

FACT



Pennsylvanians United for Safety

UPDATE

July 13, 1998

Volume 1 • Number 4

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Pennsylvanians United for Safety

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Pennsylvanians United for Safety

is a coalition of 40 member organizations representing over 2.9 million Pennsylvanians dedicated to the goal of upgrading the seat belt law to Standard Enforcement. PennDOT estimates that this legislation could save 400 lives each year and reduce our economic loss by over \$2.2 billion. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have upgraded their seat belt laws to Standard Enforcement, with the strongest penalties being in the District of Columbia. New York (1984) and Maryland (1997) have Standard Enforcement, with New Jersey and Ohio considering this important issue.

Pennsylvanians United for Safety

Teenage Highway Fatalities

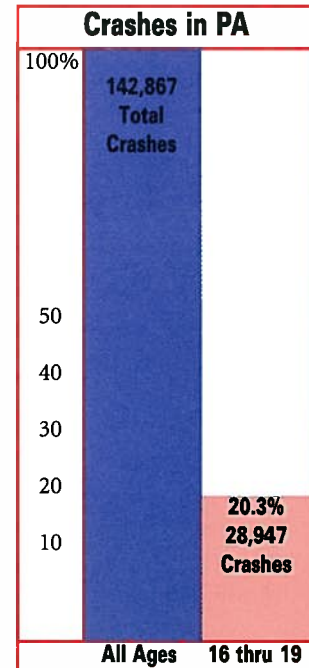
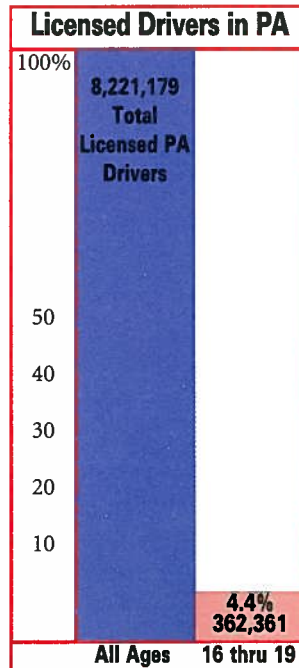
Teenagers Have Five Times More Crashes than Average Adult

Few people would dispute the fact that many teenagers feel immortal and therefore defy any action that places them in danger. According to PennDOT crash statistics from 1996, the age group of motor vehicle operators involved in the highest number of accidents was 16 thru 19 years.

In 1996 there were 8,221,179 licensed Pennsylvania drivers. Of that total, 362,361 or 4.4% were teenagers.

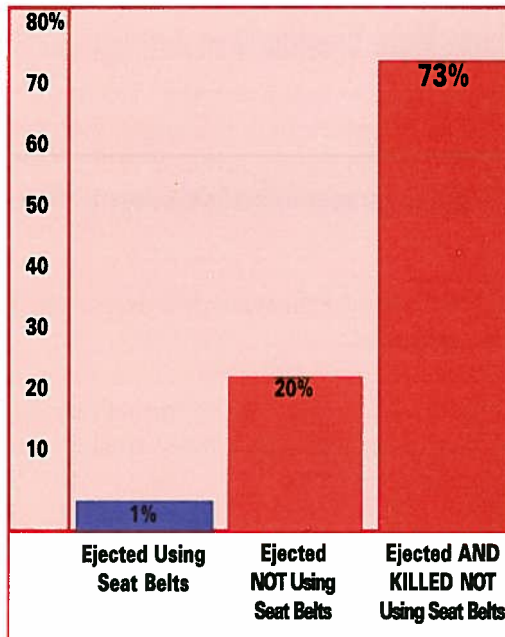
For teenage drivers, 1996 data places them as the most likely to be involved in a crash. They were responsible for 28,947 crashes which accounted for 20.3% of all crashes in 1996.

Often young drivers lack the practical experience to safely react to traffic conditions. Drivers in this age group also commonly engage in more risk-taking behaviors, thereby exposing themselves to dangerous situations on the road. And teens are twice as likely to have unbuckled passengers in the car. **On average, 70% of teens who die in crashes are NOT wearing their seat belt.**



Ejection from Vehicle Usually Fatal

Seat belts prevent total ejection from a vehicle in an accident. Reports show only 1% of the occupants using seat belts are totally ejected, compared with 20% of the unrestrained occupants in auto crashes.



In motor vehicle crashes, being ejected out of the vehicle is over 20 times more deadly than remaining inside the protection of the vehicle. In fatal crashes, 73% of passenger car occupants who were ejected from the vehicle were killed.

Actions Most Likely to get Teenagers to Buckle Up

The American Coalition for Traffic Safety (ACTS) conducted a survey of 800 non-users of seat belts and part-time seat belt users residing in Secondary Enforcement states such as Pennsylvania. The survey was conducted for ACTS in May of 1996 by Lawrence Research.

The survey uncovered 5 primary legislative actions that would encourage motorists to buckle up:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. Driver License Penalty Points | 28.0% |
| 2. Standard Enforcement Law | 20.3% |
| 3. Increased Fines | 15.0% |
| 4. Reduced Lawsuit Awards for not Buckling Up | 10.5% |
| 5. Increased Enforcement Levels | 8.8% |

The results highlight the fact that the second most influential act that a legislature can initiate to increase seat belt usage is to pass Standard Enforcement laws. Upgrading the seat belt law was nearly 3 times more effective than increasing the level of enforcement. House Bill 2078 will upgrade the seat belt law to Standard Enforcement and increase the fine to that of a summary offense. The fear of a traffic citation inspires more teens to buckle up.

What is the Value of a Life?

Seat belts save lives. Most people agree to that statement. In 1996, 295 children, teenagers and young adults under the age of 21 were killed on our highways.

Of that total, 13 were pedestrians, 14 were riding a bicycle and we can assume the majority of the remaining fatalities involved motor vehicles. As previously noted, 70% of the teenagers killed were NOT wearing seat belts, or some 187 of those young people in 1996 were unbuckled. Many of those killed could have survived, had they been wearing their seat belt.

Standard Enforcement of seat belt usage will encourage the most vulnerable age group, our teenage population, to buckle up. Families suffer enormous pain and anguish when a child is killed or seriously injured. The total cost of accidents is too high for the teenage population, who represent 4.4% of drivers and are involved in 20.3% of all Pennsylvania crashes.

FACT UPDATE

May 1998

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PENNSYLVANIANS UNITED FOR SAFETY

A New Coalition Representing 2.8 Million Pennsylvanians

Primary Objective - Enforcement to Save Lives

Coalition Formed to Improve Pennsylvania Safety Program

PENNSYLVANIANS UNITED FOR SAFETY has been formed by thirty-three organizations in Pennsylvania who have banded together in a coalition to support upgrading the state's seat belt law to standard enforcement. Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have upgraded their seat belt laws to standard enforcement, with the strongest penalties being in the District of Columbia. New York (1984) and Maryland (1997) have standard enforcement, with New Jersey and Ohio strongly considering the issue.

There is Compelling Urgency

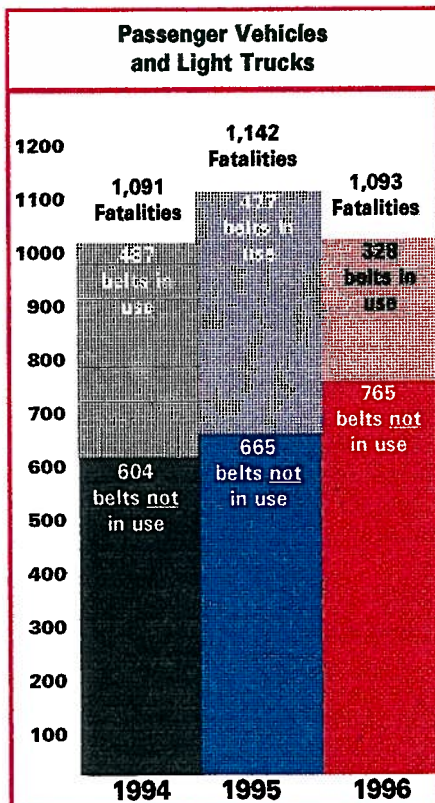
Traffic accidents claimed the lives of 1,470 people who died on Pennsylvania highways in 1996, and over half were not wearing their seat belts. Another 5,250 received major injuries costing taxpayers millions of dollars. PennDOT estimates that standard enforcement of seat belt usage could save over 360 lives each year and could have saved over \$2 billion. That results in saving one life each day!

Education efforts to increase awareness of the need to buckle up have been very successful. Seat belt usage in Pennsylvania increased to 71% in 1994 and 1995. However, in 1996 seat belt usage dropped to 65% which was a 9% drop from the previous year. The 1997 statistics should be published in the near future.

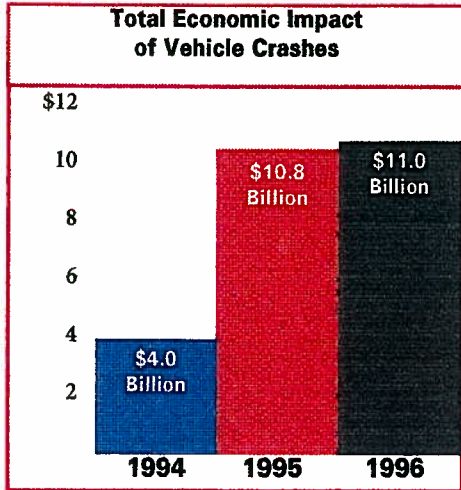
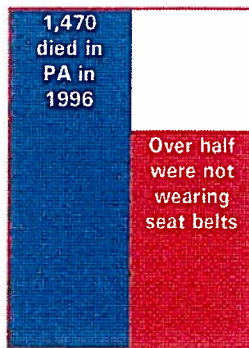
Why the drop? Speculation is that as auto manufacturers add additional safety features to new cars, such as front and side air bags, some motorists feel safe and therefore become complacent. Modern motor vehicles offer some 45 safety features. However, the interrelated value of these safety features is lost if the seat belt, requiring human action, is not engaged. Without the seat belt, the other safety devices cannot accomplish the task imposed by the federal standards.

20% of the Highway Fatalities in PA in 1996 Were Kids Under 21

There is a direct correlation between the driver wearing a seat belt and the child passenger being properly restrained. In 1996, 108 children under the age of 16 were killed with a majority not properly restrained. Teenagers don't consider seat belts to be "cool." They feel immortal and are killing themselves at an alarming rate. In 1996, 187 kids between the ages of 16 and 21 were killed. Teenage drivers or their passengers under age 21 would benefit from a tougher seat belt law. They understand the cost and aggravation of taking a traffic citation home to their parent and yet can't relate to the danger of hitting a windshield and suffering brain trauma. We will explore these issues in greater detail in future *Fact Updates* devoted to teenage deaths.



Source: PennDOT



Source: PennDOT

Current Law Considered Weak

Pennsylvania currently has what is considered one of the weakest seat belt laws in the United States. Our current law applies to front seat passengers only and treats seat belt usage as a secondary violation, however the seat belt citation will not apply unless the primary violation results in a conviction. In addition, the driver is responsible for the front seat passenger only up to the age of 18. This means that an older passenger cannot be cited since the passenger did not create the primary violation.

PENNSYLVANIANS UNITED FOR SAFETY Call for Action

The Pennsylvanians United for Safety coalition supports the standard enforcement proposals introduced in the Pennsylvania Legislature.

The coalition is being funded by the insurance and automotive industries and the restraint equipment industry through the National Safety Council, specifically the Air Bag and Seat Belt Safety Campaign in Washington, D.C.

The coalition is prepared to address this issue with all interested parties. Again, the goal is to save lives, reduce serious injuries, reduce the associated costs that are paid by our fellow citizens, allow all citizens to enjoy the benefits from the economic impact and equitable enforcement experienced in other competing states.

Since HB 2078 was introduced on December 16, 1997 an estimated one person per day has died who could have been saved on Pennsylvania Highways if they were wearing their seat belt in compliance with state law. **Crash victims, loved ones, families and taxpayers ask for your support of House Bill 2078 or comparable provisions in other related Senate Bills!**

PENNSYLVANIANS UNITED FOR SAFETY

Grassroots Membership

33 organizations representing 2.8 million Pennsylvanians

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
 Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign
 American Automobile Manufacturers Association
 American Trauma Society, Pennsylvania Division
 Center for Violence and Injury Control,
 Allegheny University of the Health Sciences
 Coalition for Lifetime Injury Prevention and Trauma Team,
 PennState Geisinger Health System
 Committee on Trauma of the AM College of Surgeons
 Firemen's Legislative Federation of Pennsylvania
 Hospital & Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania
 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Region III
 National Transportation Safety Board
 PA AAA Federation
 PA Association for Safety Education
 PA Association of Private School Administrators
 PA Association of Pupil Services Administrators
 PA Chamber of Business and Industry

PA Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
 PA Chapter American College of Emergency Physicians
 PA Chiefs of Police Association
 PA DUI Association
 PA Emergency Health Services Council
 PA Emergency Nurses Association
 PA Fire Services Institute
 PA Fireman Publication
 PA Medical Society
 PA Nurses Association
 PA Osteopathic Medical Association
 PA PTA
 PA SADD
 PA School Counselors Association
 PA State Coroners Association
 PA Trauma Nurse Advisory Council
 PA Trauma Systems Foundation

FACT



Pennsylvanians United for Safety

UPDATE

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Pennsylvanians United for Safety

Crime Versus Crash Statistics

Crime Statistics Important to the General Assembly

The Governor and General Assembly have listened to the citizens of the Commonwealth and taken a strong and aggressive stand in introducing legislation to combat the unacceptable levels of crime in our Commonwealth

According to the Pennsylvania State Police Uniform Crime Report (UCR) entitled, *Crime in Pennsylvania 1996*, murders in Pennsylvania during a 5 year reporting period, have fluctuated between a low of 671 in 1996 and a high of 821 in 1993. The number of murders in our state from 1992 to 1996 averaged 733.

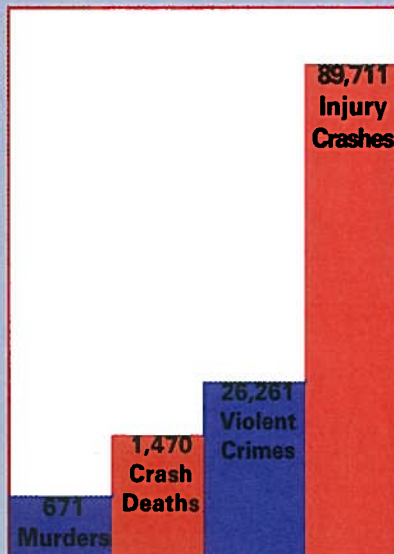
When you compare Pennsylvania's murder statistics with fatal crash statistics, it becomes clear that *our citizens are in greater danger due to traffic crashes than criminal activity*, the latter being constantly hyped by the media.

PA State Police 1996 Uniform Crime Report

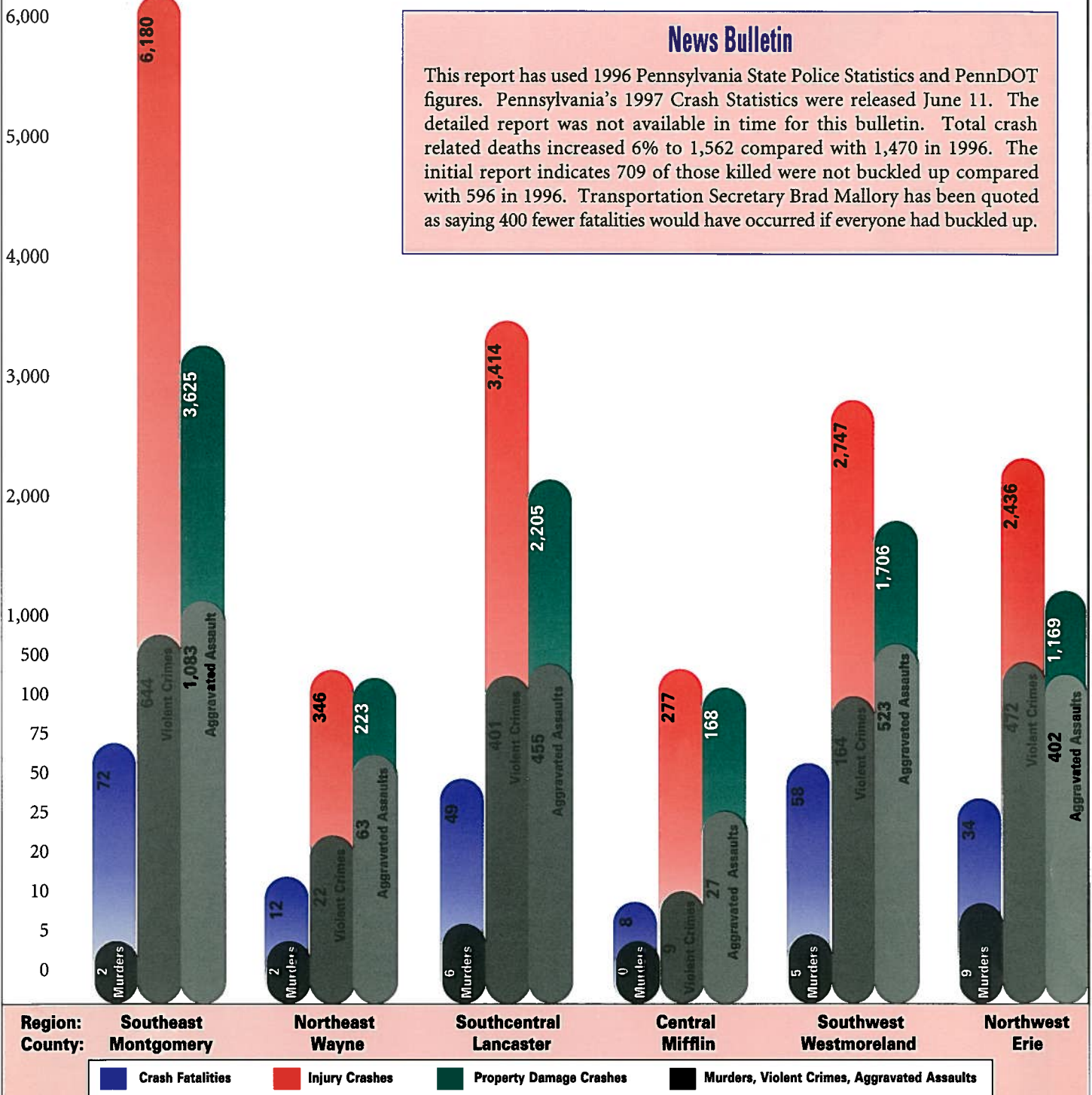
In 1996, 1,470 people lost their lives on our state's highways. That is more than two times the 671 people murdered. Many of the crash victims never saw their perpetrator and therefore never had a chance to mitigate the situation. Violent crimes in Pennsylvania during 1996 totaled 49,549. This number includes murder, rape, robbery and aggravated assault.

The UCR study indicates the violent crimes of rape and robbery totaled 26,261 when compared to 89,711 crashes involving personal injury.

Aggravated assaults totaled 22,617 compared with 51,802 *property damage only* crashes.. As a result, you are 2.2 times more likely to be killed in a motor vehicle crash than you are of being murdered in Pennsylvania. You are 3.4 times more likely to be injured on a Pennsylvania highway than raped or robbed. And, you are 2.3 times more likely to sustain a property damage crash (with no injury) than be assaulted in the state.



1996 County Crime vs. Crash Statistics Tell the Story



News Bulletin

This report has used 1996 Pennsylvania State Police Statistics and PennDOT figures. Pennsylvania's 1997 Crash Statistics were released June 11. The detailed report was not available in time for this bulletin. Total crash related deaths increased 6% to 1,562 compared with 1,470 in 1996. The initial report indicates 709 of those killed were not buckled up compared with 596 in 1996. Transportation Secretary Brad Mallory has been quoted as saying 400 fewer fatalities would have occurred if everyone had buckled up.

PennDOT estimates that Standard Enforcement will save more than one life per day in Pennsylvania, AND prevent 16 injuries per day. For too many others, a head trauma injury will condemn the victim and family to a lifetime of suffering and taxpayer support.

Should you have any questions regarding this study, or wish to receive a report specific to your county, please contact our office at 717-233-8070 and we will be happy to provide you with a copy.

EAGLE UPDATE

June 15, 1998

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For more information contact:

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Child Safety Tied to Adult Seat Belt Usage

States with Standard Enforcement laws averaged 15% higher seat belt usage than those with secondary laws, as of December 1996.

During the first full year after enforcement began in five states that upgraded their seat belt law to Standard Enforcement, there was a 23% reduction in the fatalities of children and young adults under the age of 21.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Pennsylvanians United for Safety

A New Coalition Representing 2.8 Million Pennsylvanians

Children's Safety in Jeopardy

Coalition Formed to Improve Pennsylvania Safety Program

Pennsylvanians United for Safety is a coalition of 37 member organizations representing over 2.8 million Pennsylvanians dedicated to the goal of upgrading the seat belt law to Standard Enforcement. PennDOT estimates that this legislation could save 366 lives each year and reduce our economic loss by over \$2.2 billion.

Child Safety Affected by Adult Behavior

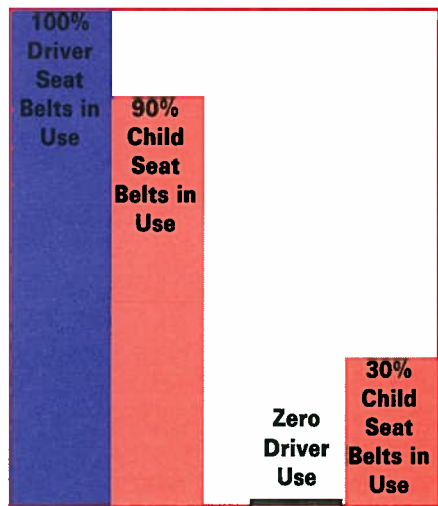
Seat belt studies indicate that there is a definite correlation between an unbelted driver and his/her child passengers. The accompanying graph illustrates the fact that –

if the driver is wearing a seat belt, there is a 90% chance that the children will be wearing their seat belt and/or child passenger restraint system. If the driver is not wearing a seat belt, then there is only a 30% chance that the child passengers will be wearing a seat belt and/or child passenger restraint system.

In 1996, Pennsylvania lost 108 children under the age of 16 in traffic fatalities. We also lost 187 young adults age 16 through 20. This means that of the 1,470 fatalities in Pennsylvania in 1996, 20% were young adults and children under the age of twenty-one.

Standard Enforcement of seat belt usage will save lives, especially young innocent lives. Most teenagers, who feel immortal, will buckle-up to avoid going home with a traffic citation. That fact alone will reduce our young adult fatalities.

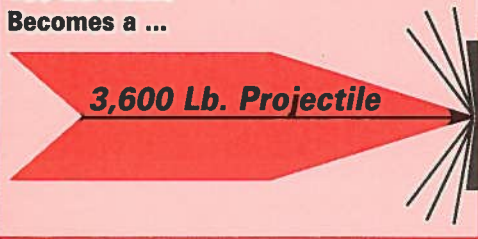
As a result, the General Assembly needs to pass Standard Enforcement of seat belt use in order to encourage more adults to buckle up and provide a safer environment for children in motor vehicles and encourage teenagers to “be cool” and avoid Law Enforcement and parental retribution.



Source: National Safety Council

In a crash of only 35 mph:

**180 Lb. Adult
Becomes a ...**



Brace Yourself ??

Some people believe that they are strong enough to brace themselves in a crash. They are NOT! At only 35 mph, an unbelted driver or passenger weighing 180 pounds crashes into the steering wheel, dashboard, windshield or onto the pavement with a force greater than 3,600 pounds. Nobody's arms are that strong!

Some people allow their children to ride in the car without a safety belt or child safety seat. They believe they can hold onto or catch their child in a crash. Yet in a crash at highway speeds of only 30 mph, a 15 pound child can easily generate a sudden force greater than 300 pounds.

In a crash of only 30 mph:

**15 Lb. Child
Becomes a...**



In a crash, even a strong adult wearing a seat belt cannot hold onto a child. The youngster is torn from the adult's arms and thrown into the dashboard or the windshield. If the adult is not wearing a seat belt, both adult and child will fly forward and the child will probably be crushed between the adult and the dashboard.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Two Issues of Importance

First, the current Pennsylvania Child Safety Restraint Law applies only to children under age 4, regardless of where they are riding in the vehicle. In other words, Pennsylvania currently has a standard enforcement seat belt law which was designed to protect children under the age of 4. The difficulty of enforcing this law is obvious as the enforcement officer many times has only a split second to determine the age of a child.

Second, the current Pennsylvania seat belt law applies to the front seat passenger only up to age 18.

This means that children over the age of 4 in the back seat are not required to be placed in child restraint safety systems or seat belts. As a result, the phenomena described above regarding children becoming projectiles is a tragic occurrence in Pennsylvania. The 1996 crash statistics illustrate the fact that 20% of the highway fatalities in Pennsylvania were children, teenagers and young adults under the age of 21. The totals were 108 children under the age of 16 and 187 teenagers and young adults over the age of 16 and under the age of 21.

The Heart and Soul of Our Future

It is indeed tragic when we lose 295 young lives. What makes it even more tragic is the paraplegic youth on assistance who is struggling for each day of life. Or the head trauma case that will never experience his or her potential. If Pennsylvania is truly to become competitive in the global economy of today, we must reduce the human and economic loss through Standard Enforcement of seat belt use.

**1,470
Deaths
All Ages**

**295
Deaths
Under
Age 21**