passenger vehicle occupants killed.

“Staying inside the vehicle during a crash can save your life. Occupants who are ejected from a vehicle are four times more likely to be killed,” said Bev Kellner, Texas AgriLife Extension Service program manager for Passenger Safety.

“Most ejections are due to the failure to wear a safety belt. NHTSA data show that in 2006, 75 percent of ejected passenger vehicle occupants were killed. But among motorists who were in serious crashes and buckled up, 77 percent survived.”

That’s the reason behind the *Click It or Ticket* campaign, which begins mid-May each year and brings increased enforcement of the safety belt and child restraint laws. This year, the Memorial Day *Click It or Ticket* mobilization starts on May 19 and goes through June 1. The campaign will feature an emphasis on daytime as well as nighttime enforcement. With a network of agents around the state, Extension is focused on helping to get the word out about the upcoming Memorial Day *Click It or Ticket* mobilization. The goal is to reach groups who are still not convinced of the importance of wearing their safety belts. The message is simple B buckling up will keep you from receiving a ticket – better yet, it may very well save your life!”

For more information on the lifesaving benefits of buckling up, please visit

[www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov),

or contact the Texas AgriLife Extension Service office at 903/473-5000, ext. 157.

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