

PRIMARY SEAT BELT ENFORCEMENT

MYTH VS. FACT

If I get hurt in a crash, I'm not hurting anybody but myself.

Society pays every time someone is hurt in a crash. Severe injuries often end in lifetime disabilities that are covered by state and/or federal aid. As taxpayers, we all bear these economic costs including emergency services, uninsured medical care, tax-supported rehabilitation programs, higher insurance premiums, and survivor benefits. Costs for medical treatment are, on average, 55% higher for patients who were not wearing seat belts. Tax dollars pay for an estimated 25% of the medical costs of people injured in motor vehicles (2/3 from Medicaid and 1/3 from Medicare).

I agree that kids should be restrained in a vehicle, but adults should be able to make their own decision.

In Missouri's 2006 Child Restraint Observational survey, it was shown that when the driver failed to wear their safety belt, 42% of the children were not restrained either. Parents must set the example for their children. In addition, any unbelted passenger becomes a flying projectile. **What child stands a chance against an adult hurled into them at an enormous force? Also, if you're not belted in and are seriously hurt, have you considered who will care for your children? Or worse yet, who will raise them if they survive and you don't?**

I'll just brace myself if I'm in a crash.

Consider the laws of physics. If you crash or slam on your brakes, your car comes to a sudden stop but your body will keep moving until it is stopped—by the windshield, dashboard or pavement. Use the following formula to determine the approximate force it takes to restrain a person in a crash:

$$\begin{array}{rccccccc} \text{Speed of car} & \times & \text{Weight of passenger} & = & \text{Restraining Force} \\ 40 \text{ mph} & \times & 150 \text{ lbs} & = & \mathbf{6,000 \text{ lbs}} \end{array}$$

Do the math. Could you bench-press 6,000 lbs? Or stop yourself from colliding into your passengers? Racecar drivers have long recognized this fact and wouldn't consider driving without a safety harness (and they've survived horrific crashes at extreme speeds).

My vehicle has air bags. Why should I worry about wearing a safety belt?

Even if your vehicle has air bags, always wear your seat belt. When air bags are used alone, they are only 11% effective. However, the combination of a properly worn seat belt and use of an air bag can reduce the risk of death 63%.

If my car catches fire or is submerged, I'd rather be thrown clear than trapped.

Less than ½ of 1 percent of crashes involve either fire or water, plus the odds of your safety belt not releasing are minimal. Wearing a safety belt stops your body from being thrown around inside or outside the vehicle. A safety belt decreases the chances you'll get hurt or knocked unconscious by firmly keeping you in place—there's no way can you escape if you're unconscious. Most law enforcement officers will admit they seldom unbuckle a dead person.

In 2005, of 742 crashes involving driver ejections, 658 (almost 96%) of the drivers were not wearing their safety belts.

Won't a primary seat belt law allow racial profiling to occur?

Legislation was passed during the 2004 session to enhance Missouri's racial profiling statute 590.650. The law now requires law enforcement officers to complete a racial profile report on **every** motor vehicle stop—regardless of the reason (roadblock and sobriety checkpoint stops are exempted). Law enforcement agency racial profile reports are due annually to the Attorney General.

So it all boils down to this:

On January 1, 1968 the first Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard required lap belts at all seating positions and shoulder belts in the front outboard positions for passenger cars. Nearly 40 years later, we've got cell phones and GPS in our vehicles, but Missouri has yet to pass a primary safety belt law. Are we catering to the 23% of our population who don't wear safety belts versus the 77% who do?

A primary safety belt law has the potential for increasing Missouri's usage rate 11 percentage points. This would translate to about 90 lives saved each year.

Of any single piece of traffic safety legislation, a primary safety belt law has the greatest potential for saving the most lives.

