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Missourians Wearing Seat Belts Even Less

Jefferson City, MO -- Fewer Missourians buckled up this year compared to 2009, according to the latest statewide seat belt survey conducted in June 2010. Despite evidence proving the benefits of wearing a seat belt, nearly 24 percent of Missouri motorists are still not making it click. Only 76 percent of Missourians buckle up regularly, compared to 77 percent in 2009, which is eight percent less than the national average of 84 percent.

“We are just totally baffled as to why these people still don’t buckle up and risk their lives unnecessarily every time they ride in a vehicle,” says Leanna Depue, chair of the Missouri Coalition for Roadway Safety’s Executive Committee. “Unfortunately, Missouri just can’t seem to get our overall seat belt usage rates to increase, and it’s not likely to improve significantly without a primary safety belt law. We could save so many lives just by making our seat belt law a primary one.”

In 2009, 878 people were killed in Missouri traffic crashes, and 67 percent of the vehicle occupants killed weren’t wearing a seat belt. Wearing a seat belt is your best defense in a crash because it provides protection from being ejected and keeps motorists from smashing into windshields, dashboards and other passengers.

The annual survey involved more than 126,419 observations of drivers and passengers in 460 locations in both urban and rural counties. Missouri worked with The Missouri Safety Center to conduct the survey. Since 2004 the usage rate has fluctuated only slightly between 75 and 77 percent.

Other survey findings show that of Missouri drivers, those driving vans and sport utility vehicles buckled up most often – 84 percent of the time. Only 64.4 percent of pickup truck drivers wear seat belts.

“All the statistics show that seat belts are life saving and all the experts agree that buckling up is the best way to protect yourself in a crash, but almost one fourth of my fellow Missourians just don’t.” said Depue. “It is a number we have to keep trying to change. Please buckle up!”

For more information, visit www.savemolives.com.

NOTE: For video interviews of Missouri Highway Patrol Colonel Ron Replogle and Emergency Room Physician Thomas Nittler please visit: ftp://ftp.modot.org/CRmedia/Seat_Belts_2010/

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