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Kansas Aims to Save Lives with “Click it. Or ticket.” Enforcement *State, local police target unbuckled travelers*

TOPEKA, Kan. — Kansas ranks towards the bottom one-third in seat belt usage among all 50 states. State and local law enforcement are working to improve this ranking by stepping up enforcement to crack down on motorists who aren’t wearing their seat belts as part of the Click it. Or ticket. seat belt enforcement campaign.

More than 150 law enforcement agencies across Kansas will be taking a no-excuses approach to seat belt enforcement as part of the national campaign that runs from May 21 through June 3, concurrent with one of the busiest travel and holiday weekends of the year.

“The Click it. Or ticket. campaign is about saving lives. We would be grateful if every occupant we observed was wearing their seat belt” said Ben Gardner, Kansas Highway Patrol Technical Trooper. “Our increased enforcement around Memorial Day serves as a reminder that wearing a seat belt is the easiest thing you can do to save your life.”

In 2017, nearly half of the 359 deaths from crashes in Kansas were not buckled. Young adults are dying at disproportionate rates because they are not wearing their seat belts in Kansas. In Kansas, 56 percent of 18-to-34-year old occupants killed in crashes were not wearing their seat belts in 2017. Male pick-up truck drivers between the ages of 21-34, and drivers in rural areas are among the top unrestrained fatalities.

“Seat belts save lives every day. But they only save lives when they are used and there are still many people in Kansas who don’t buckle up,” said Chris Bortz, KDOT Traffic Safety Program Manager. “Our goal is 100 percent compliance. It doesn’t matter where you go, drivers need to buckle up for every ride, every time because a deadly crash can happen to anyone.”

In 2017, Kansas seat belt usage was 82 percent, below the national average of 90.1 percent, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. From 2014 to 2016, seat belts saved nearly 41,500 lives across the country.

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