

As travel rises, police warn: 'Click it or ticket'

by Bend Weekly Sources

As the travel season shifts into high gear in Oregon, law enforcement agencies across the state are taking the national "Click It or Ticket" campaign on the road again.

Local police departments, sheriff's offices and Oregon State Police always pay attention to make sure that drivers and passengers are safely restrained in their vehicles. But during the national "Click It or Ticket" blitz May 22 through June 4, they will be watching closely for this vital yet simple safety law.

"Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and disability for all Americans age 1 through 34, according to the National Centers for Disease Control," said Carla Levinski, occupant protection program manager at the Oregon Department of Transportation's Safety Division. "The goal is simple - to save more lives by convincing and reminding seat belt users and non-users to buckle up on every trip."

In fact, the 2005 Oregon Legislature extended the state's seat belt law to include vehicles for hire, such as taxis, limousines, shuttles and vans.

As of Jan. 1, 2006, Oregon law requires occupants of these commercially operated passenger vehicles to use safety restraints. All occupants age 16 and older are responsible to buckle themselves up, and adult passengers are responsible for properly restraining children under 16 in seat belts or child safety seats. Only taxi drivers are exempt from the law.

ODOT has produced free "Seat belts must be worn in this vehicle" stickers for operators of these types of vehicles. They may be obtained from ODOT's Transportation Safety Division at 800-922-2022 or in Salem at 503-984-4190.

"Seat belts are the simplest and cheapest way to reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes," Levinski said. "Although Oregon has the nation's fifth highest belt usage rate at about 93 percent, that remaining seven percent costs over a hundred lives a year in Oregon."

The 2006 "Click It or Ticket" national traffic enforcement mobilization is promoted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Oregon law enforcement agencies, most of which receive traffic safety overtime funding through ODOT's "Three Flags Campaign," will be teaming with officers nationwide to encourage proper use of safety belts and child restraints - by everyone, on every trip.

"In Oregon, law enforcement will focus efforts during this spring's blitz on educating the public regarding booster seat use for children, prohibition of minors under eighteen from riding in the open bed of pickup trucks, and the recent change to Oregon law that requires belt use by occupants of taxis, shuttles, limos and other vehicles for hire," Levinski said.

An example of the interagency efforts during this blitz, Oregon State Police, Marion County Sheriff's Office and police officers from Woodburn, Keizer and Salem will be conducting a saturation patrol on Interstate 5 between Salem and Donald/Aurora on Monday, May 22. The saturation will use the OSP airplane, patrol car and motorcycle officers.

Safety belt stats

* The 2006 "Click It or Ticket" national traffic enforcement mobilization is promoted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and will run from May 22 through June 4. Oregon law enforcement agencies, most of whom receive traffic safety overtime funding through ODOT's "Three Flags Campaign", will be teaming with officers nationwide to encourage proper use of safety belts and child restraints --- by everyone, on every trip.* The goal is simple: to save more lives by convincing nonusers and part-time belt users to buckle everyone on every trip.* Oregon law enforcement will focus efforts during the upcoming blitz on educating the public regarding booster seat use, prohibition of minors under 18 from riding in the open bed of pickup trucks, and a recent change to Oregon law which requires belt use by occupants of taxis, shuttles, limos and other vehicles for hire. * Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and disability for all Americans age 1 through 34 years old, according to the National Centers for Disease Control. * Regular safety belt use is the single most effective way to protect people and reduce fatalities in motor vehicle crashes.* While it is estimated that 83 percent of Americans regularly wear their safety belts, Oregonians do much better. Oregon has the nation's fifth-highest use rate for safety belts at 93.3 percent. Other states in the top five are Hawaii 95.3 percent, Washington 95.1 percent, Nevada 94.8 percent, Arizona 94.0 percent. * Lack of safety belt use can be deadly. In 2004, 36 percent of persons who died in Oregon crashes were reportedly not using safety restraints. Unbelted occupants are 10 times more likely to be ejected in a crash than one who is

belted and odds of surviving an ejection are estimated at one in four. * During 2004, lower safety belt use on rural roadways contributed to 80 percent of Oregon's total traffic fatalities occurring in rural areas. * "If everyone in Oregon buckled up last year, about 106 lives could have been saved. "

Oregon adult seat belt law* Oregon law requires that all motor vehicle operators and passengers be properly secured with a safety belt or safety harness.* This means that both parts of a lap and shoulder belt system must be worn together, only one person per belt, and no placement of the shoulder belt behind the back or under the arm. Any of these situations places the vehicle occupant at severe risk of internal crash injury.

Oregon child restraint law* Children under 4 years of age OR weighing less than 40 pounds must be restrained in child seats.* Children over 4 OR weighing more than 40 pounds must use booster seats until they attain 6 years of age AND weigh at least 60 pounds.

Back seat recommended for children* While it is not the law in Oregon, it is strongly recommended that children aged twelve and under ride in rear seating positions. Research indicates that such rear seating reduces the risk of injury by 37% for that age group.

Commercial vehicle belt use* Effective Jan. 1 this year, Oregon's safety belt law requires occupants of commercial vehicles used for the transportation of persons for compensation or profit and which transport 15 or fewer persons, to use safety restraints. This applies to occupants of such vehicles as shuttles, taxis, limousines and vans. Among these types of vehicles, taxi cab drivers are the only occupants excepted from this law.* ODOT is providing FREE "Seatbelts must be worn in this vehicle" to any transportation provider who wishes to post them in their vehicles and can be ordered by contacting the Transportation Safety Division at 800-922-2022 (statewide) or 984-4190 (Salem).

Minors in pickup beds* Minors - anyone under the age of 18 - are prohibited from riding in the open bed of a pickup unless traveling in the scope of employment or between hunting camps.

More safety belt tips* If the shoulder belt portion of your adult safety belt rides up onto your neck or feels uncomfortable, you may increase your comfort by sliding the built-in adjuster up or down or by moving your seat position. * Various after-market accessories are marketed as belt "adjusters" or "positioners." While most of these products are not safety-tested, if the comfort they provide makes the difference between whether or not you will wear your belt, they are probably well worth the investment.* For help with repair, installation or retrofitting of safety belts, call your vehicle dealer or vehicle manufacturer's customer service department.

More information on safety restraints* www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TS/safetybelts.shtml

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