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## **Survey Says More Teens Buckling Up, but the Battle Continues**

*Battle of the Belt Campaign Aims to Save Teen Lives*

JEFFERSON CITY – More Missouri teens are buckling up. According to the results of the latest statewide seat belt survey, teen seat belt use is up to 66 percent from 61 percent.

Unfortunately, that means 34 percent still aren't wearing their seat belts and are at a greater risk to get injured or killed in traffic crashes. That's why Missouri high schools are invited to compete in the 2010 Battle of the Belt Challenge for an opportunity to win cash and prizes while increasing their school seat belt use.

“Although more Missouri teens are wearing their seat belts according to the survey, too many still are dying in car crashes because they aren't buckled up,” said Leanna Depue, chair of the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety's Executive Committee. “Through education, competition and fun, Battle of the Belt can make a difference with Missouri teens and save lives.”

Young drivers are overrepresented in crashes both nationwide and in Missouri. Of all 2009 Missouri traffic crashes, 24 percent involved a young driver (under age 21). Of all fatal traffic crashes, 17 percent involved a young driver. Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for people 15-20 years old.

The statewide competition will run Oct. 4 to Nov. 19 to educate young drivers about safety belt use, reduce traffic crash injuries and save teen lives. The program consists of two surprise seat belt checks at each high school to measure student seat belt usage before and after an educational campaign on the importance of safety belt use. In addition, schools have the opportunity to submit a 30-second video spot aimed at encouraging their peers to buckle up. Statewide and regional cash prizes are awarded to schools reaching high safety belt usage rates.

The program was originally brought to southwest Missouri by the Missouri Emergency Nurses Association and St. John's Hospital. In 2006, the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety,

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in conjunction with American Family Insurance, took the competition statewide and continue to sponsor this year's program along with the Missouri College of Emergency Physicians.

More than 144 schools participated in Battle of the Belt last year. Washington High School in Washington, Mo. won the video contest. Their winning entry featured a race to buckle up with the message, "Everyone's a Winner When You Buckle Up." It can be viewed at [saveMOLives.com](http://saveMOLives.com).

Sign up your local high school to take on the Battle of the Belt Challenge by completing a participation agreement form online at [saveMOLives.com](http://saveMOLives.com) by Oct. 1. For more information on Battle of the Belt, visit [saveMOLives.com](http://saveMOLives.com).

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