



## NEWS RELEASE

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### PARENTS OF TEEN KILLED IN CAR CRASH URGE TEXANS TO BUCKLE UP

*TxDOT launches 'Click It or Ticket' campaign to reduce unbelted injuries, fatalities*

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May 1, 2018

**AUSTIN** – On the evening of Oct. 28, 2017, Kailee Mills was traveling with three friends to a Halloween party when the car she was riding in went out of control and flipped just 400 yards from her home. Kailee, the only one not wearing a seat belt, was thrown from the car and killed. Her friends escaped with minor injuries. Kailee's parents, David and Wendy Mills of Spring, Texas, were devastated.

"We don't know why Kailee had taken off her seat belt," said David Mills. "She always wore it. We never thought this would happen to us — to our daughter. We know that if she had been wearing her seat belt, she'd still be here. Instead, the girl we called our 'ray of sunshine' is gone."

"No family should have to grieve the loss of a loved one whose life was cut short," said Texas Department of Transportation Executive Director James Bass. "Last year, more than 900 people killed in traffic crashes were not buckled up, leaving countless families, friends and communities to deal with a tragic loss. Many of these deaths were preventable, but seat belts only work if you use them."

Kailee Mills was a student at Klein Collins High School and planned to study medicine in college. To give meaning to their daughter's death, her parents started working to build awareness about the importance of always using a seat belt. Now they're joining with TxDOT to launch the state's annual "Click It or Ticket" campaign in the hope they can help other families avoid what they've experienced.

Statewide seat belt use continues to increase, reaching nearly 92 percent for 2017, yet 929 unbuckled Texans still died in traffic crashes last year. TxDOT's "Click It or Ticket" campaign reminds drivers and passengers that wearing a seat belt is the single most effective step they can take to protect themselves in a crash. Wearing a seat belt reduces the risk of dying in a crash by 45 percent. That number jumps to 60 percent for pickup trucks.

While daytime seat belt usage continues to increase, nighttime use remains lower, leading to a higher rate of fatalities. Last year, the Texas A&M Transportation Institute found the number of drivers and front seat passengers observed in 18 cities not wearing seat belts increased by almost 50 percent from day to night. In 2017, 57 percent of all crashes where occupants died and weren't wearing a seat belt happened at night (between 6 p.m. and 5:59 a.m.).

Texas law requires everyone in a vehicle to be properly buckled up or face fines and court costs up to \$200. Children younger than 8 must be in a child safety seat or booster seat unless they're taller than 4 feet 9 inches. If they aren't properly restrained, the driver faces fines of up to \$250, plus court costs.

As part of the "Click It or Ticket" campaign, Texas law enforcement officers will step up their enforcement of the state's seat belt laws from May 21 to June 3, including the Memorial Day weekend.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the “Click It or Ticket” initiative in Texas is estimated to have saved 5,473 lives, prevented more than 95,500 serious injuries and saved more than \$20.7 billion in related economic costs from 2002 through 2017.

To learn more about “Click It or Ticket,” visit [texasclickitorticket.com](http://texasclickitorticket.com).

For media inquiries, contact TxDOT Media Relations at [MediaRelations@txdot.gov](mailto:MediaRelations@txdot.gov) or (512) 463-8700.

*The information contained in this report represents reportable data collected from the Texas Peace Officer's Crash Report (CR-3). This information was received and processed by the department as of April 20, 2018.*

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