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Buckle Up, No Matter Where You Sit

New Statistics Show Back Seat Passengers Still Not Buckling Up

SPRINGFIELD – With new survey results showing rear seat belt usage still lagging behind front seat occupants, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Illinois State Police (ISP) are reminding the public that anyone who rides in a motor vehicle needs to buckle up, no matter where they are sitting.

Despite the addition of back seat passengers in the state’s mandatory seat belt law three years ago, a new IDOT survey shows that only 84.9 percent of back seat passengers in Illinois are wearing seat belts, an increase of just seven percentage points since 2013. A separate survey, taken earlier this year, revealed usage by drivers and front seat passengers at an all-time high of 95.2 percent.

“Vehicle miles and fatalities are up on Illinois roads in recent months. We urge more back seat passengers to follow the law and buckle up,” said IDOT Director of Traffic Safety Jared Thornley. “Too many preventable injuries and fatalities continue to happen to passengers in the back seat. Increasing seat belt use means fewer deaths and serious injuries. It’s that simple.”

In 2003, Illinois passed a primary seat belt law requiring drivers and front seat passengers to wear a seat belt. In 2012, the law was expanded to require every passenger to wear seat belts, regardless of where they are seated in a vehicle.

Enactment of the primary seat belt law has increased seat belt use for front seat occupants by 19 percentage points, from 76.2 percent in 2003 to 95.2 percent in 2015. In addition, IDOT and ISP continue to raise awareness of the importance of buckling up through enforcement programs like “Click It or Ticket” and by continuously sharing seat belt safety messages via social media and public service announcements.

“Drivers and front seat passengers understand the importance of buckling up, but it is equally important for those in the rear seat to buckle up as well,” said Illinois State Police Col. Tad Williams. “The safety of everyone in a vehicle is dependent on all passengers wearing their seat belt. During a traffic crash, unbuckled passengers can be thrown around and cause injury to other

occupants. As a reminder, all vehicle passengers are required to wear a seat belt. It’s the law and it can help save your life or the life of another.”

The September 2015 survey included samples from the City of Chicago, Cook County, upstate Illinois counties (DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Winnebago) and downstate Illinois counties (Champaign, Bureau, Effingham, Rock Island, Madison, and St. Clair.)

Additional statistics show downstate counties have the highest back seat belt use rate at 90.6 percent. Upstate counties studied in the survey have the next highest usage rate at 85.7 percent, followed by Cook County and Chicago with 81.8 percent and 69.9 percent, respectively.

Safety Belt Use Among Occupants of Passenger Cars in Illinois in 2015

Region	Drivers	Front Seat Passengers	Rear Seat Occupants (Children)	Rear Seat Occupants (Adults)	Total Rear Seat Occupants
Total	94.2%	89.9%	93.3%	71.9%	84.9%
Chicago	86.3%	81.1%	72.9%	66.7%	69.9%
Cook	93.7%	87.4%	94.4%	63.0%	81.8%
Upstate	94.2%	88.4%	94.8%	68.1%	85.7%
Downstate	96.7%	95.8%	95.6%	83.8%	90.6%

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