
TxDOT's five goals: reduce congestion, enhance safety, expand economic opportunity, improve air quality and increase the value of transportation assets.

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TxDOT “Teen Click It or Ticket” Campaign Launches Statewide Urging Teens to “Love Yourself, Buckle up”

Pilot Program Aimed at Teens Showed More Buckled Up

AUSTIN, February 07, 2011 – The Texas Department of Transportation’s (TxDOT) “Teen Click It or Ticket” campaign will launch statewide following the success of a five-county pilot program aimed at increasing seat belt use among young drivers and passengers ages 16-20. Since the roll out of the pilot program in May 2009, both teen drivers and passengers buckled up for safety – with as much as a 9.1 percent increase in the number of teen drivers using seat belts according to findings from TxDOT and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Because of these results, TxDOT is now expanding this campaign statewide..

During the pilot program conducted in Bexar, Dallas, Harris, Hidalgo and Tarrant counties, teen drivers and their front seat passengers buckled up 4.5 percent more frequently than their peers in the five control cities used for comparison.

“We’re delighted to say that the teens in our pilot program heard our message and took it to heart. More young drivers and their passengers are buckling up. By expanding this program statewide, we hope teens throughout Texas will always wear their seat belts whenever they’re in a vehicle,” said Carol T. Rawson, P.E., Deputy Traffic Operations Division Director for TxDOT. “Teens need to remember that buckling up can not only save their own lives, but also the lives of the people they love. That’s why we’re reminding them that wearing a seat belt is so necessary. Every rider. Every ride.”

In Texas, teen drivers are the population group with the highest incidence of unbuckled fatalities. In 2009, more than half (53 percent) of the teen drivers and passengers ages 15-20 killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes were not wearing their safety belts at the time of the crash. Almost two-thirds of those drivers and passengers killed in crashes were male.

To make sure teens understand the importance of wearing a safety belt, TxDOT is touring a mangled, wrecked truck to cities throughout the state. Two teen involved in the truck crash survived because they were both belted. “This is a very graphic and visual display of a terrible wreck—it’s hard to imagine that the two teens actually walked away from it. Both of them credit seat belts as the only reason they’re alive today,” said Rawson.

Participating high schools around the state will receive materials including parking lot banners, window decals, lawn signs and posters to display around campus that direct students to the Web site, www.seatbeltsrock.com--which is an interactive site with stories and videos from popular DJ’s around the state, quizzes and a virtual valentine card that can be shared with friends and loved ones. Students who

visit the site have the opportunity to register to win one of four iPads, donated by Nationwide Insurance. Additionally, each school will receive coupons from Whataburger for free and discounted meals to use as student incentives.

In September 2009, a new traffic law took effect in Texas requiring all occupants of a vehicle, including back seat passengers, to be secured by a safety belt—no matter their age. According to NHTSA, on average, Texas kids and teens ages 5 – 16 buckle up less than 30 percent of the time in the back seat.

“While we are proud of the pilot campaign results, our work is not over until all Texas teens get the message that buckling up—in the front and the back seat-- will save their life,” said Tracie Mendez, Driver Behavior Program Manager at TxDOT. “We need to keep up the steady drumbeat reminder throughout the state.”

Regular safety belt use is the single most effective way to protect drivers and passengers and to reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes. Those back seat passengers not buckled up can become a human missile during a crash, injuring not only themselves, but those in the front seat as well. Drivers not wearing safety belts face fines of up to \$250, and those drivers on the Graduated Driver License (GDL) Program could risk license suspension if they receive a seat belt citation. It’s important that all people in the car – driving or not –remember to buckle up.

Too many lives are being lost by not buckling up. View Rhianna Rutledge's story here and other teen stories at www.seatbeltsrock.com.

The Texas Department of Transportation

The Texas Department of Transportation is responsible for maintaining nearly 80,000 miles of road and for supporting aviation, rail and public transportation across the state. TxDOT and its approximately 12,000 employees strive to empower local leaders to solve local transportation problems, and to use new financial tools, including tolling and public-private partnerships, to reduce congestion and pave the way for future economic growth while enhancing safety, improving air quality and preserving the value of the state's transportation assets. Find out more at www.txdot.gov. Fan us on Facebook www.txdot.gov/facebook. Follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/txdot.

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