



Support Wyoming Senate File (SF) 11

Seat Belt Use Saves Lives and Curbs Costs:

- There were 36,096 motor vehicle crash fatalities on U.S. roads in 2019.^[i] Among passenger vehicle occupant fatalities that year, almost half (47 percent) were unrestrained when restraint use was known.^[ii]
- According to the latest data available, for passengers that survived fatal crashes in 2018, just 13 percent were unrestrained.^[iii] Seat belt use, reinforced by effective safety belt laws, is a proven lifesaver.
- From 1975 to 2017, seat belts have saved over 374,000 lives^[iv] and over \$1 trillion in economic costs.^[v]
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimated that needless deaths and injuries resulting from non-use of seat belts cost society more than \$10 billion annually in medical care, lost productivity, and other injury related costs based on 2010 data.^[vi] When adjusted for inflation, this amounts to over \$12 billion per year.^[vii]
- The average inpatient costs for crash victims who don't use seat belts are 55 percent higher than for those who use them.^[viii]
- NHTSA estimates that each critically injured survivor of a motor vehicle crash costs an average of \$1 million. Medical expenses and lost productivity account for 82 percent of the cost of the most serious level of nonfatal injury.^[ix]
- If every state with a secondary seat belt law upgraded to primary enforcement, about 1,000 lives and \$4 billion (2005 US\$) in crash costs could be saved every year.^[x] When adjusted for inflation, this amounts to \$5.5 billion per year.^[xi]

Wyoming Traffic Safety Facts:

- 147 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes in Wyoming, a 32 percent increase over 2018 (111 people killed in traffic crashes).^[xii]
- Lack of restraint use is a major contributing factor to traffic deaths and injury. Forty-seven percent of passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2019 in Wyoming were unrestrained, based on known use.^[xiii]
- Seat belt use dropped by eight percentage points in Wyoming to just over 78 percent,^[xiv] the third lowest seat belt use rate in the Nation.^[xv]
- Over the ten-year period of 2010 to 2019, motor vehicle crashes claimed the lives of nearly 1,300 people in Wyoming.^[xvi]

Seat Belt Non-Use Hurts Business (according to the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS), in 2018):

- Restraint non-use by on-the-job employees cost employers \$1.7 billion.
- Off-the-job restraint non-use by employees and their benefit-eligible dependents cost employer \$5.7 billion.
- Total costs of seat belt non-use by employees cost employers more than \$7.4 billion.
- Costs per employee injured or killed in a crash on-the-job averaged \$62,770 for those unrestrained, nearly doubling the \$33,150 cost if restrained.

Why is it important if my neighbor buckles up or not?

- The costs of seat belt non-use are borne by every taxpayer in the state.
- When loss of life, pain and decreased quality of life are added to economic costs, the annual national toll of traffic crashes is \$836 billion each year. Adjusting for inflation, this cost is now nearly \$1 trillion.
- The economic cost of motor vehicle crashes results in each person living in the U.S. essentially paying a \$784 annual "crash tax."^[xvii]
- In Wyoming, costs of crashes are nearly double. The economic cost of motor vehicle crashes results in each person living in Wyoming essentially paying a \$1,438 "crash tax".^[xviii]

- Although opponents to comprehensive seat belt laws claim that nonuse is a personal choice and affects only the individual, the fact is that motor vehicle injuries and fatalities have a significant societal cost. NHTSA calculated that the lifetime cost to society for each motor vehicle fatality is about \$1.4 million. More than 80 percent of these costs are attributed to lost workplace and household productivity.^[xi]
- Although the affected individual covers some of these costs, those not directly involved in crashes pay for more than three-quarters of all crash costs, primarily through insurance premiums, taxes and travel delay. In 2010, the costs borne by society, rather than by the crash victims, totaled more than \$187 billion; approximately 7 percent of total economic costs were borne by public sources (federal and state government).^[xii]
- In 2000 alone, seat belts might have prevented more than 142,000 injuries.^[xiii]
- Regarding personal choice and individual rights in relation to highway safety laws, the U.S. District Court for Massachusetts held in a decision affirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court that “...from the moment of injury, society picks the person up off the highway; delivers him to a municipal hospital and municipal doctors; provides him with unemployment compensation if, after recovery, he cannot replace his lost job; and, if the injury causes disability, may assume the responsibility for his and his family’s continued subsistence.”^[xiv]

Why is a primary enforcement all occupant seat belt requirement necessary?

- Seat belts are only effective if used. Primary enforcement laws are much more effective in getting people to buckle up.^[xv]
- Seat belt use is higher in states with primary enforcement laws compared to those with secondary enforcement laws or with no seat belt use law.^[xvi]
- Some states have experienced a 10-15 percent increase in seat belt use rates when primary laws were enacted.^[xvii]
- A study conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that when states strengthen their laws from secondary to primary enforcement, driver death rates decline by an estimated 7 percent.^[xviii]

For more information, contact Tara Gill, Sr. Dir. Advocacy and State Legislation, tgill@saferoads.org.

[i] Traffic Safety Facts Research Note, Preview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2019, NHTSA, Oct. 2020, DOT HS 813 021.

[ii] Traffic Safety Facts Research Note, Preview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2019, NHTSA, Oct. 2020, DOT HS 813 021.

[iii] Traffic Safety Facts Research Note, 2018 Fatal Motor Vehicle Crashes: Overview, NHTSA, Oct. 2019, DOT HS 812 826.

[iv] Traffic Safety Facts 2017: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System and the General Estimates System, NHTSA, Sep. 2019, DOT HS 812 806.

[v] The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised), NHTSA, May 2015 (Revised), DOT HS 812 013.

[vi] The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised), NHTSA, May 2015 (Revised), DOT HS 812 013.

[vii] CPI Inflation Calculator, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, available at https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

[viii] Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) Project Seat Belt and Helmet Analysis, Research Note (Revised), National Center for Statistics and Analysis, NHTSA, February 15, 1996.

[ix] The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised), NHTSA, May 2015 (Revised), DOT HS 812 013, p.1.

[x] The Nation’s Top Strategies to Stop Impaired Driving: Primary Seat Belt Laws, NHTSA, Feb. 2007, DOT HS 910 712.

[xi] CPI Inflation Calculator, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, available at https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm

[xii] NHTSA. *Traffic Safety Facts Wyoming*, available at: <https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/stsi.htm#>, Wyoming tab.

[xiii] NHTSA. *Traffic Safety Facts Wyoming*, available at: <https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/stsi.htm#>, Wyoming tab.

[xiv] NHTSA. *Traffic Safety Facts Wyoming*, available at: <https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/stsi.htm#>, Wyoming tab.

[xv] Traffic Safety Facts, Crash Stats, Seat Belt Use in 2019 – Use Rates in the States and Territories, Apr. 2020, DOT HS 812 947.

[xvi] NHTSA. *Traffic Safety Facts Wyoming*, available at: <https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/stsi.htm#>, Wyoming tab.

[xvii] Based on cost data per *The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010* (Revised), NHTSA, May 2015 (Revised), DOT HS 812 013 and 2010 census data

[xviii] Based on cost data per *The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010*, 2010 (Revised), NHTSA, May 2015 (Revised), DOT HS 812 013 and 2010 census data.

[xix] The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised), NHTSA, May 2015 (Revised), DOT HS 812 013.

[xx] The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised), NHTSA, May 2015 (Revised), DOT HS 812 013., p. 2.

[xxi] Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) Project Seat Belt and Helmet Analysis, Research Note (Revised). National Center for Statistics and Analysis. Washington, DC: NHTSA, February 15, 1996.

[xxii] *Simon v. Sargent*, D.C.Mass.1972, 346 F.Supp. 277, affirmed 93 S.Ct. 463, 409 U.S. 1020, 34 L.Ed.2d 312.

[xxiii] The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised), NHTSA, May 2015 (Revised), DOT HS 812 013.

[xxiv] Traffic Safety Facts Research Note, Seat Belt Use in 2018—Overall Results, NHTSA, Jan. 2019, DOT HS 812 662.

[xxv] *The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2010 (Revised)*, NHTSA, May 2015 (Revised), DOT HS 812 013.

[xxvi] *Effect on fatality risk of changing from secondary to primary seat belt enforcement*, Farmer, Charles M. / Williams, Allan F., *Journal of Safety Research*, 2005.